



Children of Zion: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land (educational booklet)

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CHILDREN
OF ZION: ♦♦

*Jewish & Christian Perspectives
on the Holy Land*

DANIEL R. LANGTON

CONTENTS

4	<i>Foreword</i>
5	<i>Acknowledgments</i>
6	<i>Introduction</i>
	<i>Jewish Perspectives:</i>
7	How is 'Israel' Understood in Jewish Thought and Tradition?
12	What is the Significance of the State of Israel for Jews?
	<i>Christian Perspectives:</i>
18	How is 'Israel' Understood in Christian Thought and Tradition?
21	What is the Significance of the State of Israel for Christians?
25	<i>Institutional Statements</i>
32	<i>Multi-layered Language: Unpacking the Words We Choose to Use</i>
38	<i>Glossary</i>
39	<i>Further Resources</i>
40	<i>References</i>

FOREWORD

Few words evoke a wider or deeper range of emotions amongst Christians and Jews than those associated with the 'Holy Land' and the reasons are not far to seek. 'Zion', 'Israel' and 'Jerusalem' and many others, are foundational words and points of reference in our scriptures, our liturgy our theology and formation of identity; but they are also foundational in the politics of the Middle East. We use these words regularly in our worship in our churches and synagogues; but we also use them regularly in our conversation about current affairs and read them daily in the media. If any of these words had one layer of meaning and resonance only, it would be a complex enough matter. But for most Christians and Jews, each has multiple layers of resonance which come to us from many sources and senses, making it hard to disentangle them and to be able to use them comfortably and meaningfully as we might wish.

For these reasons the informal meeting of Jews and Christians from the Church of England known as the Lambeth-Jewish Forum, has sought to produce this resource: 'Children of Zion: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land', in the hope that it will help ordinary Christians and Jews – and many others – to deepen their own and each other's understandings. We hope that it will encourage and assist us all to talk together and to enjoy what we share as well as to appreciate where and why we differ.

We have in mind its use in many contexts: for the benefit of individual readers that they will be helped to understand more; for those occasions when Jews and Christians come together, that they will better be able to discuss together; for people going to the Holy Land on pilgrimage or as tourists, that they will be able to engage more effectively with the places and people they encounter there.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Daniel Langton for bringing this work to fruition. He has brought to bear his considerable knowledge and research abilities to produce in clear language something of real value. There is no shortage of material on every aspect of this subject, but this is one of the few which combines so effectively clarity with brevity and breadth with depth.

Ed Kessler

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this booklet is to offer a brief overview of the meanings of 'Israel' for Jews and for Christians. The land of Israel possesses great significance for other communities, of course, including Muslims, Druze, and Baha'is, but here we will be focusing on its relevance to Judaism and Christianity. As will become clear, even this is no simple task. Partly this is because Jews and Christians are profoundly concerned about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and about their relations with Muslim communities. But mainly it is because there are so many different perspectives within these two communities.

The first section, then, will consider some of the different answers one might expect to the questions: How has Israel been understood historically by Jews and Christians? And, specifically, what does the establishment of the State of Israel *mean*, theologically or otherwise? In attempting to answer these questions, we will explore how traditional conceptions of Israel are related to the realities on the ground by different people in different ways. Many statements about Israel and its place in Jewish-Christian relations have also been issued in the last few decades at an institutional or official level. Such statements, which we will consider briefly in the second section, give us some insight into the political and theological challenges that arise in discussing the meaning of Israel in the context of inter-faith dialogue. They are powerful reminders that differences over the identity and purpose of Israel sharply divide the Christian and Jewish

communities, and that this polarization exists not only between but also within each camp. The third section has to do with terminology. Language is not neutral and, in the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict and global religious tensions, it is politically and theologically highly charged. We will conclude, therefore, with a consideration of the various terms used to describe 'Israel' in order to heighten our awareness of such issues and to increase our sensitivity to the impact of the words we choose to use.

Down through the centuries, Israel has inspired many Jews and Christians to the heights of spiritual ecstasy and to the depths of loss and lamentation. The Holy Land is for both a precious idea and a geographical location where God and humankind have met with profound consequences for all time. The meaning of Israel – as described in liturgical poetry, religious laws and learned theology – is interpreted in very different ways, however, and counter-claims regarding its spiritual significance have featured prominently in the history of Jewish-Christian relations. They continue to this day.

TIMELINE BCE (BEFORE COMMON ERA)

c1025-928 UNITED MONARCHY UNDER SAUL, DAVID AND SOLOMON.

JEWISH PERSPECTIVES

How is Israel Understood in Jewish Thought and Tradition?

Broadly speaking, one can differentiate between three uses of the name Israel in Jewish thought relating to people, land and state. Firstly, there is *am Yisrael* or the people of Israel. This refers to the Jewish people who, according to the book of Genesis, are descended from the patriarch Abraham whom God called out of the land of his birth and with whom He made a special covenant marked by the sign of circumcision.¹ The name Israel, which means ‘He who wrestled with God’, was given to Jacob, the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham.

Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.'... God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.' So he was called Israel. God said to him, 'I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.'

(Genesis 32:24-28, 35:9-12)

Later at Mount Sinai God called the descendents of Jacob, recently fled from slavery in Egypt, to be his holy nation (Exodus 19). From these origins developed the idea of a chosen people, which the *Tanakh* or Hebrew Bible also knows as *b'nei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) or *beit Yisrael* (the House of Israel). According to the rabbinic writings known as the *Talmud*, this was to be an ever-lasting arrangement. God would not forget his people Israel. As Rabbi Abba bar Zavda put it, ‘Even though he has sinned he remains an Israelite’ (Babylonian Talmud (BT) Sanhedrin 44a). Nor, according to Rabbi Acha bar Ya'akov, would Israel ever be truly subjugated because, as a people, Israel found its freedom in fulfilling the *mitzvot* or commandments (BT Erubin 54a).² The *siddur* or prayer book reflects the centrality of this conception of Israel with texts such as: ‘We firmly hold that he is the Lord our God, besides whom no other god exists, and that we, Israel, are his people.’ (*Emet ve-Emunah* in the evening service).

Since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the Jewish community has fragmented into a range of religious and non-religious types. While secular Jews have rejected the theological notion of Jewish chosenness, many are nevertheless committed to the cultural or national life of the Jewish people, and are proud of their contributions to world civilization. Such non-religious self-definitions were made easier in the late nineteenth- and first half of the twentieth-centuries, when discussion of Jewish ‘race’ and ‘nationality’ were commonplace among both Jews and non-Jews. Israel, in the sense of a people, then, has come down to us as a fascinating mixture of religion, culture, nationalism, and biology.

The second use of the term refers to *eretz Yisrael* or the Land of Israel. Religious Jews link this understanding of Israel to the biblical account of the Land promised by God to His people as part of an enduring covenant with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The prophets, priests and kings of biblical times were keenly aware that they shared power with God Himself in this Promised Land, and the Israelites understood that their failure to observe his *mitzvot* or commandments could result in the loss of His favour and exile. This deep connection between God’s covenant and the Land can be found in many authoritative texts; Deuteronomy 11:18-21, recited twice daily by traditional Jews in the *Shema* liturgy, reads: ‘You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul... so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.’ There has always been a continuous Jewish presence in the land, even if the leadership was gone and the numbers were for long periods very low; Christian and Muslim conquerors all found Jews inhabiting the land. Even during those periods when they were not sovereign over it and were separated from it – an experience that began with the Babylonian Exile in 586-538BCE – the land of Israel has haunted the religious imagination of the Jewish people, embedding itself in their sacred scriptures, prayers and festivals. The sixth-century prophet Ezekiel’s certainty that one day the people of Israel would be restored to the land became the classic expression of this hope. In his famous vision of the valley of dry bones, he wrote,

Then he said to me, Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

(Ezekiel 37: 11-12).

At the heart of the liturgy lies the hope for the messianic restoration of Jerusalem, Israel’s holiest city, destroyed along with its Temple by the Romans in 70CE, and for the ingathering of the Jewish people many of whom, following their rebellion against Rome 135CE, were forbidden from living in Jerusalem and its environs and who began to drift into exile. The traditional text of the *Amidah*, the prayer of eighteen benedictions recited at every service, exclaims: ‘To Jerusalem, your city, return in mercy, and dwell in it, as you have promised. Rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting structure’ and ‘May our eyes witness your return in mercy to Zion. Blessed are you, O Lord, who brings back his *Shekhinah* [presence] to Zion.’ Famously, the festival of Passover not only celebrates the Exodus from Egypt to the land of Canaan but enjoins one to look forward to ‘Next Year in Jerusalem’. And there are many other examples.³

In the classic rabbinic writings it was assumed that only in the land of Israel could the people of Israel create the ideal society that God had intended. It is understood to possess special sanctity and despite the rabbis' general approval for Jews to live in obedience to their foreign rulers, the connection between the land and the people is never forgotten. The *Mishnah* claims that 'the land of Israel is holier than all other lands' because it is only there that certain commandments can be fulfilled (Mishnah Kelim 1:6), and it is even suggested that building a home in the land is 'equivalent to all the other *mitzvot* in the *Torah* put together' (Sifre Ekev, 10:1). Taking the long view, it is clear that the loss of Jewish sovereignty and the anticipation of its revival have profoundly shaped Jewish religious consciousness in the *diaspora* or dispersion amongst the nations. Despite the fact that for most of their history Jews have not held power within the land, and perhaps because of this, the connection to the land has left an indelible trace in the communal memory. Another way of putting this is to say that, for religious Jews, the question has not been one of permanent dispersal to the four corners of the earth, but rather one of temporary exile.

After the Enlightenment, however, many Jews came to abandon such emotional and theological attachments. After all, to the majority of Western Jews living in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, the land of Palestine was *terra incognita*. Those committed to political emancipation and the achievement of equal rights for Jews within Europe badly resented the frequent taunts of anti-Semites telling them to 'go home'. Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was one of the most influential Jewish voices who argued strongly for identifying with and contributing to wider European thought and culture in the here and now. For Reform Jews, who emerged in the early nineteenth-century, nationalist conceptions of Jewishness represented a serious threat to the purely religious conceptions that they believed constituted authentic Judaism; furthermore, ideas such as a personal messiah and the Jewish return to the Land were rejected as outmoded, irrational beliefs, which undermined what they regarded as the more universalistic teachings of Judaism. Secular or non-religious Jews, however much they might have valued the literary and cultural heritage of the Bible and its link to the land, certainly eschewed all theological understandings of it. Practical concerns about the challenges facing Jews who wished to integrate into wider European life left no time for religious fantasies, as they saw it. And so, for a short period, the land lost its lustre for sizable sections of the Jewish community, at least in Western European and North American societies.⁴ It would not be until the triumph of Zionism in the twentieth-century that large numbers of Jews in these countries would again define themselves by reference to the Land, one way or another.

The third use of the term Israel has to do with the modern nation-state, known as the State of Israel or *medinat Yisrael*. Bordering Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, in addition to Gaza and West Bank, Israel is a small, compact state boasting a territory roughly the size of Wales, and more than 60 percent of it is desert. The modern state of Israel was declared independent at midnight on 14 May 1948, following the 1947 approval by the United Nations of the partition of the British Mandate of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab.⁵ From the beginning, Israel's legitimacy has been disputed. It has been in an almost constant state of conflict with its Arab neighbours (although it has signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan), and tensions with the Palestinians have been fraught; the first Palestinian *intifada* or uprising began in 1987 and the second in 2000.

The State of Israel is a parliamentary democracy with a legal system that has come to incorporate English common law, British Mandate regulations, and, in matters of personal status, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious law. Its citizens are known as Israelis (as distinct from the biblical Israelites) and its population is 7.1 million people, of which 75.8 percent are Jews, 19.9 percent are Arabs (1.17m Muslims, 117,000 Christians) and the remaining 4.3 percent comprise Druze, Circassians, and others not classified by religion. If Jewish orthodoxy is defined in terms of adherence to Jewish religious laws and practices, then 20 percent of Israeli Jews claim to be fully observant, 60 percent follow some combination of the laws according to personal choices and ethnic traditions, and 20 percent are essentially non-observant. Israel's chief exports are cut-diamonds, high-technology, and agricultural products (fruits and vegetables).⁶ What precisely constitutes the Jewishness of the world's only Jewish state is fiercely debated throughout the *diaspora* and within Israel itself. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (14 May 1948) reads:

...the Land of Israel, was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom. Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers... and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood... This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State... by virtue of 'natural and historic right'.

What is interesting is the mix of religious and secular imagery. With an ear to secular nationalism, one might pick up on the language of identity, statehood, political freedom, historic attachment, the revival of Hebrew (as a national language),⁷ independent nationhood, and natural rights. At the same time, listening for hints of religious or biblical influence, one might highlight wording such as the eternal Book of Books, keeping faith, never ceasing to pray, traditional attachment, and making the deserts bloom.⁸ The Declaration was signed by those who claimed to be 'Placing our trust in the Rock of Israel [*tsur Yisrael*]', the precise interpretation of 'Rock of Israel' being left to individual conscience and conviction; the religious could understand it to refer figuratively to God, and the non-religious could interpret it as an allusion to the rock-like character of the people of Israel and/or the ever-enduring historical and cultural legacy of the Hebrew Bible itself.⁹ Thus Jewish religious aspirations were powerfully intertwined with secular nationalism in the origins of the state.

At different times and different places, different Jews have emphasised one or more of the three dimensions of people, land and state. From a historical perspective, it is next to impossible to untangle these constituent parts of the modern Jewish psyche. This has consequences for Jewish-Christian dialogue, as the modern Orthodox scholar David Blumenthal has observed:

These three concepts – People, Land and State – are very difficult for Christians to grasp. Christianity has no concept of bio-ethnic identity; there is no ‘Christian people’ which is bound by ancestry. Christianity also has no concept of Land; there is no ‘Christian homeland.’ The connections between spirituality and bodies, and between religion and geography, have no easy parallels in Christianity. Yet, these ideas are core and central to Jewish identity, religious and secular, especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust. No dialogue can begin without acknowledging these realities.¹⁰

The complex ways in which these three meanings of Israel relate to each other becomes clearer when one considers the significance or meaning attributed by Jews to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

What is the Significance of the State of Israel for Jews?

The vast majority of Jews living today, whether religious or secular, are supportive of Zionism, which might be defined as the goal to enable the people of Israel to return to the land of Israel and to establish there a secure national home. As Zionists, they regard their political support for the state as integral to their self-understanding as Jews. For religious Jews, the meaning of the Jewish state is coloured by the meaning of Israel in Jewish tradition and it should therefore come as no surprise that the establishment of the modern Jewish state is commonly interpreted in relation to the divine promise to restore God's chosen people to their Land. Traditional rabbinic Judaism certainly links national sovereignty with the messianic age,¹¹ although there is disagreement as to whether Israel's apparently miraculous victories of 1948 and 1967 over multiple Arab armies, and especially its capture of Jerusalem's Old City and Temple Mount in 1967, are signs that the messiah has come or is at hand. Likewise, religious Jews disagree over the precise location of the borders of the messianic state, but many of the more traditional would heartily agree with the assessment of Morton Klein, the national president of the Zionist Organization of America:

To me, as a Jew, Israel's creation and history seem to be an almost miraculous fulfilment of the Torah's prophecies... In recent years, the miracles have continued. In 1967, the heartland of the Jewish national home was finally liberated – Judea, Samaria, and Gaza returned to Israel. Jerusalem was reunited after centuries of Arab neglect and desecration of Jewish holy places and neighbourhoods. The Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the Tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem, the Tomb of Joseph in Shechem (Nablus) – all finally returned to their rightful owners.¹²

For some, to build up the Jewish state is to assist God in holy action to help bring about the final redemption. In language heavily pregnant with mystical meaning, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of British Mandate Palestine, Abraham Isaac Ha-Cohen Kook (1865-1935) alluded to this idea when he wrote of the connection between the Jew and Israel.

Eretz Yisrael is not something apart from the soul of the Jewish people; it is no mere national possession, serving as a means of unifying our people and buttressing its material, or even its spiritual, survival. Eretz Yisrael is part of the very essence of our nationhood... Deep in the heart of every Jew, in its purest and holiest recesses, there blazes the fire of Israel. There can be no mistaking its demands for an organic and indivisible bond between life and all of God's commandments; for the pouring of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of Israel which completely permeates the soul of the Jew, into all the vessels which were created for this particular purpose; and for expressing the word of Israel fully and precisely in the realms of action and ideas.¹³

For a few, such as *Gush Emunim* (Block of Faithful) or its successors, who promote Jewish settlements in disputed territories, the implications are even more serious. They believe that God has returned the Promised Land to His people and therefore that no part should be surrendered. Consequently, they believe that those who fight against Israel or who call for exchanging ‘land for peace’ are with the forces of evil and against God. Here, exclusivist nationalism is justified in terms of the state’s religious mission. As one of their ideological authorities once explained,

*[T]he end of days has already come... behold, now through conquest Eretz Yisrael has been redeemed from oppression from the sitra achra [forces of evil]. It has entered the realm of sanctity. Thereby we have raised the Shekhinah [presence of God] from the dust, for it has been in Exile amongst foreigners. If, God forbid, we should return only a tiny strip of land we would thereby give control to the evil forces, to the sitra achra.*¹⁴

Of course, many religious voices disagree vehemently with such a view and understand the search for peace to be an expression of the highest Jewish values, even when this involves territorial compromise.

While the majority of non-religious Jews, which includes many Israelis, are uninterested and even hostile to right-wing religious Zionists’ biblical claims for the land (which they regard as making an already complicated political situation even more so), nevertheless, they are just as likely to define themselves as supporters of Israel. For such secularists, its establishment is the remarkable achievement of a nineteenth-century political goal to create a refuge for the Jewish people from anti-Semitism and a homeland where Jewish life and culture could develop on its own terms.¹⁵ They note with pride that the Zionist movement is deeply indebted to secular Jews, such as the first prime-minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), and the first president Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), whom they believe had solved the challenge of anti-Jewish hostility with a modern nationalist solution. While some were uninterested in the exact location of the new homeland – at one point, Uganda was discussed as a serious option by Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of Political Zionism – it is a measure of the power of *eretz Yisrael* in the Jewish imagination that the secularists, too, were swept along by the audacity of the idea of establishing a modern state in the cradle of Jewish ancestral history, a land trod by the biblical patriarchs. Nevertheless, the importance of the state is, in their view, best understood in materialist terms. They draw upon the language of secular nationalism, and many stress the necessity of ending their *diaspora* existence so as to achieve authentic Jewish culture, following the cultural Zionist *Ahad Ha-Am* (1856–1927). For other founding figures, Israel offered the possibility of a truly socialist vision of communal life, which was expressed most famously in the *kibbutz* movement. Today, secular Jews focus on a nation-state whose borders have been determined by real world politics.

Despite their different worldviews, religious and secular Zionists share a lot in common, quite apart from the historical experiences that led to the emergence of modern Zionism. In particular, both groups attach profound meaning to the establishment of the state in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of European Jewry. For both camps, the powerful, emotional attachment to Israel is a complicated phenomenon that relates, at least in part, to the contrast of the catastrophe of the Holocaust, commonly viewed as the culmination of centuries of Christian anti-Judaism, and

the redemptive re-birth of the Jewish state after two millennia, heralding a new era of Jewish self-determination. The embodiment of the connection between Israel and the Holocaust or *Shoah* is the national memorial centre in Jerusalem, *Yad vaShem*, which is located on Mount Herzl, adjacent to the cemetery in which Israel's founders and soldiers are buried. It plays a key public role in the shaping of Israeli identity and attracts enormous numbers of foreign Jewish visitors each year. Israelis and Zionists of all sorts believe that the future of the Jewish people is to a great extent dependent upon the continued existence of a Jewish state that can ensure its survival. Personal and familial experience of anti-Semitism has taught that a Jewish homeland, a place of refuge for Jews, is a practical necessity, regardless of whether one is religious or not. Religious and secular Zionists also share a profound sense of connection to the land as the cradle of Jewish culture and civilisation and one of the few places where there has been a continuous Jewish presence since biblical times. Many have family members living in Israel. Regardless of any acknowledgement of Palestinian national claims for a homeland, these factors are pronounced in the modern Jewish psyche and help explain why, despite the turmoil of everyday life there, Israel attracts an increasingly large percentage (now around 40 percent) of the world's Jewish population.

Without seeking to detract from its overwhelming success within world Jewry, it is important not to forget those vocal Jewish voices that are sharply critical of Zionism. It is salutary to remember that in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, a majority of Western Jews, whether religious or non-religious, conservative or progressive, were keen to distance themselves from Zionism. A common argument was that Zionism encouraged anti-Semitism by confirming the anti-Semite's case that Jews were not truly committed to the national interests of the countries they lived in, and that their nationalist loyalties lay elsewhere. Many Reform Jews in particular argued that Jewish nationalism had nothing to do with the divine will. Rather, they said, it confused the ethical monotheism that lay at the heart of authentic, prophetic Judaism with Jewish nationalism. In the UK it was not until 1988 that Reform Judaism formally caught up with and acknowledged the reality of the community's shift to embrace the Zionist movement and the State of Israel.¹⁶ A similar story can be told of Reform Judaism in the United States, for while some concessions were made to the movement earlier, the first full affirmation of Zionism had to wait until 1997.¹⁷

While not all Jews are supportive of the State of Israel, the voices of criticism tend to relate to the specific policies of the government and what exactly is meant by a 'Jewish' state, and not usually to the right of the state to exist. Some prominent liberal religious thinkers are disturbed by what they see as the excesses of Jewish nationalism and, sensitive as they are to the strains placed upon what they regard as Judaism's prophetic core by the military priorities of the Israeli state, they are suspicious of the political use made of the Holocaust by Zionists. For example, the progressive rabbi Michael Lerner, a political activist and editor of the inter faith magazine *Tikkun*, who regards himself as a Zionist critic of Israeli policy, believes Israel has betrayed Judaism.

Israeli policy, far from being a manifestation of the essence of Torah, is actually a rejection of God and Torah. The Israelis and their supporters in the American Jewish establishment... are actually people who do not believe in the God of Jewish tradition – the God who, according to our [rabbinic] tradition, silenced the angels when they sang praises when our enemies the Egyptians were drowning in the sea with the following admonition: ‘My children are sinking in the sea, and you dare offer songs of celebration?!’... The irony today of hearing that [the Jewish tradition of compassion] is a Christian conception, when in fact it is deeply rooted in Torah, is just one of the many markers of how far the official Judaism of our time has strayed from its foundations and been distorted by its attempts to cheerlead for the policies of a particular government. This is how Israel has betrayed the Jewish people – by allowing the inevitably flawed and distorted policies of a particular state and its government to become identified with the essence of our Judaism, to insist that to be Jewish is to be loyal to that particular government or state; in short, to promote a new form of idolatry.¹⁸

Secular Jewish Zionists such as Shulamit Aloni, a former Knesset member and founder of the Civil Rights Movement in Israel (*Ratz*), are unconcerned about threats to the ethical foundations of Judaism, of course, but are similarly critical of unquestioning support for Israeli governmental policy.

Democracy here [in Israel] is halt and lame. There is no equality of rights for all the country’s citizens, no equality for women. The population is divided into a dozen religious congregations under the jurisdiction of their clergy from birth to death; when it comes to the laws governing personal status, marriage, and divorce, we have no civil marriage, in order to keep the purity of the Jewish peoplehood.

For about thirty-eight years we have ruled over another people with an iron hand – taking possession of their land, mercilessly uprooting orchards, vineyards, and olive groves; needlessly and maliciously destroying houses and roads; and turning every single town and village into a detention camp. In other words, we destroyed their entire infrastructure. In the occupied territories there are special new roads for the Jewish settlers only, and any Palestinian who drives on such a road has his car confiscated...

Yet it is worthwhile thinking for a moment: we have peace with Egypt and we have peace with Jordan, and Syria and Lebanon are willing to make peace and do not pose a threat to Israel, and Iraq is no longer a threat (if it ever was one), and Iran is a problem for the entire world, and we have the strongest army in the region and deterrent nonconventional arms and an alliance with the strongest country in the world, and the Palestinians have nothing of all this, so even if we were to assume that they want to throw us into the sea, would they be able to do so?¹⁹

Many Ultra-Orthodox Jews, too, are highly critical of the State of Israel, although for very different reasons. It is regarded as an attempt to force God's hand by establishing a Jewish state by human means. Without the messiah's appearance, and because of the prominent role of secularists, such Ultra-Orthodox Jews cannot accept the modern nation-state as an authentic expression of this sacred vision. They take very seriously the famous 'three oaths' of the Talmud:

What are these three oaths? One that Israel not 'ascend the wall' [or attempt to take the land by force]; one that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured Israel not to rebel against the nations of the world; and one that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured the nations of the world not to oppress Israel overmuch. (BT Ketubot 111a)²⁰

For them, the proper activities of the Jew are restricted to prayer, fulfilment of the commandments, and study of Torah. From this perspective, state-building activities are acts of rebellion. Thus Israel as it exists now is regarded as an illicit, doomed attempt to cut short the divinely-imposed exile of the Jewish people – despite the fact that many do engage with the Israeli government and accept grants for educational and social services.

Many secularists who are critical of the establishment of the Jewish state formulate their concerns in terms of nationalism and imperialism, which are regarded as dangerously out-moded. Debates about the legitimacy of the State of Israel often reflect different perspectives on the question of whether it was created (emphasising historical discontinuity) or re-established (emphasising historical continuity). Others emphasise what they see as the non-representative nature of the government and the detrimental effect this has for intercommunal relations. For example, the linguist and political activist Noam Chomsky argues,

It ends up that about 90% of the land [of Israel] is reserved for people of Jewish race, religion and origin. If 90% of the land in the United States were reserved for people of white, Christian race, religion and origin, I'd be opposed. So would the ADL [Anti-defamation League]. We should accept universal values. Once Israel was established in 1948 – though in my view it was a mistake – once it was established, it had all the rights of any state in the international system, no more, no less. And that has been my position ever since. I think it ought to change, and most of my friends in Israel agree... Remember, Israel does not call itself the state of its citizens. The high court in Israel declared over forty years ago that Israel is the sovereign state of the Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora. That means Israel is my sovereign state, but it's not the sovereign state of its Palestinian citizens. Well, if that's what you declare yourself to be, then you can hardly blame critics of Israeli policy for having negative attitudes towards Jews... This is one of many respects in which insisting on a state that is fundamentally racist in its basic character and declares itself to be the state of Jews everywhere is harmful to Jews...²¹

There is great sensitivity throughout the Jewish community to such criticisms. As the American Conservative rabbi Harold Kushner explains,

This, I suspect, is why so many of us [Jews] react so defensively when Israel is criticized: because we are always afraid that criticism will lead to a withdrawal of approval of Israel's right to exist at all. It is not paranoia on our part to note the disproportionate amount of energy the United Nations puts into judging Israel. It is not hypersensitivity on our part to notice that no other country is called on continually to justify its right to exist. (Does anyone call on the dismantling of Pakistan and giving the land back to the tens of millions of Hindus who were displaced when a Moslem state was created there in 1947?) There can certainly be valid criticism of the actions and policies of modern Israel; I have engaged in no small amount of it myself. But because of its symbolic importance to us, we become sensitive to the difference between saying, 'Israel is not perfect; it should be pressed to improve', and saying, 'Israel is not perfect; therefore it should not be protected against its enemies, it should be taken away from its Jewish inhabitants and given to others.' The first is geopolitical commentary; the latter is anti-Semitism, punishing the Jewish state for things that other states would not be held accountable for.²²

Thus Jewish attitudes towards Israel reflect the complex cultural and religious mosaic of the Jewish people as a whole. While the vast majority are Zionist, regardless of whether they are secular or religious, there are many ways in which this attachment to the land is expressed, and many ways in which the individual relates it to his or her conception of Jewishness.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

How is Israel Understood in Christian Thought and Tradition?

Christians also understand 'Israel' in terms of a people, a land, and the modern state, although, arguably, they find it more difficult to harmonize these categories. It is also worth noting that while, for Jews, Israel refers solely to aspects of the Jewish experience, for Christians 'Israel' can refer both to aspects of the Jewish *and* the Christian experience.

Firstly, Israel can refer to the Jewish people, whether the rebellious, stiff-necked biblical Jews lambasted by the Church Fathers who, among other things, were said to have rejected God's prophets and killed his Christ,²³ or the Wandering Jew in eternal exile that characterised medieval Christian attitudes, or the modern Jewish Israelis who so fascinate today's prophecy-orientated evangelical Christians and whose return to their ancestral homeland is regarded by many as evidence of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Relatively early on, however, the Church also appropriated the name for itself; the formulations 'True Israel' (*verus Israel*) or 'New Israel' neatly captures the belief that the Gentile Church had replaced the Jewish people or 'Old Israel' in God's favour and was the new beneficiary of the blessings promised to Israel.²⁴ As a result of the Jewish rejection of Christ, Israel was no longer to be defined by biological descent from Jacob, but rather applied to those who recognised Jesus as God's messiah.

Secondly, Israel can refer to the Land of the Bible, although the glorious narratives of the Old Testament are augmented by those of the New Testament concerning the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and the acts of the early apostles. The land – that is, Judaea or Palestine as it became known after the Roman emperor Hadrian quashed the final Jewish rebellion in the second-century – was the scene of God's greatest revelation: it was the land from where Jesus, as God incarnate, issued his gospel of salvation. Consequently, a spiritualizing tradition emerged early on that would become dominant within Church history. Influential New Testament texts such as the Epistle to the Hebrews focused attention away from the earthly city of Jerusalem, which lay in ruins, and towards the heavenly Jerusalem and true home of the faithful (Hebrews 12). Likewise, in the book of Revelation Jerusalem is portrayed as a bride descending from heaven, as a city in the heavens (Revelations 21). Israel, as the Promised Land, came to symbolize the future hope of another world. For the Church Father Origen (185-254), the Holy Land existed in a spiritual realm and had nothing to do with Palestine; the biblical promises regarding the land, he argued, referred to a 'heavenly country'. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), too, focused upon a 'Heavenly City',²⁵ and the empty land itself was abstracted to become an object lesson of the consequences of sin and opposition to God.²⁶ Until the modern times, then, this focus on the theological significance of the land has long been characteristic of Christian thought. It can be seen to figure prominently in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, for example, in an ecclesiastical chant for Holy Monday concerning Jerusalem.

Lord, you are going to your Passion willingly, and you said to your apostles as you went along the way: 'Here we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered up, according to what is written of him.' Then let us go, also; let us accompany him, with a purified spirit, let us be crucified with him, and let us die with him to the pleasures of life in order that we may live with him and that we may hear him say: 'I am no longer going to Jerusalem to suffer, but I go up toward my Father and your Father, my God and your God, and I will cause you to come up toward Jerusalem with me, into the kingdom of heaven'.²⁷

Metaphorical understandings of holy land language have also been common in hymns. This is an especially important phenomenon since it is through songs of worship that many Christians regularly access the tradition of translating the terrestrial into the celestial. Anglican piety in particular has been deeply influenced by the use of the heavenly Jerusalem as the eternal home of the righteous. For example, 'Jerusalem the Golden', a hymn originally written in Latin in the twelfth-century by Bernard of Cluny and translated into English in the nineteenth-century, paints a picture of heaven by reference to Jerusalem, Zion, and a blessed country flowing with milk and honey.

*Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest, / Beneath
thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed. / I know not,
O I know not, what joys await us there, / What radiancy of glory,
what bliss beyond compare.*

*They stand, those halls of Zion, all jubilant with song, / And bright
with many an angel, and all the martyr throng; / The Prince is ever in
them, the daylight is serene. / The pastures of the blessed are decked in
glorious sheen.*

*O sweet and blessed country, the home of God's elect! / O sweet and
blessed country, that eager hearts expect! / Jesus, in mercy bring us to that
dear land of rest, / Who art, with God the Father, and Spirit, ever blessed.²⁸*

Nevertheless, the spiritual conceptions of Israel have never entirely eclipsed Christian traditions concerning the terrestrial Israel and, as a result, there have been periods of intense interest in Palestine. In the second-century, the theologians of the Church Fathers Justin Martyr (100-165) and Irenaeus (d.200) expressed their conviction that the territory promised by God to Abraham would be granted to the Church rather than to the Jewish people, after the return of Christ and the resurrection of the just.²⁹ Beginning with the Christianization of the Roman Empire in the fourth-century, pilgrimages to biblical sites led to the development of churches and monasteries and a consequent Christian stamp on the land. Foremost among these pilgrims was Constantine's mother, Helena, who believed she had identified important sites in the city of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, and Bethlehem. From that time, Palestine became the centre of a bustling pilgrimage industry until Islam took political control of the region in the seventh-century. Again, during the tumultuous period of the medieval Crusades, many 'took up the cross' and fought the Muslims in the belief that they were recapturing and safeguarding the holy places for Christendom. In modern times, there has existed a powerful attachment to the land among many Christians, especially Protestant Christians, who would otherwise reject any idea that a particular piece of real estate retains special sanctity. In the nineteenth-century, many Evangelicals

became committed to a 'dispensationalist' theology that had first emerged under John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). From this perspective, history appeared as a series of epochs that reflected God's plans for various people at various times. Biblical prophecy was central to this theological system and closely related to expectations of the imminent end of the world was a belief that God planned to restore the kingdom of Israel to the Jewish people. For others, the attachment to the land was more romantic, the residue of a biblically-saturated upbringing. When the novelist Mark Twain first visited Palestine in the 1860s, he wrote,

When I was a boy, I somehow got the impression that the River Jordan was 4000 miles long and thirty-five miles wide. It is only ninety miles long and so crooked that a man does not know which side of it he is on half the time. It is not any wider than Broadway in New York. There is the Sea of Galilee and this Dead Sea – neither of them twenty miles long or thirteen miles wide. And yet when I was in Sunday school I thought they were 60,000 miles in diameter...³⁰

The combination of the kind of biblical education that shaped Twain's perceptions and the growing influence of dispensationalism at least partly explains Great Britain's support for the Zionist cause in the early twentieth-century under the British mandate.³¹ For other Christians, such as the Eastern Orthodox, the vision of the land as a place of meditation, a world of shrines, relics and tombs, has given it an almost sacramental character; from this perspective, pilgrimage to Israel generates a mystical sense of participation in the world of the Bible and especially the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Thirdly, Israel can refer to the modern State of Israel. But if Israel is rich with multifaceted meaning for Christian self-definition in terms of people and place, Israel in the sense of a nation-state refers to a territory that belongs to, or is shared with, others. The periods of Christian control have not taken root in Christian consciousness to the extent that any Christian today harbours the hope that one day it will be 'returned' to their rule or dominion. Overall, it seems fair to conclude that while Israel lies at the very heart of modern Jewish identity, it takes a less prominent place in modern Christian self-understanding. The combination of people, place and state that constitutes Jewish Israel finds no exact counterpart in Christian Israel. In particular, the geopolitical dimension of Jewish self-understanding confuses many Christians.³² All this is borne out by the radically different assessments of the significance of the establishment of the Jewish state, as we shall now see.

What is the Significance of the State of Israel for Christians?

Christian responses to the emergence in the mid-twentieth-century of the State of Israel have been every bit as complex as those of the Jewish world, if not more so. Representing the largest body of Christian believers at around 1 billion, the Roman Catholic Church presents an ambivalent attitude towards Israel. On the one hand, it has taken a lead in the Christian rapprochement with Jews.³³ On the other hand, the Vatican was only prepared to recognize Israel fully in 1993 during the papacy of John Paul II, who felt a strong emotional attachment to Jews. Partly this late date was due to discomfort with the idea of the State of Israel in general: after all, the existence of a Jewish state appears to undermine the traditional Christian interpretation of the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile of the Jewish people as divine punishment for their rejection of Jesus as the Christ.³⁴ Partly, it can be explained by a fear of antagonizing Muslims: the Church has been concerned to safeguard Christians in Islamic countries and to develop Muslim-Christian dialogue; awaiting the kind of diplomatic progress achieved with the Oslo Accords of 1993 before recognizing Israel made good political sense.³⁵ And partly it had to do with concerns for the protection of the Holy Sites and of Christian interests more generally, which goes some way to explaining the Vatican's twenty-year support of a 1947 UN resolution that called for the internationalisation of Jerusalem. Eventually, the benefits of engaging directly with the State of Israel outweighed the disadvantages of recognizing it. In any case, there has been a tendency for the Vatican to distinguish between its theological relations with Jews and Judaism, and its political relations with the state, as it explained in 1985.

The existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law. The permanence of [the people of] Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design.³⁶

Roman Catholics are by no means alone in making such a distinction, a distinction which most Jews find artificial and contrary to their own self-definition. For some Christian denominations, however, there is little or no interest in dialogue with Judaism, there is only the political dimension. For example, the Orthodox and Armenian Christian communities, with significant property holdings in Israel, have tended to focus almost exclusively upon practical issues relating to their centuries-old guardianship of holy places. Such matters are of less concern to Protestant churches such as the Anglicans and Lutherans, which only developed a presence in the land in the nineteenth-century, during a time of missionary and colonialist activity. Having said that, many liberal Churches with leaderships located outside the country, such as a number of those represented in the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, tend to emphasize the political aspects to the exclusion of theological debate about the meaning of Israel. Their primary engagement with the state has to do with issues of social justice and concerns about the suffering generated by the balance of power in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite their assurances of respect for Jewish sensitivities, they have felt obliged, on occasion, to publicly criticize Israel on a range of issues. Such issues include denial of access to the holy sites and places of worship, and humanitarian-political concerns regarding denial of education and healthcare, expansion of Jewish settlements, confiscation of land, and demolition of Palestinian homes. For some, Israel appears to have become a pariah state, and there is an on-going debate as to what extent criticism of Zionism or Israel constitutes anti-Semitism. As the Catholic feminist theologian Rosemary Radford-Ruether argues, someone who criticizes Zionism is not necessarily an anti-Semite.³⁷ Others, such as Martin Luther King Jr, have been quicker to make the link.³⁸

As for the small number of indigenous church congregations, Palestinian Christians have found themselves attacked from all directions during the uprisings. They are regarded suspiciously not only by the Israeli authorities for their support of the Palestinian cause, but by fellow Arabs because they are not Muslim, and by non-Arab Christians because they align themselves closely with Muslim-dominated Palestinian nationalism. Furthermore, Western Christians who side with Jewish nationalists are often hostile towards Muslims and are suspicious of Arabs in general. In response, many Arab Christians blame Zionists for deliberately undermining their claim to have lived in the land for two millennia. In his appeal to the wider Christian world to acknowledge the Christian link to Palestine, the Anglican priest Naim Ateek offers a striking and highly controversial image of Jesus and his followers as native Palestinians, and of his congregants as 'the living stones of the land'.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, was baptized in the Jordan River, lived most of his life in the Galilee, was crucified, died, and was buried in Jerusalem. Jesus Christ's resurrection took place in Jerusalem. Therefore, the first witness to the Resurrection were Palestinians; the Church was born in Palestine as the early disciples and followers of Jesus were Palestinians. In Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out, the Gospel of the living Christ was first proclaimed in Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem his witnesses went out to the ends of the earth...

[T]he faith of the pilgrim can come alive through visiting holy sites, from being where Jesus had been, and walking where he had walked. It is, however, equally important for Christian pilgrims to meet the living stones of the land – the Christians. To visit the holy sites is a very moving experience for many; meeting the 'holy' people can be a very rewarding and enriching experience for both. Visiting museums can give a person an important sense and appreciation for the past; but to visit the churches of the land, to worship with the indigenous Christians, and to meet them personally can give the pilgrim both a sense of appreciation for the present and an invaluable experience and insight into the life of the living and pulsating Christian communities of the land, who with their ancestors before them have borne a continuing witness to Christ for the last two thousand years.³⁹

Elsewhere Ateek criticizes what he calls 'abuses of the Bible' by Jewish and Christian fundamentalists or literalists who exaggerate the significance of the divine promise of the land to the descendants of Israel. He argues that the Old Testament actually emphasizes that the land belonged to God himself, who was sovereign over the entire earth. And he highlights that while the Exodus from Egypt is couched in the language of hostility towards the existing inhabitants of the land, the biblical treatment of the second Exodus, from Babylon, emphasizes the necessity of sharing the land with others.⁴⁰

However, it is the Evangelical Churches, with powerful lobbies in North America, who represent the most important group of Christians in terms of political influence upon the region, especially with regard to shaping US foreign policy and generating financial support. These religious conservatives tend to fall into the Christian Zionist camp and tend to be uncritical supporters of the Israeli government.⁴¹ This can largely be explained in terms of their literalist rather than allegorical readings of scripture: the land is viewed as God's covenantal gift to his chosen people and, for the 'dispensationalists' among them, the ingathering of the Jewish people is associated with prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Christ. (Ultimately, they hope and believe that Jews will come to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ; and some groups, such as the Southern Baptists, would prefer not to wait for the end of time for this to be accomplished).⁴² The broadcaster Pat Robertson speaks for many conservative American Christians when he writes,

The survival of the Jewish people is a miracle of God. The return of the Jewish people to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a miracle of God. The remarkable victories of Jewish armies against overwhelming odds in successive battles in 1948, and 1967, and 1973 are clearly miracles of God... Of course, we [evangelical Christians], like all right-minded people, support Israel because Israel is an island of democracy, an island of individual freedom, an island of the rule of law, an island of modernity in the midst of a sea of dictatorial regimes, the suppression of individual liberty, and a fanatical religion intent on returning to the feudalism of eighth-century Arabia...

To our Jewish friends, we say: We are with you as a wave of anti-Semitism is engulfing the earth. We are with you despite the pressure of the Quartet [of the USA, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations] and the incredibly hostile resolutions of the United Nations. We are with you despite the threats and ravings of Wahhabi jihadists, Hezbollah thugs, and Hamas assassins...

We evangelical Christians merely say to our Israeli friends: Let us serve our God together by opposing the virulent poison of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism that is rapidly engulfing the world.

Having affirmed our support, I would humbly make two requests of our Israeli friends: First, please don't commit national suicide. It is very hard for your friends to support you if you make a conscious decision to destroy yourselves. The slogan 'land for peace' is a cruel chimera... Second, the world's Christians ask that you do not give away the treasured symbols of your spiritual patrimony... If God's chosen people turn over to Allah control of their most sacred sites; if they surrender to Muslim vandals the tombs of Rachel, of Joseph, of the patriarchs, of the ancient prophets; if they believe that their claim to the Holy Land comes only from Lord Balfour of England and the ever fickle United Nations rather than the promise of God – then in that event Islam will have won the battle.⁴³

Although a good deal less common, other Christian supporters of the Jewish state do not justify their position in terms of prophecy, but see it rather as an ethical obligation for Christians in the light of the Holocaust. Without suggesting that Israel should be regarded as some kind of recompense for the murder of six million Jews, they feel shame for the moral failure of the churches during the Second World War and for the Christian tradition which taught contempt of the Jew over so many preceding centuries. For a number of Christian intellectuals and for many involved in issuing inter faith statements, support for Zionism is a practical way of improving Jewish-Christian relations in response to twentieth-century anti-Semitism.⁴⁴ Such views are criticized by anti-Zionists such as Rosemary Radford-Ruether.

*Unfortunately, many Western Christian 'liberals' are still very much engaged in a kind of 'repentance' for the Holocaust that assumes that Christians must be silent on the oppression of the Palestinians by the State of Israel or even dogmatically supportive of its 'right to the land' against Palestinian national rights... For Christians to become part of the pressure on Israel for justice means breaking the 'guilt trap' that has silenced Christians by making them think that they 'pay' for their sins against Jews by acquiescing in the oppression of the Palestinians. This sort of response to the Holocaust must be seen as the flip side of anti-Semitic racism on the part of Christians... Far from compensating for the past genocide of the Jews, this simply adds another chapter to the record of mass evil for which guilt is due. Will Western Christians and Israelis then fund a museum to the Palestinians after they have been destroyed?*⁴⁵

Thus Christian assessments of the significance of the Jewish state range from those who regard it as the unfolding of a divinely pre-ordained plan and a sign of the imminent end of the world, to those who grant it no theological meaning at all and whose interest in Israel is expressed in the form of political criticism against social injustice and biblically-derived covenantal theologies. In between, there are those who understand the Jewish return to the land to be a demonstration of God's faithfulness to His chosen people but who do not believe that this return necessarily assumes a particular sovereign state and therefore demands no political obligations one way or another.

INSTITUTIONAL STATEMENTS

'We are aware that in dealing with this matter we are entering a minefield of complexities across which is strung a barbed-wire entanglement of issues, theological political, and humanitarian.'

*Report of the Christian/Jewish Consultation
Group of the Church of Scotland, 1985.*

Many church statements concerning the relationship between Christians and Jews and their respective faiths have been published in the past few decades. Not all deal with the controversial subject of Israel, and those that do are cautious in their wording, often leaving such comments to the end of a series of observations. This is partly for diplomatic reasons arising from the risks incumbent in discussing Israel as a geopolitical entity, and partly because of the difficulties in assessing the theological meaning of the end of exile for a people who had been, for most of Christian history, regarded as a justifiably landless, powerless and persecuted minority, and whose religion was an anachronism, a fossilized faith superseded by the New Testament and its community, the New Israel. On the one hand, these contemporary statements are of great importance, for they not only represent the 'official' policy of the institution but are, by their very nature, to be valued as the product of long study and extensive consultation. On the other hand, one should not exaggerate the impact of such pronouncements upon the faith communities, for the resolutions of the national and international leaders are not always effectively transformed into practical policy or communicated to the laity with the due care and attention that might have been hoped for.

The first official document issued by a major Christian body that referred to the Jewish return to the land of Israel was that of the Assemblies of God, the world's largest Pentecostal denomination. Published in 1927, ten years after the Balfour Declaration but more than 20 years before the establishment of the State of Israel, its Statement of Fundamental Claims maintained that 'The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, the salvation of national Israel, and the millennial reign of Christ on earth is the scriptural promise and the world's hope.' It went on, 'Every child of God who finds joy in the revealed will of our Father delights in the glorious promises of Israel's restoration. Read carefully the promises in Ezekiel [and] Jeremiah.'⁴⁶ Such sentiments express a fascination with prophecies concerning the Jewish return to the land that remains characteristic of much North American evangelical thought.

A very different worldview is revealed in 'Israel: People, Land and State' issued by the Synod of the Reformed Church of Holland in 1970. A number of key themes appear in this pioneering document, including the Jewish return to the Land as a divine sign, the recognition of the state as integral to Jewish self-definition, and concern for the Palestinians.

Today the State of Israel is one of the forms in which the Jewish People appear. We [Christians] would be talking in a void and closing our eyes to reality, if today we were to think about the Jewish people without ever taking the State of Israel into account...

As matters are at the moment, we see a free [Jewish] state as the only possibility which safeguards the existence of the people and which offers them the chance to be truly themselves... We are convinced that everyone who accepts the reunion of the Jewish people and the land for reasons of faith has also to accept that in the given circumstances the people should have a state of their own...

In our time many Jews have again gone to the land of Palestine... We rejoice in this reunion of people and land... [and we understand] the return positively as a confirmation of God's lasting purposes with his people...

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees live miserably, without rights, around the borders of Israel. It belongs to Israel's vocation that it should know itself to be responsible for them and that it should do all it can to put right the injustice done to them.⁴⁷

Another German statement that expresses support for the State of Israel does so for slightly different reasons. In 'Christians and Jews' (1975) the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany expressed their view that the Holocaust had been a decisive factor in the founding of the state and, after linking anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism to the rise of Nazism, it asserted that 'After all the injustice inflicted upon the Jews – particularly by Germans – Christians are obliged to recognize and support the internationally valid United Nations Resolution of 1948 which is intended to enable Jews to live a secure life in a state of their own.' It concluded, 'Out of these culpable omissions of the past, special obligations arise for us Christians in Germany, namely to fight newly developing anti-Semitism, even under the guise of politically and socially motivated anti-Zionism.'⁴⁸

Many Christian statements have tried to demonstrate a willingness to accept Jews on their own terms, that is, to engage with Jewish self-understanding. In a statement on Catholic-Jewish relations in the same year, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops observed,

In dialogue with Christians, Jews have explained that they do not consider themselves as a church, a sect, or a denomination, as is the case among Christian communities, but rather as a peoplehood that is not solely racial, ethnic or religious, but in a sense a composite of all these. It is for such reasons that an overwhelming majority of Jews see themselves bound in one way or another to the land of Israel. Most Jews see this tie to the land as essential to their Jewishness. Whatever difficulties Christians may experience in sharing this view they should strive to understand this link between land and people which Jews have expressed in their writings and worship throughout two millennia as a longing for the homeland, holy Zion. Appreciation of this link is not to give assent to any particular religious interpretation of this bond. Nor is this affirmation meant to deny the legitimate rights of other parties in the region, or to adopt any political stance in the controversies over the Middle East, which lie beyond the purview of this statement.⁴⁹

Some institutions have focused on specific aspects of Jewish self-definition. In 1977 the Swiss Protestant Federation offered a historically-informed exploration of the complexities of Zionism and the Jewish connection to Jerusalem. With regard to the Holy Places, specifically, it noted that while ‘according to the churches of the Reformation neither the fulfillment of the promise nor the reality of faith in the events of salvation are linked to geographically and historically located “holy places”’, nevertheless the preservation of and open access to such sites was essential for religious harmony and it complimented the Israeli government on its attempts to deal with this challenge fairly.⁵⁰

In 1980 the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland adopted a statement entitled ‘Towards Renovation of the Relationship of Christians and Jews’ that spoke of ‘the insight that the continuing existence of the Jewish people, its return to the Land of Promise, and also the establishment of the State of Israel, are signs of the faithfulness of God towards his people.’⁵¹ Here the establishment of the political state, as well as the return to the land, is seen as evidence of divine providence in action. Other churches have acknowledged that their followers are divided on this issue. As the American Lutheran Church put it in a statement on Jewish-Lutheran relations, some ‘find a religious significance in the State of Israel, seeing in recent events a fulfillment of biblical promises’ while others ‘espouse not a “theology of the land”, but a “theology of the poor”, with special reference to the plight of the Palestinian refugees.’⁵² Many churches, such as number of those represented within the World Council of Churches (WCC), are keen to stress their concern for the Palestinians. A statement about inter faith dialogue issued by the WCC in 1982 illustrates some of the tensions involved, drawing attention to an apparent lack of consistency regarding Jewish attitudes towards the state, and stressing the land’s importance to non-Jewish groups, as well as mentioning Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

During long periods, both before and after the emergence of Christianity, Jews found ways of living in obedience to Torah, maintaining and deepening their calling as a peculiar people in the midst of the nations. Through history there are times and places in which Jews were allowed to live, respected and accepted by the cultures in which they resided, and where their own culture thrived and made a distinct and sought after contribution to their Christian and Muslim neighbours. Often lands not dominated by Christians proved most favourable for Jewish diaspora living. There were even times when Jewish thinkers came to ‘make a virtue out of necessity’ and considered diaspora living to be the distinct genius of Jewish existence.

Yet, there was no time in which the memory of the Land of Israel and of Zion, the city of Jerusalem was not central in the worship and hope of the Jewish people. “Next year in Jerusalem” was always part of Jewish worship in the diaspora. And the continued presence of Jews in the Land and in Jerusalem was always more than just one place of residence among all the others.

Jews differ in their interpretations of the State of Israel, as to its religious and secular meaning. It constitutes for them part of the long search for that survival which has always been central to Judaism through the ages. Now the quest for statehood by Palestinians - Christian and Muslim - as part of their search for survival as a people in the Land - also calls for full attention.

Jews, Christians and Muslims have all maintained a presence in the Land from their beginnings. While “the Holy Land” is primarily a Christian designation, the Land is holy to all three. Although they may understand its holiness in different ways, it cannot be said to be “more holy” to one than to another.⁵³

One of the most comprehensive statements to date was issued by the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1987, and was entitled 'A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews'. It also sought to demonstrate its concern for Palestinian Christians and explicitly spoke of a process of consultation involving 'many people reflecting diverse interests and backgrounds, both in the United States and in the Middle East.' It began by speaking of having 'been made sensitive to the difficult role of our Arab Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East. We have listened to the anguish of the Palestinians, and we have heard their cry.' While it proclaimed, 'We affirm the continuity of God's promise of land along with the obligations of that promise to the people of Israel', it also noted that the blessings of the promise were dependent upon adherence to the covenant and that disobedience could result in the loss of the land, without implying the revocation of God's promise. It went on to articulate the difficulty of relating the biblical promise of the Land to Abraham to the modern political State of Israel which has taken its place among the nations of the world.

As Reformed Christians, however, we believe that no government at any time can ever be the full expression of God's will. All, including the State of Israel, stand accountable to God. The State of Israel is a geopolitical entity and is not to be validated theologically.

Drawing upon the Hebrew prophets who preached social justice, the authors argued that 'we, whether Christian or Jew, who affirm the promise of the land... dare not fail to uphold the divine right of the dispossessed.'⁵⁴ It admitted that 'We have indeed been agents of the dispossession of others. In particular, we confess our complicity in the loss of land by Palestinians, and we join with those of our Jewish sisters and brothers who stand in solidarity with Palestinians as they cry for justice as the dispossessed.' In this connection, it explicitly disavowed those Christian dispensationalists and Zionists who see the establishment of the State of Israel as a signal for the end time and Last Judgement, pointing out that such views 'ignore the word of Jesus against seeking to set the time or place of the consummation of history.'⁵⁵

In 1988, the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace observed in a formal statement that anti-Zionism 'serves at times as a screen for anti-Semitism, feeding on it and leading to it.'⁵⁶ But perhaps the most remarkable Catholic document was the 'Fundamental Agreement' between Church and the State of Israel published in 1993.⁵⁷ This document, which acknowledged 'the singular character and universal significance of the Holy Land', could be read as a joint-statement that codifies the conditions under which the Catholic Church was prepared to recognize the Jewish State and establish full diplomatic relations. Amongst other things, Israel recognised the right of the Church 'to carry out its religious, moral, educational, and charitable functions and to have its own institutions, and to train, appoint and deploy its own personnel in the said institutions or for the said functions to these ends.' It also affirmed that it would 'maintain and respect the existing status quo in the Christian holy places to which it applies and the respective rights of the Christian communities thereunder.' Both state and Holy See acknowledged that they 'have an interest in favouring Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land' and co-operation to this end was agreed in the hope that this will inculcate better understanding. The Church also made clear that 'it is solemnly committed to remaining a stranger to all merely temporal conflicts, which principle applies specifically to disputed territories and unsettled borders.'

In 1996 the United Methodist Church offered another demonstration of the challenges facing Christians who seek to address perceived injustices in the Middle East and, at the same time, to reassure the Jewish people that the centrality of the land for Jewish identity is fully recognised. They reported,

As United Methodist Christians, we are deeply affected by the anguish and suffering that continue for many people who live in the Middle East region which includes modern Israel. We commit ourselves, through prayer and advocacy, to bring about justice and peace for those of every faith.

Within The United Methodist Church, we struggle with our understanding of the complexity and the painfulness of the controversies in which Christians, Jews and Muslims are involved in the Middle East. The issues include disputed political questions of sovereignty and control, and concerns over human rights and justice. We recognize the theological significance of the holy land as central to the worship, historical traditions, hope, and identity of the Jewish people. We are mindful of this land's historic and contemporary importance for Christians and Muslims. We are committed to the security, safety, and well-being of Jews and Palestinians in the Middle East, to respect for the legitimacy of the State of Israel, to justice and sovereignty for the Palestinian people and for peace for all who live in the region.

As we join with others of many religious communities in wrestling with these issues and searching for solutions, we seek to work together with other Christians, Jews, and Muslims to honor the religious significance of this land and to bring about healthy sustainable life, justice and peace for all.⁵⁸

The Church of England also has a history of reflection on the complexities involved. Most recently, the authors of 'Sharing One Hope' (2001) highlighted some of the mistakes often made in this area of debate, and suggested that the inclusion of Muslims in inter faith dialogue about the land was essential.

Discussion of these issues arouses a great deal of passion among both Christians and Jews, and suggests that there are two opposite dangers that need to be avoided. Some, on the one hand, seem to downplay the importance of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, failing to recognize the seriousness of the issue in the minds of many on all sides of the conflict. Others, however, are in danger of attaching to this conflict too much significance for Jewish-Christian relations in this country.

It is important to recognize that Jews and Christians are frequently divided among themselves, both in the Middle East and here. Finding ways to contribute constructively to the search for justice and peace in Israel/Palestine is a major challenge in inter faith relations for all three Abrahamic religions; it is difficult to see how any dialogue on these questions could meaningfully proceed between Christians and Jews without the engagement of Muslims also. Furthermore, while members of the Church of England can and do hold strong opinions on these issues, their readiness to express their views should be tempered by the recognition that they do not have to live directly with the consequences, as do Arabs and Jews in the Middle East.

In response to all those statements which reflected a Christian willingness to engage with Israel and an awareness of Jewish sensibilities, an inter-denominational group of Jewish scholars and religious leaders issued 'Dabru Emet' (Speak Truth) in 2000. While it cannot be said to have boasted 'official' sanction, it was representative in the sense that its signatories included over 220 individuals from various groupings including Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and non-affiliated Jews.⁵⁹ In attempting to acknowledge the improvement in relations between the Jewish and Christian communities, it set out a list of eight propositions, the third being an acknowledgment of changing attitudes towards Israel. The authors particularly welcomed the new reality that,

Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. The most important event for Jews since the Holocaust has been the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Promised Land. As members of a biblically based religion, Christians appreciate that Israel was promised -- and given -- to Jews as the physical center of the covenant between them and God. Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics. As Jews, we applaud this support. We also recognize that Jewish tradition mandates justice for all non-Jews who reside in a Jewish state.⁶⁰

Two points are worth noting here. The first is that, however vague, a link is made between the Holocaust and the state in a way that is not often to be found in Christian statements, where the tendency is to deal with the two events separately, even if the shadow of the Holocaust is ever-present in the minds of the drafters. The second point is that the Jewish scholars end with a reassurance to Christians that Jewish tradition demands the protection of all minority groups in Israel.

Such reassurances about the welfare of minority groups fail to satisfy everyone, however, not least some of the minorities themselves. Palestinian Christians, and Christians in the Middle East more generally, have expressed publicly their concerns about what they regard as political and religious interference in the region, in particular. Perhaps the clearest official statement in this regard is the controversial 'Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism', which was signed in 2006 by the patriarchs of the Latin and Syrian Orthodox churches of Jerusalem amongst others. While asserting their beliefs that the Palestinians are one united people regardless of whether they are Muslim or Christian, and that Israelis and Palestinians are capable of living together within peace, justice and security, the document condemns in the strongest possible terms the phenomenon of Christian Zionism and its impact on geo-politics.

We categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliation. We further reject the contemporary alliance of Christian Zionist leaders and organizations with elements in the governments of Israel and the United States that are presently imposing their unilateral pre-emptive borders and domination over Palestine. This inevitably leads to unending cycles of violence that undermine the security of all peoples of the Middle East and the rest of the world... We call upon all people to reject the narrow world view of Christian Zionism and other ideologies that privilege one people at the expense of others.⁶¹

Looking back over these institutional statements about 'Israel', one is struck by the diplomatic caution and passionate feeling that together characterize many of these attempts to find the right balance between the needs of the different faith communities. It is clear that there are as many differences among Christians as between them as to the meaning of the establishment of the State, its connection to biblical prophecy, its relationship to the Holocaust, and its influence upon the politics of the Middle East. The same is true of attitudes towards the claims of Jews, of Palestinian Muslims, of Middle Eastern and Palestinian Christians, and of Christian Zionists, amongst others. It seems safe to conclude with the observation that the complexity of the political, historical, social and theological issues relating to the holy land will demand further engagement and reflection from the leadership of these communities for a long time to come.

MULTI-LAYERED LANGUAGE: UNPACKING THE WORDS WE CHOOSE TO USE

When speaking or writing about 'Israel', the vocabulary that one adopts has complex political and religious meaning attached to it. Different groups hold very different conceptions of what 'Israel' signifies and their language subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) reflects these differences. While many terms are used interchangeably, the same term is often understood in a variety of ways, according to the ideological perspective of the speaker, and one must always remember that the speaker's use of a term will not necessarily correspond with one's own. As those involved in inter faith dialogue know well, words gain their meaning from their textual context and the social conventions that underlie them. To understand the issues one must first develop an appreciation of context and a sensitivity towards unfamiliar perspectives and related terminology. Let us take a look at some of the language used in discussions about 'Israel'.

CANAAN (*K'naan* in Hebrew) refers to what is today Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and parts of Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria. According to the Bible its borders extended from the river of Egypt to the Jordan (Numbers 34:3-12), and the Canaanites were one of the seven nations driven out at that time (Deuteronomy 7:1). The name conjures up the biblical stories of the patriarchs, the Exodus and the subsequent conquest of the 'Land of Milk and Honey' promised by God to the Children of Israel (*b'nei Yisrael*).

GREATER ISRAEL (*Eretz Yisrael ha-shlemah* in Hebrew) usually refers to the aspirations of some extremist religious, nationalist Jews to reclaim Israel according to their interpretation of the Biblically-determined boundaries from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18). Potentially this would include modern Israel, Gaza, West Bank, the Golan Heights, Lebanon, and portions of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt; some would also include parts of Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Turkey. In modern Israeli political debate, 'Greater Israel' tends to refer to Israel, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Gaza Strip.

HOLY LAND, THE (*Eretz ha-kodesh* in Hebrew or *Terra Sancta* in Latin) is a phrase often used to highlight the religious significance of Israel for Christians and Jews (and Muslims). The phrase itself does not appear in the Bible or Talmudic literature, although *eretz kedoshah* ('a holy land') and variants appear in Jewish writings from the medieval period onwards. While for some people any claim of sanctity for the Land itself, or the Holy City of Jerusalem, or the holy sites, sits uncomfortably with teachings relating to the transcendent, other-worldly nature of the divine, for many others the sanctity of such sacred spaces is both obvious and necessary. For Jews, the Bible and derived religious laws or *halakhot* give the land a special status regarding

'[H]aving entered a spacious vaulted chamber, painted in Turkish fashion, we saw at the further end a trellised door, and being led to the spot, we beheld through the lattice the sacred and royal deposit of the best and noblest of kings [King David]. Yes! There we contemplated the resting-place of all that was mortal of him, whom the electing wisdom of the Almighty had placed on the throne of a kingdom, which had, at first, but the Lord himself for its King. We read in Hebrew and then translated in the presence of all a very devotional prayer. How impossible it is to describe the feelings with which we were impressed.'

Judith Montefiore, Notes from a Private Journal of a Visit to Egypt and Palestine (1844)

observance and it is regarded as a covenantal gift to the Children of Israel by God Himself. The historic location of the Temple in Jerusalem bestows a special sacredness upon it, but Judaism also recognised other holy cities including Hebron, south of Jerusalem, and Safed and Tiberias in the Galilee. Important examples of Jewish holy places include the Western Wall and Temple Mount in

Jerusalem, the tomb of King David, also in the Old City, Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem, the Cave of Machpela in Hebron, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah are said to be buried, and Mount Meron, near Safed, the location of the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, to whom the classic work of Jewish mysticism, the *Zohar*, is attributed. For Christian tradition, 'the Holy Land' has certainly encompassed the land that was the backdrop to the events of the Pentateuch and Prophets, although for many commentators it has existed primarily in a spiritual rather than a physical realm. For most Christians, however, the holy places proper are those linked to the New Testament accounts of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, his baptism in the Jordan, his ministry and healings throughout Galilee and in towns such as Nazareth and Jerusalem, and his crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem. Such holy sites feature in the liturgies and have attracted pilgrimages since ancient times, which involved significant numbers after Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the fourth-century. Christians have a venerable tradition of sanctifying sites of momentous religious and historical significance, reflecting a profound desire to draw spiritual experience from the Holy Land; for example, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which stands to this day, was built over the Church of the Resurrection which dates to 360 CE. The phenomenon of the Crusades witnesses to the powerful attraction of the Holy Land for the medieval Christian imagination. Today, most of the Christian holy places remain in the hands of guardians from the oldest churches and especially the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian Churches, although Protestants maintain their own 'Garden Tomb', where Jesus is said to have risen from the grave, near the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem.

ISRAEL (*Yisra'el* in Hebrew) was the name God gave the biblical patriarch Jacob (Genesis 32:24-28, 35:9-12) and became the preferred name for the people who claimed to be his descendants. In the Hebrew Bible, it was also the name of the Northern Kingdom, whose idolatrous kings brought about the Assyrian invasion in 722 BCE, and which is to be distinguished from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the other accession-state that emerged after the golden age of the united kingdoms of David and Solomon. The return of Ezra and Nehemiah after the Babylonian Exile demonstrated the continued relationship between God and the 'remnant of Israel'. Until today, the Jewish people have referred to themselves as 'Israel' and 'Children of Israel', with profound implications for connection between the land and their religious and cultural identity. From early on, Christians evidenced a supersessionist interpretation of the New Testament, regarding themselves as the True Israel and heir of all the biblical promises. Thus the claim to be 'Israel, the people of God' is a claim traditionally contested by both Jews and Christians. Today Israel also refers to the Jewish national state established in 1948 as a liberal democracy located on the south-eastern coast of the Mediterranean in southwest Asia, which borders Lebanon to the north, Syria to the north-east, Jordan to the east, and Egypt

Our Father Who art in Heaven, Protector and Redeemer of Israel, bless Thou the State of Israel which marks the dawn of our deliverance. Shield it beneath the wings of Thy love. Spread over it Thy canopy of peace; send Thy light and Thy truth to its leaders, officers, and counselors, and direct them with Thy good counsel.

O God, strengthen the defenders of our Holy Land; grant them salvation and crown them with victory. Establish peace in the land, and everlasting joy for its inhabitants.

Remember our brethren, the whole house of Israel, in all the lands of their dispersion. Speedily let them walk upright to Zion, the city, to Jerusalem Thy dwelling-place, as it is written in the Torah of Thy servant Moses: 'Even if you are dispersed in the uttermost parts of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather and fetch you. The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it.'

Unite our heart to love and revere Thy Name, and to observe all the precepts of Thy Torah. Shine forth in Thy glorious majesty over all the inhabitants of Thy world. Let everything that breathes proclaim: The Lord God of Israel is King; His majesty rules over all.

Prayer for the Welfare of the Government of Israel, Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel, (1948)

to the south-west. In modern Palestinian political discourse, many refuse to acknowledge 'Israel' or 'the Zionist entity' and make a distinction between the country, which is called 'Palestine', and the political structures in it, which include Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

JUDAH or JUDEA (*Yehudah* in Hebrew, or *Iudaea* in Latin) was the name of one of the Patriarchs and sons of Jacob. In the Hebrew Bible it was also the name of one of the states that emerged after the break-up of Solomon's empire and refers to the mountainous Southern Kingdom, to be distinguished from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This political entity was restored with the name Judah or Judea after the Babylonian exile and this remained the name of the land until the Romans renamed it Palestine after 135 CE. The residents of the land, and those associated with it but living elsewhere, were therefore known as Judeans, the origin of the name 'Jew'. The land in question is currently divided between the State of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and, depending on the precise geographical definition, Jordan.

JUDEA AND SAMARIA (*Yehudah ve-Shomron* in Hebrew, *al-Yahudiyyah was-Sāmarah* in Arabic) are the biblical names of the territories that today correspond with the 'West Bank'. The Israeli government started using this phrase during the premiership of Menachem Begin (1977-1983). In modern Israeli political discourse, the phrase is not infrequently used by right-wingers to refer to the historical and present Jewish settlements in that area, and is consequentially regarded as linguistic colonialism by many Palestinians. Use of the phrase often implies that the territories are Jewish and should remain part of Israel.

LAND OF ISRAEL, THE (*Eretz Yisrael* in Hebrew) refers to the land given to the Jewish people by God, according to the Hebrew Bible, and where the national and religious identity of the Jewish people was formed. The precise borders of the territory of the ancient Israelite kingdom are notoriously difficult to establish, not least because

the Bible discusses the matter on a number of different occasions.⁶² For many, 'the Land of Israel' recalls to mind the covenantal promises that God made to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and others; the struggles of the Children of Israel to conquer the Land; tales of great kings such as David and Solomon; and the repeated warnings of the Prophets that national sin would lead to loss of the Land. As the Kingdom of God, 'the Land of Israel' resonates with the idea of God's sovereignty and rule over Israel and, by extension, over the nations. Following the destructions of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in 70 CE and 135 CE, which were interpreted as divine punishments, the Jewish articulation of a hope of restoration to the Land eventually included the idea that God was in exile with his people; in some mystical traditions, release from exile and restoration to the Land was identified with redemption of the world itself. Generally speaking, possession of the Land was a necessary condition of self-fulfilment for both the individual and the community, and a number of the *halakhot* or religious laws of Talmudic Judaism (for example, relating to tax and agriculture) are only required for those living in 'the Land';

as the twelfth-century philosopher Maimonides and others have argued, the study of such laws was a valuable exercise. In this vein, the eighteenth-century Chasidic rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810) also gave transcendent religious meaning to the land when he said, 'Wherever I go, I am going to *Eretz Yisrael*.

The Lord our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Resume your journey, and go into the hill country of the Amorites as well as into the neighbouring regions – the Arabah, the hill country, the Shephelah, the Negeb, and the sea coast – the land of the Canaanites and the Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land that I swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them.'

Deuteronomy 1:6-8

Nor was the power of the phrase 'the Land of Israel' lost on the modern founders of the State of Israel, it being the chosen designation of those drafting the Declaration of Independence in 1948. It is often said that it is because the Land is not central to their theology that Christians have failed to comprehend the profound attachment of the Jewish people to the Land. In reality, Christian opinion differs markedly

as to the religious importance of the Land. It should not be forgotten that in Christian tradition the Land of Israel is also 'the Holy Land', boasting the holy places, and thus the goal of pilgrimages since time immemorial. Nor that, today, many

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, 1948

Christians concerned with inter faith relations increasingly recognise the land's centrality to dialogue. Nor that large numbers of Evangelical Christians regard the Land as playing a vital role in confirming the biblical prophecies that foretell the Second Coming of Christ and the apocalyptic events described in the Book of Revelation. Nevertheless, there *has* been a historical tendency within Christian theology to spiritualise, focusing upon the heavenly Jerusalem rather than the earthly Jerusalem, for example. Jewish exile has traditionally had a theological significance in the writings of the Church Fathers in that the Jews' absence from the Land was interpreted as evidence of divine punishment for their rejection of the Christ. This, perhaps, partially explains the late recognition of the State of Israel by the Vatican in 1993. For quite different reasons, Palestinian Christians have protested the emphasis given to the Land, generating a liberation theology that has bitterly attacked readings of the Old Testament that justify Jewish claims to the Land, and which emphasises instead universalist biblical teachings.

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES 'The Occupied Palestinian territories' refers to the West Bank and until 2005 the Gaza Strip, which were 'occupied' or 'liberated' by the Israelis in the 1967 Six Day War. Following the Oslo Agreement (1993), the Palestinian Authority controlled a significant portion of this territory. In August 2005, Israel withdrew all settlers and military from Gaza, leaving it entirely in the hands of the Palestinian Authority. In 2007 Hamas, a militant Islamist group forcefully took over administration of the Gaza Strip, leaving the Palestinian Authority with the West Bank. Hamas considers all of the land, including the pre-1967 territory, to be occupied

Palestinian territory. 'The Occupied territories' or 'disputed territories' or '1967 territories' are terms often used interchangeably with the 'Occupied Palestinian Territories', although they properly refer to all the territories controlled by Egypt, Jordan and Syria until the Six Day War in 1967, when they were militarily 'occupied' or 'liberated' by the Israelis. These include the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, respectively. East Jerusalem and the Golan were annexed by the State of Israel.

PALESTINE (*Palaestina* in Latin, *Filastin* in Arabic, *Palestina* in Hebrew) is a name derived from the biblical Philistines who inhabited the southern coast of historic Canaan, in what is today Israel and the Gaza Strip. Following the Bar Kokhba Rebellion of 132-135 CE, the Emperor Hadrian renamed the territories of Galilee and Judea 'Palestine' (actually 'Syria-Palaestina'), after the ancient enemies of

Remember the solidarity shown to Palestine here and everywhere... and remember also that there is a cause to which many people have committed themselves, difficulties and terrible obstacles notwithstanding. Why? Because it is a just cause, a noble ideal, a moral quest for equality and human rights.

Edward W. Said (1935-2003)

Israel. Historically, Christian tradition has seen fit to retain the term until relatively recent times. During the rule of the Ottoman Empire (1516-1917), the land was incorporated at different times into different provinces although in the nineteenth-century it was popularly known as the 'land of Palestine'. Under the British Mandate (1922-1948), all Arab and Jewish residents carried passports identifying them as Palestinians. In modern Israeli political discourse, 'Palestina' refers to the land before it was renamed Israel in 1948. In modern Palestinian political debate, 'Filastin' is sometimes used to refer to the territories under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, namely the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; more often, the term is simply used as an alternative to

Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince. The hills are barren... The valleys are unsightly deserts... It is a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land... Palestine is no more of this workaday world. It is sacred to poetry and traditions – it is dreamland.'

Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad (1869)

Israel, implying an aspiration for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the entirety of the land.

PROMISED LAND, THE (*ha-aretz hamuvtachat* in Hebrew) is a name used to emphasise the covenantal nature of the gift of Israel from God to the Jewish people, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible.⁶³ The name itself does not appear in any biblical or rabbinic texts and is first seen in the writings of the Protestant reformer John Calvin.⁶⁴ Sometimes referred to as the 'Land of the Covenant', it is arguably impossible to discuss the subject of the covenants of Israel with God without reference to this Promised Land.⁶⁵ In Jewish tradition, the biblical vision of an agricultural land that inculcates a godly way of life for the Children of Israel is an eternal vision, with exile being understood as the temporary result of collective guilt. As the rabbis

saw it, the punishment of exile would redeem Israel's sins, and restore them to the land promised by God; after all, it was their duty as Jews to live there.

*Martin Luther King Jr,
Speech in Memphis, 1968*

And I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.

As such, there was a powerful moral dimension underlying Jewish conceptions of the land and their place within it. For Christians, the early Church Fathers focused not so much on the blessings of a promised land, but rather on the promises of blessings, which had now been transferred to the Church; Christian tradition came to view the Jewish dispossession of the Promised Land as a permanent state of affairs that demonstrated the veracity of their own triumphalist claims to be the True Israel. Since the Six Day War of 1967, 'the Promised Land' has become controversial in modern Israeli political debate. In response to nationalists who are committed to retaining the territories won at that time, their leftwing opponents have concurred with Hanoch Levin's sentiments, 'But I am no grain of sand on the seashore / And it is not my job to fulfill God's promises to Abraham.'⁶⁶ Like 'Zion', the epithet 'the Promised Land' has taken on powerful symbolic meaning for many Christian groups, including the seventeenth-century Pilgrim Father colonists to North America, nineteenth-century anti-slave abolitionists and the twentieth-century civil rights movement. Many Christians also use

'the Promised Land' in a metaphorical sense, often alluding to a better world or the afterlife, and as such the term can often be found in hymns and poetry.

WEST BANK (*ha-gada ha-ma'aravit* in Hebrew, *ad-daffatu l-gharbiyya* in Arabic) refers to the territory on the west bank of the river Jordan. After the armistice lines (known as the Green Line) were drawn up following the Israeli-Arab conflict of 1948-49, the territory was controlled by Iraqi and Jordanian troops. It was annexed by the Kingdom of Jordan in 1950 and captured by the Israelis during the 1967 Six Day War. The term corresponds to the geographical region of 'Judea and Samaria'. Use of the term often implies that the territories should not be regarded as part of Israel.

ZION (*Zion* or *Tsiyyon* in Hebrew) is frequently found as a synonym and metonym for 'the Land of Israel' and/or for its capital Jerusalem, and/or for Solomon's Temple. According to biblical tradition, it was King David who conquered the Jebusite stronghold on Mount Zion, renaming it the City of David, and it was his son Solomon who built the first Temple there. It has been rightly said that 'Zion' is a place name that Jews and Christians use to express realities that are beyond geography but are nevertheless rooted in history.⁶⁷ These realities are very different, of course, as one would expect from two communities who have each traditionally claimed to be the True Israel and people of God. Over time, the name became pregnant with messianic and redemptive meaning. This biblical name has a powerful resonance as a symbol for freedom, self-autonomy, and redress for all wrongs. Since the Babylonian exile, the

prayed for restoration of the Jewish people has been intimately related to *shivat zion* or 'return to Zion'. Jewish religious life, liturgy, festivals, and rites of passage are imbued with longing for Zion. For example, the medieval

*By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down
and there we wept when we remembered Zion.
For there our captors asked us for songs, and our
tormentors asked for mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of
the songs of Zion!' How could we sing the Lord's
song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to
the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if
I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.*

Psalm 137:1, 3-6

Spanish Jew, Judah HaLevi, captured beautifully this yearning for Zion in his poetry. And, of course, nationalist secular and religious Jews in the nineteenth-century who sought a Jewish safe-haven far from the anti-Semitism of Europe called themselves Zionists, as do present day supporters of a Jewish homeland in Israel who seek a political and cultural renewal of the Jewish people in its ancestral homeland. Having said that, historically speaking many Jews have been quite uninterested in such matters, and today the centrality of Zionism for Jewish identity is challenged by Ultra-Orthodox Jews, who believe that only God could and should restore Jews to Zion and that human effort in this regard is sinful, and by anti-colonialist historians and theologians who express concern at, amongst other things, the use of the Holocaust for garnering political support for the Zionist enterprise. 'Zion' has an ancient pedigree in Christian thought, too. The early Church Fathers tended to relate the biblical praises and promises for the 'Daughters to Zion' to the Christians. Anabaptists founded the so-called Kingdom of New Zion in Münster in 1543, while Mormons believe that the new Jerusalem will be established in the new Zion of North America. The name was also adopted as a spiritual metaphor for the hopes of Christian African slaves

My heart is in the east, and I am in the farthest West... I am the harp for all thy [Zion's] songs... / Would that I had wings that I could wend my way to Thee, O Jerusalem, from afar! / I will make my own broken heart find its way amidst your broken ruins; / I will fall upon my face to the ground for I take much delight in your stones and show favour in your very dust. The air of your land is the very life of our soul.

*Judah HaLevi (c.1075-1141),
'Odes to Zion'*

for their own freedom from oppression in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Christian Zionism has its roots in nineteenth-century European and

North American Protestant dispensationalist thought, although expectations of a 'restoration' of the Holy Land as part of the ultimate providential plan for humankind go back earlier; today, many Evangelicals offer unquestioned political and considerable financial support for Zion, or the State of Israel, as one way of bringing about the Second Coming of Christ and the End of Days.

*I will not cease from mental fight,
nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Til we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.*

*William Blake (1757-1829),
'Jerusalem'*

GLOSSARY

Aliyah (Hebrew for 'ascension'): Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel.

Ashkenazi (derived from the Hebrew word for Germany): Jews from eastern France, Germany and Eastern Europe, and their descendants.

Diaspora: Any place outside the Land of Israel, where the Jewish people live.

Dispensationalism: The theological interpretation of history as a series of divine periods relating to God's plan of salvation, associated with the Christian John Nelson Darby.

Enlightenment: A philosophical movement of the eighteenth-century that emphasized the use of reason to scrutinize previously accepted doctrines and traditions and that brought about many humanitarian reforms.

Intifada (Arabic for 'shaking off'): The uprisings by Palestinian Arabs in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank against Israel in the late 1980s and again in 2000.

Kabbalah (Hebrew for 'receiving'): Jewish mysticism.

Kibbutz (Hebrew for 'gathering'): A community settlement, usually agricultural, organized under collectivist principles.

Knesset (Hebrew for 'assembly'): The Israeli legislative body or parliament.

Orthodox Jews: One of the major conservative movements of Judaism, characterized by the belief that Jewish law was directly revealed by God and that tradition should not be changed.

Pogroms: organized massacres, often of Jews.

Reform Jews: One of the major progressive movements of Judaism, characterized by the belief that Jewish law, which was inspired by God, must be interpreted anew for every period.

Talmud (derived from the Hebrew for 'learning'): The most significant collection of the Jewish oral tradition interpreting the Torah and discussing the religious-legal decisions.

Torah (Hebrew, translated as 'teaching' or 'law'): In its narrowest sense, the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), sometimes called the Pentateuch. In its broadest sense, the entire body of Jewish teachings.

Zionism: A political movement to enable, maintain and support a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel. The word is derived from Zion, another name for Jerusalem.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Naim Ateek, Marc Ellis, Rosemary Radford-Ruether, eds, *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992).

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Rosemary Radford-Ruether & Herman Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

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Paul Richard Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007).

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www.mfa.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/7D3D9738-24FA-4274-B2F5-0D9A6FF0A3A0/0/FactsAboutIsrael2008.pdf

www.bc.edu/research/cjl/cjrelations/resources.html, the website of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College. Includes articles, document collection, educational resources, an annotated sourcebook, and related links.

www.jcrelations.net, a website devoted to fostering mutual respect and understanding between Christians and Jews around the world. Includes online articles, reviews, reports, official statements, and study resources on Jewish-Christian relations, as well as links to many related organizations.

www.sidic.org/en/docOnline.asp, the website of the SIDIC Rome Center (International Service of Jewish-Christian Documentation). Includes a large collection of online documents concerning Jewish-Christian relations.

REFERENCES

¹ See Genesis 12, 15, 17, 21, 22.

² Commenting on Exodus 32:16, 'And the tablets were the work of God, and the writing of God was inscribed [*charut*] on the tablets', Rabbi Acha Bar Ya'akov said 'No nation or tongue will conquer them, for they do not read the word as "inscribe" [*charut*], but as "free" [*cherut*].'

³ The grace after meals: 'Blessed be Thou who is building Jerusalem', and the prayer said to comfort mourners: 'May the Lord comfort you among all those that mourn for Zion and Jerusalem' The wedding service: 'May Zion rejoice as her children are restored to her in joy. O Lord our God, may there soon be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of bride and groom,... the voice of young people feasting and singing.' Prayer for forgiveness: 'Remember Mount Zion, remember O Lord, the affection of Jerusalem, never forget the love of Zion; Thou wilt rise and have pity on Zion; for it is time to favour her, for the appointed time has come.' Daily and festival liturgy: 'Have mercy O Lord, and return to Jerusalem the site of thy sanctuary, with everlasting joy...'

⁴ It is worth noting that in the large Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, and in North Africa and the Middle East, the special ties between the Land and Judaism remained generally unaffected by such ideological developments.

⁵ United Nations Resolution 181(II) on 29 November 1947.

⁶ These statistics are taken from the Central Bureau of Statistics as published in the Israel Information Center's *Facts About Israel* (Jerusalem: Keter Press, 2008).

⁷ As a spoken language, Hebrew was replaced by Aramaic in Israel in the third- or fourth-centuries BCE, although it continued to be used as the language of prayer and study amongst Jews until today. A prominent figure in the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language in Israel was Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922).

⁸ See Isaiah 35:1-2, which is traditionally understood to refer to the messianic age. 'The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly.'

⁹ In II Samuel 23:3 and Isaiah 30:29 God is called 'the Rock of Israel'. The term re-occurs in the liturgy.

¹⁰ David Blumenthal, 'Israel: Jewish View' in L. Klenicki & G. Wigoder, eds, *A Dictionary of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 101.

¹¹ The great medieval authority, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), agrees that 'The Messianic age is when the Jews will regain their independence and all return to the land of Israel', although he differs from most authorities in that he rejects any idea of attendant miraculous phenomenon: 'Nothing will change in the Messianic age, however, except that Jews will regain their independence.' Maimonides, *Commentary on Mishnah*, Sanhedrin 10:1.

¹² Morton Klein, 'What Israel Means to Me – As an American, as a Jew, and as a Child of Survivors' in Alan Dershowitz, *What Israel Means to Me* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 227-228.

¹³ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Ha-Cohen Kook, 'Eretz Israel' (The Land of Israel) in *Orot* (Jerusalem: 1950), and reprinted in Hertzberg, *The Zionist Reader* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 419, 421.

¹⁴ Rabbi O. Hadya, cited in Uriel Tal, 'The Land and the State of Israel in Israeli Jewish life' Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of the 76th Annual Convention (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1977), 10.

¹⁵ Since World War I, a number of independent Arab states were formally created from what had been the Ottoman empire. These include Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. Since 1945, many colonies have won independence from empire. Newly independent countries proclaimed their national liberation and political self-determinism from Britain (India, Pakistan, Ghana, Barbados, Zimbabwe), from France (Syria, Lebanon, Algeria and Vietnam), from Belgium (Zaire), from Holland (Indonesia), and from Portugal (Angola).

¹⁶ A resolution of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain in 1988 declared: 'Meeting in Annual Conference in the fortieth year of the State of Israel the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain reaffirms its total support of the Jewish

people's right to its own independent State within secure borders. / The members of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain regard the State of Israel as a unique expression of our people's faith and history. It is the homeland of our people as well as home to our spirit and our soul. We are concerned partners in the struggle for its peace, its security and its future. / The RSGB calls upon its constituents to renew and increase their efforts to strengthen the State of Israel, especially through *aliyah* and through support for the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. We believe that by strengthening Israel we will also enrich Jewish life in the Diaspora through close contact with the land, the people, the language, the history and the problems of modern Israel; in turn, a strong Diaspora will manifest the universal values of Judaism and constitute the primary source and strength and support for Israel leading to the Diaspora and Israeli Jewry working together in harmony towards the achievement of Judaism's Messianic hope.' RSGB Annual Conference in 1988, reproduced in Jonathan Romain, *Faith and Practice* (London: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1991), 202.

¹⁷ In the Columbus Platform (1937) the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis declared: 'We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its [Palestine's] up-building as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.' The San Francisco Platform (1976), the first after the State had been established, stated: 'We encourage *aliyah* [immigration to Israel] for those who wish to find maximum personal fulfillment in the cause of Zion.' There were caveats, though. 'At the same time that we consider the State of Israel vital to the welfare of Judaism everywhere, we reaffirm the mandate of our tradition to create strong Jewish communities wherever we live' and 'We demand that Reform Judaism be unconditionally legitimized in the State of Israel.' The Miami Platform (1997) went a good deal further, stating among other things: 'While Jews can live Torah-centered lives in the Diaspora, only in *Medinat Yisrael* [the State of Israel] do they bear the primary responsibility for the governance of society, and thus may realize the full potential of their individual and communal religious strivings.' The full texts of 'The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism' or Columbus Platform (1937), 'Reform Judaism: A Centenary Perspective' or the San Francisco Platform (1976), and 'Reform Judaism and Zionism: A Centenary Platform' or The Miami Platform (1997) can be found at: <http://ccarnet.org/documentsandpositions/platforms/>

¹⁸ Michael Lerner, 'Loving Israel, and Being Betrayed by Israel' in Alan Dershowitz, *What Israel Means to Me* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 253-254.

¹⁹ Shulamit Aloni, 'What Israel Means to Me' in Alan Dershowitz, *What Israel Means to Me* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 18-19, 20.

²⁰ This is a commentary on a verse repeated three times in Song of Songs (2:7, 3:5, 8:4): 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the wild does: do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready!'

²¹ Noam Chomsky, in interview with Jennifer Bleyer *The Ugly Planet*, No 2 (23 Oct 2004).

²² Harold Kushner, *To Life: A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 243-249.

²³ The charge of deicide, that is, the murder of God, was first directed against Jews in the late second-century by Melito, Bishop of Sardis. The idea was taken up by many other Church Fathers including John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo, and later Martin Luther. Since the Holocaust most churches have rejected the validity of the charge.

²⁴ The idea is derived readily enough from texts which appear to refer to the Church as the 'twelve tribes' (James 1:1) or as 'the circumcision' (Philippians 3:3) or as 'the Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16), and which suggest that 'In speaking of 'a new covenant', he [God] has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.' (Hebrews 8:13). Jesus is understood to have criticised his fellow Jews for their over-confidence in their chosen status, saying, 'Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.' (Luke 3:8). An early reference to "True Israel" is found in chapter 123 of *Dialogue of Justin Martyr and Trypho the Jew* (c165): 'Ridiculous interpretations of the Jews. Christians are the true Israel.' An early reference to 'New Israel' is found in a letter or address of Theodoret to the Monks of the Euphratensian, the Osrhoene, Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia (early 431): 'Gather us one by one, Thy new Israel, building up Jerusalem and gathering together the outcasts of Israel.'

²⁵ Origen argues that any references in the Old Testament to either 'Judea and Jerusalem were the shadow and figure of that pure land, goodly and large, in the pure region of heaven, in which is the heavenly Jerusalem.' Origen, *Against Celsus* 7.29.

²⁶ 'But the Jews who slew Him, and would not believe in Him, ... were yet more miserably wasted by the Romans, and utterly rooted out from their kingdom, where aliens had already ruled over them, and were dispersed through the lands (so that indeed there is no place where they are not), and are thus by their own Scriptures a testimony to us that we have not forged the prophecies about Christ.' Augustine, *City of God*, 46.

²⁷ Eastern Orthodox Matins service for Holy Monday.

²⁸ Bernard of Cluny (or of Morlaix), 'Urbs Sion aurea' (1146), translated by John M. Neale as 'Jerusalem the Golden' (1858).

²⁹ 'Jesus the Christ will turn again the dispersion of the people, and will distribute the good land to each one, though not in the same manner. For the former gave them a temporary inheritance, seeing he was neither Christ who is God, nor the Son of God; but the latter, after the holy resurrection, shall give us the eternal possession.' *Dialogue of Justin Martyr and Trypho the Jew* 113.3-5. 'If, then, God promised him [Abraham] the inheritance of the land, yet he did not

receive it during all the time of his sojourn there, it must be, that together with his seed, that is, those who fear God and believe in Him, he shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For his seed is the Church, which receives the adoption to God through the Lord [Christ]...’ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.32.

³⁰ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (London: Macmillan, 1927), 454. Twain first published this in 1869.

³¹ Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952) consciously appealed to Christian Zionist sympathies among British statesmen in lobbying for the Balfour Declaration (1917), which declared the support of the British government for the Jewish claim to Palestine. They ‘believed in the Bible, that to them the return of the Jewish people to Palestine was a reality, so that we Zionists represented to them a great tradition for which they had an enormous respect’. Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1949), 200.

³² W.D. Davies, a sympathetic Christian scholar, calls the Jewish connection to the land (and, by extension, the state) the ‘scandal of territorial particularity’. W.D. Davies, *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 71.

³³ The process of rapprochement began with ‘Nostra Aetate (In Our Time) in 1965, which repudiated the deicide charge and condemned anti-Semitism, while stressing the bond that ties ‘the people of the New Covenant’ to ‘Abraham’s stock’. ‘Nostra Aetate, Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions’, Second Vatican Council (28 October 1965), No.4.

³⁴ According to his diary entry, Herzl’s request in 1904 for assistance from the Vatican was met by Pope Pius X’s response, ‘We cannot approve of the Zionist movement. We cannot prevent the Hebrews from going to Jerusalem, but we could never sanction it... The Hebrews have not recognised our Lord, therefore, we cannot recognise the Hebrew people... If you come to Palestine and settle your people there, we shall have churches and priests ready to baptise all of you.’ Raphael Patai, ed, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, vol. V, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Herzl Press, 1960), 1602-1603, 1604.

³⁵ The Accord (also known as The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed 13 September 1993) represented the first face-to-face agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians and saw representatives of the Palestinians recognise Israel’s right to exist as well as the creation of the Palestinian Authority which would administer the territory under its control.

³⁶ ‘Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church’, Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (June 24, 1985), paragraph 25.

³⁷ ‘Frank criticism of political injustices in Israel is not anti-Semitism. One must be clear what anti-Semitism, or any prejudice, is and not confuse it with justified criticism. Prejudicial views against a particular people have several aspects. One element is that crimes are claimed against a group that did not, in fact, happen, such as the medieval ritual murder charge. Or... [an evil performed by some members of the group] is not treated as an instance of a general human capacity but rather of a stereotypical characteristic of the group. Finally, and most importantly, the criticism is made to justify hatred and injustice against the group.’ Rosemary Radford-Ruether & Herman Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah* 2nd

edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 214.

³⁸ In a 1968 appearance at Harvard, Martin Luther King, Jr. said: ‘When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You are talking anti-Semitism.’ Seymour Martin Lipset, ‘The Socialism of Fools: The Left, the Jews and Israel’ in *Encounter Magazine* (December 1969), 24. Pawlikowski, a Catholic academic, observed ‘If the critic of Israeli policy makes it clear that he/she is still committed to the survival of the Jewish state, whatever its shortcoming, then whether that criticism is valid or not, the person cannot be termed antisemitic. But if, as is true in many cases, a criticism of Israeli policy leaves the distinct impression that Israel has forfeited its right to exist because of some political failure, then the criticism might with good justification be placed in the antisemitic category.’

John Pawlikowski, *What are They Saying about Jewish-Christian Relations?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 127. More recently, the Council of Christians and Jews issued a statement: ‘Anti-Zionism can also be used as a proxy for antisemitism. As examples of this, CCJ regards anti-Zionism as antisemitism when its proponents: (a) Fail to promote equally self-determination of Palestinians and Israelis, (b) Wilfully use the terms “Jews” and “Israelis” and Judaism and Israeli nationality interchangeably, (c) Consider only discrimination against, or injustice to, Palestinians to the exclusion of that of Israeli Jews, (d) Judge Israel by standards which are not applied equally and impartially to all other countries.’ CCJ Position Statement on Zionism and anti-Zionism, May 2008.

³⁹ Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 112-114.

⁴⁰ Ateek cites Ezekiel 47:21-23: ‘So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord God.’ Naim Ateek, ‘Biblical Perspectives on the Land’ in Naim Ateek, Marc Ellis, Rosemary Radford-Ruether, eds, *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 108-118.

⁴¹ While many Jews are suspicious of the motives of Christian Evangelicals, others are more pragmatic. The Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin (1913-1992), for example, was amongst the first senior politicians to woo the American Christian right (and their financial and political power) in the 1970s and 80s.

⁴² The US Southern Baptist Convention’s ‘Resolution on Jewish Evangelism’ (1996) proclaimed ‘That we direct our energies and resources toward the proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people.’

⁴³ Pat Robertson, ‘Why Evangelical Christians Support Israel’ in Alan Dershowitz, *What Israel Means to Me* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 293-296.

⁴⁴ Examples of individuals include Reinhold Niebuhr, Franklin Littell, John Pawlikowski, Eugene Fisher, and Edward Flannery. An important example of such a Church statement is ‘Towards Renovation of the Relationship of Christians and Jews’, Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland, Germany (1980).

- ⁴⁵ Rosemary Radford-Ruether & Herman Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah* 2nd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 218, 246.
- ⁴⁶ Statement of Fundamental Truths, General Council of the Assemblies of God (1927), article 14. References cited include 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 19:11; Rom. 11:26,27; Rev. 20:1-7, and Ezekiel 37:24-28, 39:25-29; Jeremiah 32:37-41, 33:7-9.
- ⁴⁷ 'Israel: People, Land and State', Synod of the Reformed Church of Holland (1970), paragraphs 3, 41, 42, 43, 49.
- ⁴⁸ 'Christians and Jews', Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (1975), III: 3-4.
- ⁴⁹ 'Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations', National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1975), section 9.
- ⁵⁰ 'Reflections on the Problem "Church-Israel"', Central Board of the Swiss Protestant Church Federation (1977), VI Zionism, and VII Jerusalem.
- ⁵¹ 'Towards Renovation of the Relationship of Christians and Jews', Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland, Germany (1980), 2.3.
- ⁵² 'The American Lutheran Church and the Jewish Community', General Convention of the American Lutheran Church (1974), III.
- ⁵³ 'Ecumenical Considerations on the Jewish-Christian Dialogue' The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches (1982), sections 2.14-17. This was not unlike the WCC's earlier recognition in 1967 that the creation of the State of Israel 'is of tremendous importance for the great majority of Jews; it has meant for them a new feeling of self-assurance and security. But this same event has also brought suffering and injustice to Arab people.' It went on to suggest that no general evaluation of the formation of the State could be reached, admitting 'the question of the present state of Israel, and of its theological significance, if any, has [yet] to be taken up.' 'The Church and the Jewish People', The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (1967), II. Nevertheless, the WCC has understood the importance of accepting Jewish self-definition. In 1977, the British working Group for the World Council of Churches revised their 'Guidelines on Jewish-Christian Relations' to acknowledge the post-Biblical development of the Jewish people and their religion. In particular, the document draws attention to 'the emergence of the State of Israel, which, by restoring the Land to its relationship to its People and Religion, has made it possible for Judaism to regain its wholeness.' 'Guidelines/Recommendations on Jewish-Christian Relations', third revised text of British Working Group for the World Council of Churches Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People (1977), sections 1, 2 and 3.
- ⁵⁴ It explains, "'Land" is understood as more than place or property; "land" is a biblical metaphor for sustainable life, prosperity, peace and security... Thus we affirm our rights of solidarity with all people to whom those rights of "land" are currently denied.'
- ⁵⁵ 'A Theological Understanding of the Relationship Between Christians and Jews', The Presbyterian Church, USA, General Assembly minutes (1987), 417-424.
- ⁵⁶ 'The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society', Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace (1988), II.15.
- ⁵⁷ 'Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel' (30 December 1993).
- ⁵⁸ 'Building New Bridges in Hope', General Conference of the United Methodist Church (USA) (1996), section 9.
- ⁵⁹ A parallel ecumenical Christian document is 'A Sacred Obligation; Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People', The Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations (2002).
- ⁶⁰ 'Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity', National Jewish Scholars Project (2002), paragraph 5.
- ⁶¹ 'The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism' (22 August 2006). The signatories included His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah (Latin Patriarchate, Jerusalem), Archbishop Swerios Malki Mourad (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem), Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal (Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East), and Bishop Munib Younan (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land).
- ⁶² Genesis 15:18-21, Exodus 23:31, Numbers 34:1-15, Deuteronomy 1:6-8 and 11:24, Joshua 1:4, and Ezekiel 47:13-20.
- ⁶³ God makes the promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21), Isaac (Genesis 26:3), Jacob (Genesis 28:13), Moses (Exodus 6:4) and Joshua (Joshua 1:1-6).
- ⁶⁴ 'Thus, Abraham is not allowed to keep down his thoughts to the promised land: by a greater promise his views are carried upward to the Lord.' John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* XI:2.
- ⁶⁵ It is worth noting that there are a number of divine covenants in the Hebrew Bible, and not all relate directly to the Land. 'A plain reading of the Hebrew scriptures makes it look as if there are numerous covenants, as if God were trying desperately to make a lasting covenant with somebody—with Noah, several times with Abraham, with Israel, with David, with Aaron, with Joshua, Josiah and Ezra—and having great trouble in making any one covenant stick.' Norman Solomon, 'Themes in Jewish-Christian Relations' in *Toward a Theological Encounter: Jewish Understanding of Christianity*, ed by Leon Klenicki (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 18. See chapter 9 'Covenant Renewal and Narrative Structure' in Bernard Jackson, *Studies in the Semiotics of Biblical Law* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).
- ⁶⁶ 'Hineh ha-aretz hashlemah' (Here is the whole/complete land) in Hanoch Levin, *Ketchup* (The Satirical Cabaret in Tel Aviv, March 1969).
- ⁶⁷ Daniel Rossing, 'Zion' in *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, edited by Ed. Kessler and Neil Wenborn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 450.

