

RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

PASSIA
MEETINGS
1996-1998



Edited by
DR. MAHDI ABDUL HADI

PASSIA
Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs

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Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs

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INTRODUCTION

The fact that in our region the encounter between people of very different religious traditions takes place in the close proximity of cities and neighborhoods, has always given issues pertaining to religion and inter-faith matters a special place within PASSIA's regular meeting program.

Over recent years it has become particularly clear that there is an increased need to address the religious diversity prevailing in the region and to work towards an improved understanding between the various religious communities of the three monotheistic faiths.

Whilst acknowledging that faith must be treated with the utmost sensitivity and sincerity, especially in the Middle East, PASSIA has served for the past few years as one of the main addresses where people can gather in order to engage in rational religious dialogue and learn about other faiths. By providing such a forum, it was always PASSIA's intention to make a valuable – though hardly visible - contribution to the promotion of the respect of others as well as to the shaping of a pluralistic society where religious diversity is appreciated as part of the heritage of those who live there.

Part of this endeavor's rationale is PASSIA's belief that religious differences can be enriching and that each religious tradition makes a distinctive contribution to a society. Religion lies at the heart of nearly every human culture, shaping its identity, values, relationships, and actions. While religion can inspire and unite, it also has the power to divide and destroy. Religious differences have often been a cause of conflict and violence, and even today, religion is being exploited to foster prejudices and discrimination while religious emotions are being used to promote other, non-religious goals.

In the case of the Middle East, tradition has it that the practices of the different religious communities frequently represent opposing political views and powers, which has not only led to hostilities and confrontations but also reinforced national, cultural and ethnic differences. Being aware that the Christian, Moslem and Jewish communities in the region have enor-

mous potential to either encourage peaceful coexistence or support sectarian hatred, PASSIA believes that religious dialogue can help in building bridges and dispelling existing stereotypes. After all, and despite the distinctiveness of the different religious traditions, the three monotheistic faiths have bases of unity among them and others may be discovered in the course of such a dialogue.

By engaging in an open and sensitive dialogue among believers of the different faiths, each side can learn from the other and help promote better understanding and cooperation, while acknowledging their differences. This is particularly important in the case of Palestine and Israel, where the encounter between people of very different religious traditions – each inspired by a unique vision of the divine and with a distinct cultural identity – takes place in the close proximity of cities and neighborhoods. Here, dialogue can help in breaking down walls of fear and prejudice by addressing issues of conflict arising from religious and cultural differences. There will never be peace in the Middle East without peace between the religions, and peace between the religions can only be achieved through dialogue between the people.

This volume is a selection of meetings and lectures that took place at PASSIA over the years 1995-1998. Not included are the many meetings that were held 'off the record' and that are not being publicized owing to either the sensitivity of their contents or the reluctance of speakers and/or participants to have the proceedings published. Furthermore, due to limitations of space only the most significant meetings and lectures are included, as part of an effort to keep the scope and content as comprehensive and informative as possible.

It is hoped that this publication will serve as a reader for all those interested in religious topics and concerns related to the three monotheistic religions in the Holy Land. It is also hoped that it will provide a valuable insight into the numerous aspects and debates related to faith and inter-faith issues that dominate the discussion in contemporary Palestine.

Jerusalem, December 1998

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi
Head of PASSIA

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE - A CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW¹

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Discussing the Church and State in Christianity is a difficult matter in that it raises many interrelated issues. In this brief paper I will attempt to look at the Christian stance on the question of the Church and State in a general way, as well as the historical relationship in practice. Finally, I will concentrate on the Palestinian point of view with regard to this subject.

THE CHURCH'S POSITION ON THE STATE

The Bible:

Reading the Bible, we find several verses on the relationship between political and spiritual life. Among these are verses from the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of John and the holy letter from Paul to the King of Rome:

1. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17).
2. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15).

¹ Presentation given at a workshop held at PASSIA on 9 February 1996. The event was part of a PASSIA project -- jointly undertaken with the Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv, and the Center for Strategic Studies, Amman - entitled 'Palestine, Jordan, Israel - Building a Base for Common Scholarship and Understanding in the New Era of the Middle East.'

3. "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence'" (John 18:36).

It is impossible to understand the verse from the Gospel of Mark unless we interpret it within its proper context. This verse appears at the end of the initiation of the Jewish leaders when they sent some Pharisees and Herodians to catch Jesus saying something or taking a stand that contradicted Jewish teaching.

"And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. And when they were come, they say unto him, 'Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?' But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, 'Why tempt ye me? Bring me a penny, that I may see it.' And they brought it. And he saith unto them, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' And they said unto him, 'Caesar's.' And Jesus answering said unto them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at him"(Mark 12:13-17).

Analysis of the Story:

Who were the Pharisees and the Herodians? The Pharisees were a group of Jews who were extremely zealous in observing the Law of Moses and the practices of the ancients in matters of ritual purity, observing the Sabbath, the Ten Commandments, etc. They were opposed to pagan Roman rule. As for the Herodians, they were among the followers of Herod and supported his rule, which was granted to him by the Romans. This meant that this group was waiting for Jesus to say something against the government of Caesar so they could report it to Caesar.

Therefore, when the rabbis and wise men of the Jews sent the Pharisees - who were conservative in keeping the Law of Moses on the one hand, and the Herodians, who leaned in favor of the Romans on the other hand - they actually wanted to trap Jesus into making a political statement or taking a political stance with regard to the question posed to him. We should also clarify here that at that time the faithful Jews considered the rule of the Romans to be an attack against them because it was not the rule of God, and its laws were not the laws of God written in their holy

books. It was understood that anyone who was against the rule of God was against the rule of faith and that those who leaned toward the pagan imperialist Romans were against faith in God. But we understand from the response of Jesus - "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" - that faith in God is not faith in a particular political system or in a particular state, because God and faith are above politics and the specifics of particular periods in time. Meanwhile the believer, in his role of citizen, must bear his political responsibilities without bringing God into the matter. With his response, Jesus overcame the long-standing theocratic mentality that characterized that period, announcing a new system when he spoke to Pilate, saying:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,... but now is my kingdom not from hence."

In this world, citizens must deal with Caesar according to the principles of a temporal authority, while they must deal with God according to the principles of dogma and faith. Jesus clarified this position to his followers who witnessed his wonders and miracles, who heard his teachings, and who fervently wanted him to be their worldly king and to free them from the Roman Niro. The Gospel of John tells us that when Jesus learned this was the will of the people he departed and went to the mountains alone (John 6:15).

RELATIONS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

In the first three centuries the Church was separate and far from the State and politics, because Jesus' vision was the Kingdom of God and the Beatitudes - "blessed are the poor, the merciful, the meek..." - and spiritual considerations are contradictory to the considerations of the State. This was an important reason why the Roman State's position towards the followers of Christ was "they have no right to exist" and must be caught and eliminated wherever they are. Indeed, the Christians at that time suffered severe forms of torture and were even put to death for their Christian faith. Hence, these first three centuries of the Church's history are called the centuries of faith and martyrdom. The Church's position on the Roman authorities was tied to two principles: first, "All authority is from God" and must be obeyed; second, "God is more worthy of obedience than men," which means that it is not the place of the State to interfere in the affairs of the Church and in the freedom of Christians in embracing and expressing their faith.

However, after the Roman Empire's conversion, Christianity's situation changed dramatically. The Empire put all its means at the disposal of the Church in its effort to spread the Christian faith. In regards to the relation of Church and State, we can say that the Church set out on an errant path as the Church and the State became one. The Roman emperor kept for himself authority over religious matters, and the interests of the emperor and of Christianity thus became one. Consequently, when there was religious dissent, the emperor was blamed for it because every religious dispute reflected on the unity of the empire. This is evidenced throughout history in various emperors calling for the convening of ecumenical religious conventions and intervening in the designation of the Bishop. Examples abound: Constantine, the king who headed the ecumenical convention in Niquia in the year 325; King Theodosius' calling for the holding of the ecumenical convention in Afsas in the year 431; Marqianus agreeing to the holding of the Khalqidunia convention in the year 451, etc. In contrast to this, we see some bishops who wanted to preserve the independence of the Church and its non-integration into public life. An example of this is the metropolitan of Milano Saint Ambrosius and Pope Jilasius who wrote in one of his letters to the Emperor Ithnasius the following:

“Your Highness the Emperor,

The world is ruled by two principles: the authority of the holy clergy and the authority of kings. The mission of the Bishops is becoming more difficult because they must stand before God's judgment on behalf of themselves and the kings. As your grace knows, although your position puts you above all people, it is your religious duty to bow your head in front of those responsible for matters of God as long as you are expecting them to offer you a means of salvation. In order to receive heaven's secrets and to deal with them properly, as you also know, one must obey the dictates of Christianity not to lead or assume temporal authority. And thus in this matter you are subject to their judgment and must not try to make them to submit to your will. Indeed the religious leaders, according to the laws of the land, recognize that the empire has been given to you from on high and they obey your decisions as final. Thus you must obey those who are dedicated to the service of the heavenly secrets.”

It is worth mentioning that the integration between Church and State was carried out first under the authority of the State: this was the first model of integration between the two. As for the second, it occurred when the Church was controlling the State. We see this in the Western Roman Empire, where the Church found itself filling the vacuum of authority after the

dissolution and division of the Roman Empire between East and West. Pope Bonifasius VIII expressed this position in his edict 'One United Church' of 18 November 1302, in which he wrote that the Christian World - State and Church - formed one body with the Pope as its head.

Yet despite these efforts at integration, conflicts continued between the Church and the State. The most famous of these was that between the German Emperor Frederick Barbarosa and his resistance against Pope Iskander III. The other important conflict was between King Henry IV and Pope Gregorius VII.

During this period when the Church and the State were one unit, a number of religious wars took place and it is in this period that the Inquisition returned. This tension and conflict remained in Europe until nations and national entities began to form at the expense of the Holy Empire. Some Popes held onto the dream of a Holy Empire until the period of the rise in interest in human sciences and the beginning of the reform movement within the Church itself. However, the Church remained tied to the State in one form or another until the beginning of this century. In the Latrun Agreements between the Vatican and the Government of Italy in 1929 the Church finally lost all its temporal authority but retained its spiritual freedom.

Today, there are still a number of Christian states that consider Christianity the official state religion. However, the distinction between clergy and secular officials has become clear, and there is a clear definition of the fields of work in which they operate.

THE CHURCH'S POSITION TODAY

The Church today sees the State as an independent entity with jurisdiction over temporal matters and as having sovereignty over its own laws and objectives that are not tied to the spiritual realm: the State as an institution is not subject to the Church.

The Church is a spiritual institution with its own independent existence. Its role is to take care of the spiritual realm, which includes not only the relation between people and God, but also relations between human beings. The Church carries a spiritual message, which is subject to the sacrament of redemption that Jesus carried.

Consequently, there are differences between the Church and the State in the means they employ. For example, the Church does not use the kind of measures that a state uses in security matters, and thus the State does not have to accept the same repression that the Church does. The Church has one great message: love everyone, even your enemy.

States have a specific political system, whereas the Church is not tied to any system and can coexist with any system, regardless of its political ideology. Thus, the Church is also not tied to any political party. Christianity is a faith and not a political or party ideology: it is for every person and all peoples. Meanwhile, politics is limited to a specific idea and a specific group. It is my view that there are no Christian political programs, although there are political programs that the Church may reject because they go against the fundamental moral faith and principles, or that the Church may accept because they are compatible with general Christian principles. On this subject, the Vatican II says, "The Church rejects political forms that stand as a barrier in the face of civil or religious freedom as is the case in some regions." The faithful are like all other citizens in that they can oppose or support any political program in accordance with their fulfilling their national duties. Their political activity may be affected by their moral, religious, and deepest internal convictions, but their political choices remain tied to national factors and are not of a religious or sectarian nature.

It is clear that despite the independence of both the State and the Church in their fields of activity, there remains between them some points where they overlap, joint fields of work, and a continuing dialogue. Several factors account for this: first, the Christian citizen is one person who is tied to two institutions; second, the duty of the State is the complete general interest, which includes all aspects of human beings in their material and spiritual pursuits; third, the temporal realm, even if it is independent, remains subject to moral measures, as do all human activities.

In a speech on 11 January 1973 to members of the diplomatic corps to the Vatican, His Holiness Pope Paul VI summarized the Church's position on the State:

"The Church is far from political activity as such, but it is present at each meeting between people and in every discussion on justice. The Church works in the service of the people and in fostering conscience and cooperation, according to its own way, including cultural and social growth and progress. We have no other way but that which Christ out-

lined: 'Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.'"

So the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal systems is clear in this period. It is not the responsibility of the followers of the Christian faith to point out a political course or specific worldly paths the citizen must follow.

Yet there is a deep connection between the two systems. Therefore, we cooperate in working towards the general interest of every country and all of humanity, and we are not neutral observers, for the Bible forbids us from remaining silent when people are exposed to material or spiritual danger, or when the law itself is in danger.

RELIGION AND THE BELIEVER

We must distinguish between religion and the believer. Religion is from God and God is above both the issues of man and the stands he takes in religion's name. Often religion is exploited and given a false political interpretation because the believer wants to serve his own interests, which differ from the teaching and interests of God. Many mix the two matters, and for this reason we say that the believer is not allowed to carry religion to false conclusions. In our time we have seen many acts of extremism and violence happening in the name of religion and with religious slogans, knowing that the monotheistic religions are innocent of any call for killing and violence and oppression and that they call for tolerance, love, justice, and peace. If we look at history, we see many wars and acts of evil that were undertaken with religious slogans and in the name of God even though they had nothing to do with religion or God. In our time, the Church must strengthen peace between peoples through adherence, faith and devotion to the Bible and through implementing its message in the world, because it is the Church's calling to encourage and establish in the human community justice, good and beauty.

The Church demands the separation of itself from the State and it demands that the believer respect an authority that faithfully serves its citizens. The Church encourages intellectual and religious pluralism in all societies in the hope that democracy will be realized, which will make all citizens equal before the law. When we turn our attention to duties and services that will provide security, stability, and social justice for all, if the State serves and helps the Church and the believers, and its policies do

not contradict the principles and morals of the believers, then it is no problem if the official state religion is that of the believers. But if the state religion is the religion of the majority of the citizens, our question is: What about the minority and its rights? What about equality between citizens? I say this because in cases like these, there will no doubt be constraints and limits imposed by the majority and the State on the minority, which will be deprived of its rights. Thus the minority will be oppressed and equality among the citizens will be prevented.

The political community and the Church are independent; neither of the two is tied to the other in any field. Besides that they both serve, in their different roles, the individual and societal needs of the people. They do for the good of all with maximum efficacy and in a constant effort to cooperate positively according to the circumstances of the time and place.

This does not mean that the Church is not interested in the nation and the citizens and it does not mean that the Church stands watching what is happening without interest, especially if there is political or social oppression. I say this because the voice of the Church that calls for right, justice, equality, and respect for all must be a lofty prophetic voice and must be heard. And it must do everything possible for the dignity of human beings, who were created in God's image. The Second Vatican tells us:

"In order to assure a truly humanitarian political life, it is essential to foster the growth of the concept of justice in the conscience of man and to foster the growth of the notion of goodness and sacrifice on the path of the general interest... there also must be great importance placed on national and political education to enable all citizens to play their role in social and political life."

This means that the Christian must participate seriously in public life. The Christian must not marginalize himself or withdraw into his shell, for doing so is the devil's work and not of the teaching of God, who called for opening up, communicating, and giving. It is thus incumbent on the Christian to undertake all possible efforts to realize social justice and the dignity of the human family.

Finally, I repeat what the Patriarch Sabbah said on this matter:

"The issue of the relationship between Church and State is multifaceted and deals with the nature of man himself, his relationship with God, and his relationship to the community. In summary, it is the issue

should protect its security without dragging the Church or God into the matter. The matter is not in its essence a matter of religion and state, but rather of the human being, who is the subject of the Church and state together, and it is for him there is a state and it is for him that there is religion."

THE PALESTINIAN CHURCH

As a Palestinian Christian, I demand that the presence and role of the Palestinian Church in political and social life be greater than what it is today and that its voice be heard more clearly. The prophetic voice of the Palestinian Church should be heard by the Christian, the Moslem, and the Jew, and may the Palestinian and Israeli politicians and the whole world hear it. The prophetic voice demands justice, right, the rejection of oppression and degradation of the dignity of man. The prophetic voice should speak out in criticizing both itself and the society to which it belongs with the goal of building social justice, and the dignity, freedom, and independence of the citizen. The Church must speak about what is right and demand it for its Palestinian sons in order to contribute to just and peaceful solutions in a land of peace, the land of the heavenly prophets. This is because justice and peace are the essence of the calling of Christianity and the Church. This does not mean that we deny or forget all that the local churches have done in giving and serving and dedicating themselves to their sons, but we demand more of it because we know that it is capable of more and of communicating Palestinian suffering to churches and peoples all over the world. The Church must remain the voice of right that sends out succor to the political voices demanding right, justice, peace, and equality for all citizens.

POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE ARAB WORLD¹

Sheikh Jamil Hamami

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Some people think that talking about political Islam implies that there is a separation between religion and the State. An in-depth look at the way and spirit of Islam would show that this is not true. Islam is the State, religion and a way of life - which includes all aspects of the daily life of the Moslem - combined. Islam defined the relationship of a Moslem with God. It also organized relations between the different sides within one Moslem state as well as relations between the Moslem state and other states, whether they are antagonist, peaceful, or involved in a mutual pact. Talk of separation of religion from the state began in practice when Mustafa Kamal Atatürk canceled the Islamic Caliphate, separated Turkey from the Islamic World and directed Turkey towards the West in heart and matter. He was famous for his power and violence against anyone who stood in his way.

This procedure caused a shock throughout the Arab and Islamic Worlds, and resulted in the emergence of several groups that attempted to resume the Islamic way of life. The Arab Nation, meanwhile, was already busy combating colonialism in its attempt to gain independence.

The Islamic political groups considered the return to Islamic every-day living as obligatory, according to Islamic Law (*Sharia*). While we cannot say that a particular group represents Islam or speaks on its behalf, all try to revitalize Islam according to their independent judgment and capabilities.

¹ Presentation given on 19 December 1996 as part of the PASSIA Seminar on *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*.

regards as a suitable alternative.

Islam is completely different from other religions and ideas in that its followers are directly accountable to God, from whom it derives its legislation for the nation and the State: this applies to social, religious and international relations. The basis of Islamic legislation centers on the following three principles: the supremacy of God Almighty, consultations (*shura*), and equality.

The desired Islamic state capable of spreading the Islamic concepts of justice, stability, security, and equality amongst the peoples of the Arab and Islamic World without distinction does not yet exist, although there have been attempts to establish one in Sudan and elsewhere.

The work of the Moslem political groups should not cause discontent or complaints from those with opposing views: they all strive to respect the opinions of others and are comfortable with the idea of a political pluralism that gives a chance to everyone to present and discuss their ideas in a civilized fashion. During the development of the Palestinian society, it is only natural that we should follow the path that aims to realize the aspirations of the Palestinian people whilst maintaining order and preventing chaos.

When we talk about the Ottoman state, we should not leave out any of the details of its wonderful history. It is true that it left a bad impression at the end of its rule and that its neglect of the Arab World had a negative impact on the intellectual, social, political and economic levels in the region. Yet this does not excuse the vicious criticism of the Ottoman state when we know very well that any weakness it suffered from at the end of its rule was the result of the attack from the West, and that only a few weak individuals within the state contributed to its demise; and then, of course, we have to consider the role played by the Jews.

The most important reason for the emergence of the Islamic groups after the cancellation of the Islamic *Khalifa* by Mustafa Kamal Ataturk was the feeling that the nation, without a *Khalifa*, no longer had a ruler to deal with its affairs. The Moslem Brotherhood emerged in Egypt as a direct result of

attempts by these groups to re-instate the *Khalifa* and to implement Islamic rule. It's founder, the martyr Hassan Al-Banna, adopted a detailed method of preparation in order to raise the Moslem individual and the society within which he or she lived according to Islamic concepts, as outlined in his letters, which became known as the letters of the martyr, *Rasa'el Al-Imam Ash-Shahid*. Al-Banna was very successful in his attempts to ensure the spread of the Moslem Brotherhood movement throughout the Arab and Islamic Worlds.

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS OF TODAY¹

PASSIA Roundtable Discussion

THE CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM RELATIONSHIP

Much of the discussion was based on the fact that the Palestinian Christians, from the Ottoman period until today, have represented a continuously shrinking minority living in a predominantly Islamic society. Although a substantial level of discussion of the situation of Palestinian society, including the various problems of the Palestinian Christians has only recently surfaced to any real extent, it is hampered by the fact that many Christians and Moslems continue to display certain misconceptions with regard to the other. Such misconceptions and the accompanying prejudices undoubtedly pose a threat to the social fabric and are not conducive to greater understanding between the two communities.

It was suggested that putting an emphasis on the issues of faith and Moslem 'protection' of the non-Moslem population could be a new social 'mistake'; on the other hand, a number of participants expressed the belief that there should be no problem in bringing things out into the open and discussing sensitive issues. Other participants questioned whether there is a genuine Christian-Islamic dialogue within Palestinian society, i.e., one that is not only political or seasonal. The existence of extremism and misunderstanding on both sides was readily acknowledged, as was the fact that ignorance of 'the other' could have a detrimental effect on society as a whole and cause a total breakdown of the Christian-Islamic relationship in particular.

¹ Summary of a roundtable discussion that took place on 6 September 1997 at PASSIA. Participants were: Harry Hagopian; Samia Khoury; Dr. Camille Mansour; Hanna Hallak; Albert Nursi; Judeh Majaj; Cedar Duaybis; Ibrahim Matar; Father Munib Younan; Dr. Bernard Sabella; Ibrahim Daibis; Naim Ateek; Doris Salah; Shawki Harb; Dr. Salim Tamari; Terry Boullata; Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi.

enjoy greater benefits than the Palestinian Moslems inasmuch as they are generally better educated and enjoy the advantages of culture and wealth. Moreover, they have fostered good relationships with Christian institutions in the West, which often affords them certain advantages over the Moslem community, although this, it was felt, can often lead to feelings of resentment. Such resentment, it was noted, is two-sided; also common to both faiths is a quasi-instinctive fear that results not only from ignorance of the other, but also from self-ignorance and a general feeling of insecurity.

Apart from the relationship of Christians with their Moslem compatriots, the issue of intra-Christian relationships was discussed at some length, including the relationship of the Church with its parishioners. Also discussed in brief was the Christian relationship with the Israeli occupier.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

It was noted that Palestinian Christians differ greatly in the way in which they perceive and display their religious identity and in how they view its level of significance. It was suggested that the Church bears the responsibility for strengthening the religious identity of the Christian population and should make greater attempts to maintain closer contact with its followers, which it was criticized for often failing to do. Although it was agreed that the religious-political role played by the Church is important, it was noted that this role has been reduced, for various reasons, to a minimum and that the gap between the Church and its followers must be decreased.

Participants raised the point that it is important for the Christians not to hide behind slogans of fear of the future or from the possibility of becoming an even smaller minority; were this to happen, it could result in an increased tendency by the Christian population to attempt to compensate for their perceived loss of status in the Palestinian community by viewing the attainment of an Israeli passport as the only option capable of assuring them their rights, social and otherwise. It was pointed out that fear of the future and a desire to guarantee one's rights was not limited to the Christians but affects a large number of Moslems too.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY VERSUS NATIONAL IDENTITY

It was observed that the Palestinian Christians consider themselves Palestinians first and Christian second. It was also observed that the Palestinian Christians have long played an important role in the national struggle and have never attempted to hide behind their religious identity. Participants noted that a real danger exists, inasmuch as each time the national movement weakens, there is a tendency to look for problems based on identity and religion rather than to concentrate on strengthening the national identity. It was emphasized that the Christian-Islamic cohesion was strong throughout the period of the *Intifada*, yet once the *Intifada* had ended, the people reverted to old habits and started to investigate more deeply the issue of confessionalism, which now appeared to be the most pressing problem. It was felt that by talking about 'minorities' and 'non-Moslems living under Moslem rule', we unwillingly reinforce ancient themes and open old wounds.

The point was raised that during the period of 'enlightenment', many Christian Arabs played a vitally important role in Arab society, such as Khalil As-Sakákiní, Shibli Ash-Shamil and others, and that the discussion of Christian-Moslem relationships in those days took place in a far more advanced framework than currently exists, following the decline of the Pan-Arab movement.

The benefits of having a 'national' church were discussed, including the fact that all decisions would be of a Palestinian origin as opposed to coming from the outside, while the sometimes undesirable influence of foreign churches on the behavior of Palestinian Christians would be eliminated. Moreover, were a national church to become a reality, all sense of belonging and loyalty, i.e., political, social, and religious, would be directed inward.

DISCRIMINATION

Participants agreed on the necessity of equality between Moslems and Christians in order to reinforce and maintain a national laic existence. These days the general political hypothesis is based on the fact that the problem lies in Islam, and the existence of one predominant faith in a particular society at the expense of another is a popular subject of discussion, as demonstrated by the attention bestowed upon the now highly fa-

mous book of a Harvard professor, [Dr. Samuel Huntington], that deals with the subject of the clash of civilizations.

Participants were in agreement over the fact that one would hope that the future Palestinian state would not show signs of any form of discrimination, whether racial, sexual, religious or otherwise. Noted was the current situation whereby those Palestinians who voluntarily or otherwise remained in the homeland now feel that the PNA often looks more favorably on their fellow countrymen who have returned from the Diaspora. It is essential, noted participants, that the Palestinian Basic Law be democratic and that the right to citizenship should in no way be based on religious identity, so as not to divide the population by reason of their faith.

A particularly sensitive issue concerns the constant referrals by Islamic movements to an 'Islamic state', with hardly a mention of an Arab democratic state; many Christians conclude from this emphasis that they will eventually find themselves out of this state and, for the said reason, could consider themselves no longer able or willing to continue to participate in the political struggle. Participants wondered what role the *Sharia* (Islamic Law) would play in the formulation of future laws and whether it would eventually form the basis of the Palestinian constitution. It was noted that the Palestinian State should be based upon the concepts of freedom, multiplicity and democracy and that were it to become clear that the entire population, including the Islamists, agreed with this basic principle - and were Christians no longer troubled by the question, 'Is it possible for a Christian to become the President of the State of Palestine?' - problems between the Christian and Moslem communities would no longer exist.

IMMIGRATION

A major problem today amongst the Palestinian Christians is the ever-increasing level of immigration. The role of national organizations in putting an end to this phenomenon was discussed, although it was agreed that the problem seems destined to continue due to the Israeli policies that succeed in driving Palestinians, particularly those of the Christian faith, out of the county. It was noted that whereas more than 50,000 Christians once lived in Jerusalem, the figure today is somewhere between 7,000-8,000. Also noted was the fact that it is wrong of statisticians and interested parties to constantly say [occasionally to promote their own goals] that Christians represent 'only' two percent of the Palestinians, as the fact

that their numbers are small in no way implies that their role in society is limited or irrelevant.

EDUCATION

The general absence of suitable religious education at an early age, whether Christian or Islamic, or whether in the home, the school or the streets was felt to have negative consequences on the Palestinian civil society. In this respect, the proposal to establish a Higher Christian Council similar to the Higher Islamic Council was discussed. Participants noted that an unsatisfactory lack of religious education in the school curriculum should be a matter of great concern because learning about praying and fasting, etc., is not sufficient; students also need to be taught social behavior, i.e., honesty, sincerity, loyalty, tolerance, modesty and manners, particularly as all the aforementioned would appear to be in decline.

With regard to education in general, participants noted that a weak educational level would have a negative effect on society, particularly at a time when we are faced with so many other problems and challenges, including, to name but a few, emigration and the current problems within the PNA and its failure to deal with certain important issues, none of which enhances the prospects for the future. It was observed that in solving their problems, Palestinians of the same educational level were able to agree on most issues, regardless of their religious background; thus, ensuring that all Palestinians attain an appropriate level of education should be seen as a national priority. Participants noted that due to the fact that fear and ignorance of the religious beliefs of others is capable of causing a rapid deterioration in the relationship between citizens, and that this deterioration is often aggravated by the role of missionaries, whose efforts to do good are often misunderstood by those of a different faith, particularly with regard to education, one possible solution would be the development of a national curriculum.

Criticism was directed toward the fact that Sunday is not an official holiday, whether in public institutions and organizations or in the majority of schools, and that it was time that Christian holidays were discussed openly as they were in the 1950s when greater attention was given to Christian rights, [but failed to result in practical solutions]. The fact that the *Tawjithi* exams are still held on Sundays while the official holiday is Friday was seen as a perfect example of the inequality that still prevails with respect to Christian-Moslem rights.

HOLY SITES

Two basic questions were asked with respect to the numerous sites of religious significance in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth:

1. What are the positive and negative aspects of the international interest in Palestine?
2. How do we transform this interest and concern to our advantage, rather than allow it to become a restraint on us?

MOSLEMS IN TODAY'S PALESTINE¹

PASSIA Roundtable Discussion

INTRODUCTION

The scholar Dr. Yousef Kardawi began his address to the 'First International Academic Conference on the Subject of 'The Islamic Jerusalem'', held in London in early September, by saying that Jerusalem is the site of the first *qiblah* (direction of prayer for Moslems), the land of *Al-Isra' w-Al-Mir'aj* (The Night Journey), the third holiest city in Islam, and the land of prophecy, commitment and Jihad (holy war), called for to ensure its protection.

Dr. Kardawi stressed the fact that the battle with the Jews is not based on religious differences, but is a battle between the aggressive Zionist movement, which has stolen the land and driven away its inhabitants and those who seek to protect the said land and see it returned to its rightful owners. He added, however, that the battle has a religious element inasmuch as the object of the dispute is Islamic land. He concluded his speech by saying that the battle for Jerusalem should be the cause of every Moslem and Christian throughout the world and of every human being who believes in freedom, regardless of his religious beliefs - in other words, the cause of every single person who believes in the power of logic and not in the logic of power.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

The participants discussed a number of issues, including the following:

¹ Summary of a roundtable discussion that took place on 11 September 1997 at PASSIA. Participants were: Imad Abu Kishek; Sheikh Hassan Tahboub; Dr. Mohammed Jadallah; Dr. Sari Nusselbeh; Dr. Hamzeh Theib; Ibrahim Ash-Sha'ban; Sheikh Mohammed Hussein; Dr. Mohammed Abdeen; Sheikh Jamil Hamami; and Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi.

The commitment and continuity, both geographic and demographic, that exists between Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian homeland. It was noted that it was wrong to talk about the Palestinian Jerusalemite community, whether Moslem or Christian, as anything but an important part of the general Palestinian society.

The role played today by the mosque and men of religion is diminishing. Moreover, society has been negatively affected by the loss of the great Islamic scholars and *fiqh* experts of the past and their knowledge and wisdom; today, research on religious conviction and social behavior is practically non-existent. It was observed that without a strong, visible Islamic presence, the presence of the church and the synagogues and their respective militants is all the more dangerous.

Participants noted the lack of cleanliness and the overall level of unsociable behavior that exist in some Moslem neighborhoods, which is all the more apparent when such areas are compared to neighborhoods inhabited by non-Moslems. Although the frequent lack of municipal services such as garbage collection was cited as a contributing factor, it was felt that local residents could make more of an effort to maintain the areas in which they live. Also mentioned was the lack of personal cleanliness and the need to educate Moslems about its benefits, as outlined by Islam, and the important role that the Moslem woman can play in imparting high standards to her children. Participants criticized cultured and educated individuals, including those who live in such neighborhoods and those who do not, for failing to attempt to rectify the current situation. Participants noted that were the Islamic religious culture more predominant, it would have positive effects on negative social behavior, including a decline in manners and morals. Also discussed was the increase in specific social problems and the issue of adherence to tribal, rather than religious, law.

Participants discussed the repeated attempts to politicize Islam and, in this context, the Western perception of Islam and the Moslems. They noted that instead of holding conferences that set out to highlight the differences between Moslems and Christians, it would be far more productive to bring the two sides together in order to build bridges.

With regard to the Islamic-Israeli relationship, it was noted that it usually exists via Israeli organizations in the city and the rest of the homeland. The relationship with foreign organizations, whether international or regional was discussed, as was the Palestinian Moslem's relationship with other sectors of the civil Palestinian society, both inside and outside Jeru-

salem. There was also a general discussion on 'Who is a Moslem?', on Islamic behavior today and on the Moslem's relationship with Jerusalem.

Participants criticized Israel's attempts to impose Israeli sovereignty on Jerusalem, partly by passing a message to the world that Jerusalem is not an occupied or divided city but one that is unified. Also discussed was the Judaization of the Palestinian identity, whereby Arab organizations are forced to operate according to Israeli laws as if they were in fact Israeli organizations. Participants stressed the importance of preventing Jerusalem from becoming a totally independent issue, separated from the national cause. They noted that dealing carefully and in the proper manner with the issue of Jerusalem would enable the Palestinians to achieve the best possible results with regard to its future status. It was also observed that Jerusalem's importance as the site of many important holy places and its significance to Moslems and Christians all over the world should always be emphasized in order to guarantee international interest in its future.

It was noted that there is a need for Palestinians to settle their differences and to face the Israelis as a united people, armed with the points on which they agree.

The issue of Palestine from an Islamic religious perspective was originally a Moslem issue that was transformed into an Arab-Palestinian issue and then into a Palestinian issue. Thus, the deep Islamic and Arab roots of the Palestinians, in addition to the Christian aspect of the national identity, should be readily acknowledged and discussed.

According to the term *'ahl adh-dhimma*, i.e., non-Moslems living under Moslem protection, as used in Omar's Covenant with the Christians, the Christians are the responsibility of the Moslem population and should be afforded their protection. It was noted that in this day and age when Palestine's citizens are all 'equal', regardless of their faith, further discussion of this issue should be limited in order to allow greater attention to be paid to counteracting Israeli attempts to Judaize and destroy the Palestinian society, particularly in Jerusalem.

Participants raised the following questions: Are the Moslems capable of influencing political decision-making that concerns Jerusalem?; How can the Moslems protect their rights, including that to buy and own Arab real estate in the Holy City? It was agreed that finding answers to both questions would allow the Palestinians to move on to other issues, many

of which - such as the issue of cleanliness - require simple, practical measures.

It was noted that there has been an exaggeration of the problems that exist between the different Palestinian communities, including the Jerusalemite Moslems and Christians. It was also noted that some Moslems object to the references to the document given by Omar Ibn Al-Khattab to the Christians as they feel it is no longer relevant to the modern-day Moslem-Christian relationship.

Whilst discussing the situation of Moslem Jerusalemites, including their relationship with the PNA and the fact that they cannot be separated from the political cause of the Palestinian people, participants discussed means of gathering support for the Jerusalem issue, with its various components - housing, ID confiscation, house demolition, etc. - from Moslems all over the world. They emphasized that Palestinian organizations in Jerusalem, whether Moslem or Christian, should meet and work together for the benefit of both sides and for the benefit of the Holy City. They also noted that it is essential to maintain strong communication channels between Moslems and the Islamic World, particularly as the Palestinians are in dire need of financial backing in order to maintain Jerusalem itself and its civil organizations.

There should be an effort to reinforce existing organizations and/or establish new ones. The Palestinian Jerusalemites are dealing with current issues and looking for solidarity, yet, there are certain issues that cannot be dealt with due to the absence of any political weight in decision-making. It was agreed that under such circumstances, it would be better to focus on issues on which it was possible to have an impact, such as cleanliness.

The role of the Moslem woman in raising the future generation was discussed, as was her status as an equal partner in the nation-building process in general.

In conclusion, it was decided that the Moslem community should focus on looking for practical solutions to social problems, taking into account its inability to participate in finding political solutions.

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS, AND FOREIGN CHRISTIANS¹

Dr. Jacobus Schoeneveld
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Foreign Christians come in great numbers to this country from all over the world. They arrive here as pilgrims and tourist groups, stay here for two or three weeks or even less and disappear again. They may number more than a million people every year. Several thousands live here for a longer time on a semi-permanent or permanent basis connected to church institutions, industrial firms, educational institutions or diplomatic missions, etc. Foreign Christians visiting this country on an annual basis or living in it greatly outnumber the estimated 165,000 Palestinian Christians who live in this country: more than 114,000 in Israel and about 51,000 in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including East Jerusalem.² In addition, there are unspecified numbers of Hebrew Christians or 'Messianic Jews' and members of mixed Jewish/non-Jewish families who have migrated to this country, especially from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

The question with which we are now preoccupied is how these two categories of Christians, Palestinian and foreign, who mix with each other in this country, either briefly or for a longer period of time, relate to each other.

¹ Presentation given at a PASSIA roundtable meeting on 13 November 1997.

² Bernard Sabella, "Socioeconomic Characteristics and Challenges to Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land", in: Michael and William Taylor (eds.), *Christians in the Holy Land*, World of Islam Festival Trust, London 1994, p. 33.

FOREIGN CHRISTIANS IN SEARCH OF THE ORIGINS OF THEIR FAITH

The first foreign Christian we know of who came to this country was Melito, the Bishop of Sardis in Asia Minor. In the account he gives of his visit to the country in around the year 160 AD, as quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea, Melito precisely formulates the purpose of his pilgrimage, which has remained the purpose of most pilgrimages that followed. In a letter to a certain Onesimus Melito wrote:

“Since you have often asked, in your zeal for the true word of God, that selections be made for you from the Law and the Prophets regarding the Savior and all our faith, and furthermore since you wished to learn with accuracy about the ancient books, how many they are in number and how they are arranged, I have endeavored to do just this... Accordingly, when I went East and was in the place where these things were preached and practiced, and after I had learned the books of the Old Testament accurately and had set down the facts, I sent them to you.”³

Melito went to the places where the events described in the Holy Scriptures, i.e., the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament, had taken place and studied these scriptures accurately. Melito's words stem from a time when the canon of the New Testament was not yet established, but it is clear that he was also interested in the places connected to the life of Jesus, since he speaks of “the Savior and all our faith.” And what Melito described as the “zeal for the true Word of God” is until today a powerful incentive to undertake the journey to this country.

From very early times, Christianity in this country has characteristically been made up of local or indigenous Christians – today we would call them Palestinian Christians – and of foreign Christians, Christians who have come from abroad to visit this country or to live here for a longer stretch of time.

The former group, the Palestinian Christians, have their origins and roots in this land through their ancestors; some of them even trace their origins back to the very first Christians in the world, the first adherents to the Jesus movement, be they of Jewish or Gentile stock, who accepted the message of the Gospel; others are descendants of Christians who throughout

³ Eusebius Pamphili *Ecclesiastical History*, Books 1-5, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC, 1953, p. 265f.

history moved to this land. Their attachment to the land is very direct and existential. It is their native homeland, the land where they and their ancestors grew up. It is the land where they are at home. One of them, Elias Chacour, wrote a book under the title: *We Belong to the Land*, and significantly did not call it 'The Land Belongs to Us'. Their link to the land is immediate and unsophisticated. They breathe the air of this land naturally and almost unconsciously.

Foreign Christians, meanwhile, are basically motivated to come here by the same reasons as Melito of Sardis, i.e., they come in search of the origins of their faith and in order to strengthen their faith. Within this group, I distinguish two subcategories, which I would characterize as Christians who come out of concern for the Holy Places and those who come out of concern for the Holy Scriptures.

CHRISTIANS OF HELENA TYPE: CONCERN FOR THE HOLY PLACES

Christians in the first category attempt to get in touch with the origins of their faith through veneration of the holy places where the events on which their faith is founded took place: the place of Christ's birth, the Church of the Nativity, the places where Christ taught, healed, performed miracles, e.g., the Lake of Tiberias and Nazareth, the places where Christ suffered, died and was risen from the dead - Gethsemane, Golgotha, the Holy Sepulchre, or rather the Church of the Anastasis, the Resurrection - and also places connected to events mentioned in the Old Testament.

This category is epitomized in Helena, the mother of the first emperor of the Roman Empire that embraced Christianity. She went on a journey to the Holy Land identifying the places where the main events of the life and death of Christ had occurred. These places shared so to speak in the mystery of the incarnation, the mystery of God revealing himself in human and earthly reality in the person of Jesus Christ who lived, worked, suffered, died and was resurrected in these places, giving them a sacramental value, something of a divine quality.

Helena came here, because her son, the first Christian Roman emperor attached great importance to building beautiful churches at these places, in order to encourage a high level of pilgrimage from all parts of the Roman Empire to the Holy Land and to develop it as an important center of the new state religion, which was to unite the Roman Empire under his rule. From that time on the Christian population, which before Constantine

had been a persecuted minority in the country, grew tremendously. In the words of Paul P. Colbi:

“The concluding years of the fourth and the starting years of the 5th Century ushered in an epoch of unsurpassed Christian growth in the Holy Land... There were some 2,800,000 souls at that time – more than half Christians. Pilgrims poured in from West and East... Inducements were offered to those coming to settle in the neighborhood of the Holy Places. The large influx of newcomers from Western Europe did much to enhance the weal of the local brethren. Several rich noblewomen of the Roman patriciate now wished to end their days in an environment of sanctity, and Jerusalem and Bethlehem were irresistible magnets for them.”⁴

CHRISTIANS OF THE ORIGEN/JEROME TYPE: CONCERN FOR THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The second category is epitomized by such foreign Christians as the Church father Origen who lived for a considerable period of time in this country, in Caesarea in the 3rd Century when the Roman Empire was still pagan, and by Jerome who lived in Bethlehem at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the 5th Century when the Christian Church had reached the state just described. They came to the Holy Land to get in touch with the origin of their faith not so much through the Holy Places, but through the Holy Scriptures. Both Origen and Jerome were eminent Bible scholars. Into this category also fall the many monks who came to the Holy Land from the South and the North, from Egypt and Antioch. They proselytized among the local population and tore down the pagan sanctuaries. They spread the Christian scriptures among the local population, built hospitals and did a much to Christianize the country.

THE INFLUENCE OF FOREIGN CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

The Christianization of the Roman Empire meant also imperial control over the Church, which was particularly felt when in the 4th and the 5th Centuries big controversies about Christian doctrine raged in the Church. The emperors wanted the Church to be one in order to function as an integrating factor in the Empire and therefore suppressed deviant opinions.

⁴ Saul P. Colbi, *A History of the Christians in the Holy Land*, University Press of America, Lanham, New York, London, 1988, p. 15.

But the deviations were not only of a spiritual nature; behind them were strong ethnic and political interests. Especially in Egypt and Syria (including Palestine) the population very much resented the oppressive rule of the Byzantine emperors. Their rejection of the doctrine about the two natures of Christ adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD was for a great part politically motivated and eventually led to the split of the so-called Monophysite or Jacobite Churches from the imperially dominated Church, which was nicknamed the Melkite Church, the Church of the King. Since then, one speaks of Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Churches.

In Palestine, this rejection of Chalcedon was to a great extent a revolt by the local population in response to what we may call Byzantine imperialism. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Juvenal, who was originally of the Monophysite persuasion changed fronts and gave in to the pressure of Byzantium during the Council of Chalcedon of 451. When he returned to Jerusalem, there was a revolt by the local Christians, which could only be suppressed by Byzantine military intervention. We have here a clear example of conflict between local and foreign Christians in the Holy Land, in which the Patriarch of Jerusalem sided with the foreign, Chalcedonian elements, but not with the local Christians.

This conflict went on for nearly 200 years, and thus it is not surprising that in 662 AD the native inhabitants of Jerusalem welcomed the Moslem Arabs as liberators. According to W.H.C. Frend,

“Native Christians did not regard Islam as other than a powerful, and indeed noxious, Christian heresy. It could be weighted therefore in the balance against the admitted evil of the Chalcedonians.”⁵

The most outstanding example of conflict between local Christians in Palestine and foreign Christians is, of course, the Crusades. The Crusaders were foreign Christians of the Helena type, who were motivated by concern for the Holy Places rather than the Holy Scriptures, and also – let us not forget – by far more worldly interests and aspirations, as had been the case with Constantine and the Chalcedonian emperors. No other foreign Christians have trampled on local Christians to such a degree as the Crusaders, who chased the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and all his clergy away and installed a Latin Patriarch and all kinds of European ecclesiastic institutions. As Saul P. Colbi writes:

⁵ In: A.J. Arberry, *Religion in the Middle East; Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*. Vol. I, p. 296.

"The tactless and overweening attitude of the Latins towards the Eastern Christians, manifested particularly in religious affairs, was to engender bitter dislike to a degree that Eastern Christians would eventually prefer Moslem to Latin sovereignty: towns and districts *en bloc*, where the indignant 'Easterners' were many, were to go as far as to welcome the reentry of Islam."⁶

In the following centuries, it was the Franciscan Order that represented the foreign Christians in the country. The Franciscans were particularly concerned for the Holy Places and the care for pilgrims and lived in relative peace with the local Christians, although they competed with the Greek Orthodox Church, the Church of the Land, over the possession of the Holy Places.

The influence of foreign, especially Roman Catholic, Christians was further increased by the pressure exerted on the local Christian communities to establish a union with Rome and accept obedience to the Pope. This led to a deep split within the Greek Orthodox Church; a part of it broke with the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem and became the Greek Catholic, or Melkite, Church. Similar splits came about through a union with Rome in the Armenian, Syrian and Coptic Churches. Foreign Christians became the leading figures in these so-called 'Uniate Churches'.

But even within the original Church of the country, the Greek Orthodox Church, there was considerable estrangement between the local Christians and foreign Christians, because the Patriarch was not from the local population, but a Greek who for a very long time lived in Constantinople rather than in Jerusalem. In addition, most of the higher ranks in the hierarchy were in the hands of Greeks rather than local clergy. This is a situation that still exists in Jerusalem today and causes a lot of tension between the hierarchy and the laity in the Greek Orthodox Church in Israel and Palestine – as distinct from the Patriarchate of Antioch in Damascus where the incumbent is a local Christian. The higher clergy of the Uniate Churches in Israel/Palestine also have nowadays local incumbents.

It was in the 19th Century after the Holy Land was invaded by Napoleon that the influence of foreign Christians increased enormously. Partly motivated by imperialist aspirations, European powers tried to gain a foothold in the country by posing as the protectors of the Christians: Russia as protector of the Greek Orthodox Church, and France as the protector of the Franciscan Order and the Greek Catholic and other Uniate Churches.

⁶ Saul P. Colbi, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

Until then, foreign Christians in the country were Orthodox and Catholics, and there was no Protestant presence in the country. This changed in 1845 when the British and the German churches established a joint bishopric in Jerusalem. These foreign Christians were of the Origen and Jerome type, who were concerned about the origins of their faith in terms of the Holy Scriptures and aimed at spreading the Biblical message according to their interpretation. They established educational institutions of a European type. The Roman Catholics, alerted by these Protestant initiatives, were quick to follow and reestablished the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, which had ceased to exist after the end of the Crusades.

It was in the second half of the 19th Century that everywhere in the country imposing buildings were erected to serve as schools, monasteries, and hospitals run by Russian, French, English, Scottish, German and Austrian Christian institutions. They attracted many local Christians and also a great number of local Moslems who received here a European type of education of high quality. Nowadays most of these institutions, although often still financially supported from Europe are being led by Palestinian Christians. The majority of pupils in these educational institutions are Moslems.

The transfer of leading positions in the Churches and Christian institutions from foreign hands to local hands did not always go smoothly, but in the Catholic and Protestant Churches the transfer has been practically completed. The Greek Orthodox Church still lags behind in this regard.

Particularly in the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century these foreign Christian institutions caused many local Christians to change their church affiliation, mostly at the expense of the Greek Orthodox Church, which saw parts of its flock join the Latin Church, the Anglican or Lutheran or other churches. This inner-Christian proselytism caused the Greek Orthodox Church to refrain from ecumenical relations with other churches.

FOREIGN CHRISTIANS AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Until now I have dealt with the presence of foreign Christians in Israel/Palestine in view of the nature of this country as the place of origin of Christianity. They were of the Helena type or of the Origen/Jerome type, concerned for the Holy Places or for the Holy Scriptures of Christianity.

In the last 50 years there has been an influx of foreign Christians in this country for quite different reasons that have to do with the return of a part of the Jewish people to this land and the establishment of the State of Israel.

Here too, we have to distinguish between two categories of Christians: the first group sees in these events a sign of fulfillment of Biblical prophecy; the other group sees these events in connection with the need for a radical reappraisal of Christian teachings about the Jewish people. Both groups encounter fierce opposition – but for different reasons – among Palestinian Christians.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL SEEN AS SIGN OF FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

As far as the first category of Christians are concerned, I cannot do better than quoting Fr. Thomas F. Stransky, the Rector of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies in characterizing this section of Christianity in a lecture held in Rome:

“During one night of late September 1996 in Jerusalem, without notice Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu opened the Hasmonean Tunnel next to Al-Haram Ash-Sharif with its sacred Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Riots started... On the same weekend in the Holy City, the International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem (ICEJ) had gathered 6,000 Christians from over 100 countries to celebrate the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles, in fulfillment of Zacharia’s prophecy (14.16).

“Most of these pilgrims were Protestant fundamentalists. They offered unconditional support to the State of Israel and its present policies, which they judged were right over and against the peace-and-justice concerns of the Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians. They cheerfully heard the address of the Prime Minister whom the ICEJ leader, Jan Willem van der Hoeven, introduced with the theological accolade: “If there is proof of a God in heaven, it is the result of the last elections” (in May). Prime Minister Netanyahu returned the compliment. He called the congregants “ambassadors of truth.” Israeli TV cameras followed large groups of these Christian visitors who passed through the Hasmonean Tunnel and its new exit to the Via Dolorosa in the Moslem quarter – in Christian piety, the holiest Old City street. Indeed, a clearly visible move from inner piety to outward politics, and a coalition with the Israeli Government, freshly in power.”⁷

⁷ Fr. Thomas F. Stransky, CSP, *Protestant and Catholic Fundamentalists. A Case Study: Political Zionism and the State of Israel*, unpublished manuscript of a lecture held on 6 February 1997 at Centro pro l’Unione, Rome, p. 11.

The Palestinian Christians are alarmed and disgusted by the activities of this category of foreign Christians, although several groups are not so extreme as the so-called International Christian Embassy.

Why do they come to this country? Again I quote Fr. Stransky, who gave in the same paper an excellent summary of their beliefs:

"In every fundamentalist's list of being fulfilled prophecies, the State of Israel plays a central role in the case of divine actors in God's directed penultimate and last act. In short, God's prophesied purpose for Israel has not been fulfilled in the Church but Israel awaits a political-social-religious fulfillment in the form of a restored and perfected Jewish nation under the rule of the returned Jesus the Christ, on the Davidic throne in Jerusalem.

"The Church will cease its mediation of divine grace, and the divinely saved ones will disappear ("be raptured") from history, so that Israel might resume its primary role as God's instrument during 'the last days.'⁸

RETHINKING CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO JEWS AND JUDAISM

The second category of foreign Christians who come to this country and are intrigued by the return of a part of the Jewish people to this country, is motivated by very different considerations. Generally, these Christians are horrified by the words and deeds of these Protestant fundamentalists, because they see how, not only Palestinians and other Arabs, but also the Jews themselves are reduced to mere pawns and marionettes in the great drama that is described in terms of a Christian scenario, in which the destruction of millions of 'unbelieving Jews' alongside Arabs and Palestinians is considered part of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

This second category of foreign Christians is deeply shocked by the fact that the mass murder of millions of Jews during the Nazi Regime took place in a part of the world that was profoundly influenced by Christianity. They see a direct link between the destruction of European Jewry and traditional negative attitudes and hostility to Jews and Judaism in the teaching, preaching and action of the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches throughout the centuries, especially in Europe, both in its Western and Eastern parts.

⁸ Fr. Thomas F. Stransky, *op.cit.* p. 6ff.

These attitudes were characterized by the theological rejection of the Jewish people as God's people. They acknowledge that God had loved, chosen and charged this people with a special task in Old Testament times, but say that God rejected this people as it did not accept Jesus Christ as Messiah and Savior but stuck to its own interpretation of the Torah, the revelation it had received from God, and remained faithful to it. The Churches saw it therefore as their task to discriminate against, to despise and persecute the Jewish people, thus creating a climate of opinion among the general population in which the hatred of Jews could flourish, thus, resistance to the Nazi regime was paralyzed, except among a courageous minority.

This second category now saw it as its task to rethink this whole Christian attitude towards the Jewish people and to learn about this people's history, its struggle for survival, its religious and cultural traditions in all their richness, and its contributions to the general community.

This 'rethinking' was, however, accompanied by distinct blindness with regard to those at whose expense the new State of Israel was established, in particular the Palestinians. In their eagerness to assume an attitude of respect toward the Jewish people and their right to freedom, security, welfare and peace, this particular group of Christians often overlook the Palestinians, including their fellow-Christians. Many Christians from Europe and America whom I encounter in this country are astonished when they hear that there are here Palestinian Christians, some of whom even trace their origins to the very beginning of Christianity. There is in this regard an enormous level of ignorance and a refusal to see things as they are. This leads to very partisan attitudes to the policies of the State of Israel and to defending things that are indefensible.

It is my firm conviction that foreign Christians who have come here to learn respect and acceptance in relation to Jews and Judaism should also learn respect and acceptance in relation to Palestinians – both Moslems and Christians – and with regard to their religious tradition and present reality, both Islamic and Arab-Christian, because fairness, justice, peace, human brotherhood and sisterhood and respect for human dignity are indivisible. One cannot love one human being and despise the other. There will always be tensions between foreign and Palestinian Christians because their motivations and priorities differ, but all are called to respect the 'other' who crosses their paths.

It is so easy for foreign Christians to choose one party in the conflict and reject the other. Christians who come here out of concern for the origins of their faith, whether they are of the Helena or the Origen/Jerome type, tend to be pro-Palestinian, and those who come here to find a new relationship to Jews and Judaism, tend to be pro-Jewish, but I feel that both groups should strive to be pro-peace and pro-reconciliation. It means that one has to move beyond the party in the conflict one feels most comfortable with and to try to understand and appreciate the other party; when foreign Christians are able to act as bridges between Jews and Palestinians, they should do so.

IBRAHIM IN THE ISLAMIC SOURCES¹

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INTRODUCTION

Allah [SWT]² created the human being and appointed him as a vice-regent on earth:

"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: I will create a vice-regent on earth."³

The purpose of creation was stated clearly in the Qur'an as worshipping the one and only God:

"I have only created Jinns and human beings, that they may serve Me."⁴

To fulfill this declared *telos* of creation, there was a need for continuous guidance from its very beginning with Adam and ending with Mohammed. The list of the prophets include many who came before Musa. To think that humanity was left without guidance for thousands of years is in contradiction *vis-à-vis* the attributes of Allah [SWT], being the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Just, ... etc. He did not create humanity in order to abandon it!

The creation of humanity marked the beginning of animosity between Satan and the newcomers. He made sure that their days in the garden were numbered; he lured them to eat from the prohibited tree. Their stay

¹ Presentation given at an Academic Seminar on Abraham that took place at PASSIA on 15 December 1997.

² *Subhanouh Wata'la*.

³ Qur'an 2:30.

⁴ Qur'an 51:56.

was cut short and all of them found themselves leading the normal course of life on earth. Humanity tries to lead a straight life according to revelation while Satan surrounds it with temptations. The Qur'an narrates that Satan pledged to continue his attempts to misguide humanity relentlessly:

*"I will lie in wait for them on Thy Straight Way. Then will I assault them ..."*⁵

The declared aim of this assault is to bring the human being to a state of disbelief:

*"Like Satan when he says to man, 'disbelieve' ..."*⁶

Not all of Satan's attempts were in vain. He was successful in causing whole nations to deviate from the right path when he convinced them to reject one wave of revelation after another:

*"Then sent We Our messengers in succession: every time there came to a people their messenger, they accused him of falsehood ..."*⁷

The basic message that these messengers carried to their people was Tawhid (i.e. the belief in the oneness of Allah [SWT] and to worship no one but Him). The Qur'an narrated that all messengers called their people to worship Allah [SWT] without association [*shirk*]:

*"For We assuredly sent amongst every People a Messenger, (with the Command), Worship Allah, and eschew Evil."*⁸

This was the message of Hud to 'Ad; Shu'aib to Madian; Salih to Thamud; Christ to the Children of Israel ... etc.⁹ The position of Ibrahim was no different than that of his brethren:

*"And (We also saved) Ibrahim: behold, he said to his people, Worship Allah and fear Him: that will be best for you if ye understand."*¹⁰

⁵ Qur'an 7:16-17.

⁶ Qur'an 59:16.

⁷ Qur'an 23:44.

⁸ Qur'an 16:36.

⁹ See Qur'an 5:72; 7:56, 73, 85.

¹⁰ Qur'an 29:16.

to guard it, or act as a check to its interpretation. The Arabic word *muhaimin* is very comprehensive in meaning. It means one who safeguards, watches over, stands witness, preserves, and upholds. The Qur'an safeguards "the Book", for it has preserved within it the teachings of all the former Books. It watches over these Books in the sense that it corroborates the Word of Allah contained in these Books and helps to sort it out from the interpretations and commentaries of the people which were mixed with it: what is confirmed by the Qur'an is the Word of Allah, and what is against it is that of the people."¹⁵

Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH) reported several interpretations of *muhaimin*, then he said:

*"All of these statements are close to each other in meanings, for the muhaimin includes all of them. It (the Qur'an) is the trustee, the witness, and the judge of every book that came before it. Allah made this great Book the last one, the seal, the most comprehensive, the greatest, and the most perfect. He included in it all the good things that were in the previous ones except that He added to it perfect things that are not available in the others."*¹⁶

In addition, Allah's Truth is guarded on all sides against those who attempt to pervert it:

*"And indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it ..."*¹⁷

Moreover, the Qur'an provides proper guidance for the seekers of Truth:

*"Verily this Qur'an doth guide to that which is most right ..."*¹⁸

The latter verse is mentioned in the Sura of the Children of Israel¹⁹ and comes after they are reminded about unpleasant events in their past which could be repeated if they perform the same actions that led to these

¹⁵ The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary; Revised and Edited by the Presidency of the Islamic Researches, Ifta, Call and Guidance. (Medina : King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1405 A.H.) p. 300.

¹⁶ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir* (Beirut: Dar Al-Jil, 1988) vol. 2, p. 62.

¹⁷ Qur'an 41:41-42.

¹⁸ Qur'an 17:9.

¹⁹ Also called Surat Al-Isra' [Ascension].

past events. This was a warning and not news about a predestined future; reconciliation is still possible!

In the light of this introduction, it is obvious that if there is an apparent contradiction between the Islamic worldview and other worldviews, one has to submit to the already established epistemological judge [i.e. the Qur'an]. For this reason, and for the purpose of our topic, when similarities are drawn between the story of Ibrahim in the Qur'an and the Torah, the following verse is applied:

*"... there came to them a Messenger confirming what was with them ..."*²⁰

And where there is contradiction, the following verse is applied:

*"But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given to them ..."*²¹

Ibn 'Abbas, one of the greatest scholars and a companion of the Prophet, reflected on the position of the Qur'an in this respect, saying the following:

*"How could you ask the People of the Book about anything while your Book which was sent down to the Messenger of Allah [SAAS] is newer, pure and uncorrupted? It [the Qur'an] told you that the People of the Book altered the Book of Allah and changed it. They wrote [a different] book with their own hands and said that it is from Allah so that they may make some gains. Doesn't the knowledge you received [through revelation] prevent you from dialoguing with them? By Allah, we have never seen a man amongst them asking you about [the book] which was sent down to you!"*²²

Despite the position of the Qur'an, the *Sunna* and scholars such as Ibn 'Abbas, the cultural contact with the People of the Book and the conversion of some of them to Islam made it possible for some notions to infiltrate the writings of some Moslems scholars. This led to the recognition of a body of literature called *Isra'iliyyat*, which is mostly influenced by the Judaic tradition. Therefore, Moslem scholars who became aware of the problem began a process of de-Israelizing of the Islamic corpus.

²⁰ Qur'an 2:101.

²¹ Qur'an 2:59.

²² Mohammed Abu Shuhbah, *Al-Isra'iliyyat wal-Mawdu'at fi Kutub At-Tafsir* (Cairo: Maktabat Al-Sunnah, 1408 A.H.) p. 3.

Epistemologically, the Islamic World's view calls for the deconstruction of the authority of the scripture of the People of the Book, in the form it exists now, as a source of peremptory knowledge.

The difference in opinion on some of the issues raised here between Moslems and the People of the Book, though crucial and at times sensitive, should not be interpreted to justify intolerance or social injustice. It is my deep conviction that a harmonious relationship amongst the adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is still achievable.

WAS IBRAHIM A PROPHET?

The Qur'an speaks in clear terms about Ibrahim as a prophet and messenger:

"We have sent thee a revelation, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: We sent a revelation to Ibrahim, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms."²³

The Qur'an also speaks about the scripture that Ibrahim received:

"Ne (behold), ye prefer the life of this world, but the Hereafter is better and more enduring. And this is in the Books of the earliest (Revelations), the Books of Ibrahim and Musa."²⁴

These verses elevate the position of Ibrahim, and others too, from being simply considered as the 'Fathers', to that of prophethood. According to the Book of Genesis, humanity was left approximately half of its age without Messengers! Did Allah [SWT] neglect the needs of humanity? Or is it the case that prophethood is restricted to the Children of Israel *in toto*?

This context is necessary to understand the stress made in the Qur'an on the belief in all the Messengers:

"The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith, each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His

²³ Qur'an 4:163.

²⁴ Qur'an 87:16-19.

*angels, his books and His Messengers. We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of his Messengers ...*²⁵

Ibn Kathir emphasized in his interpretation of this verse the position of the Moslems as those who believe in all the Prophets and Messengers, and that all of them are trustworthy, good, wise and well-guided to the good path.²⁶

The above description of the Messengers is in line with the Qur'an:

*"These were the men to whom We gave the Book, and Judgement, and Prophethood: if these (their descendants) reject them, behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new People who reject them not. Those were the (prophets) who received Allah's guidance. Follow the guidance they received ..."*²⁷

Theologically speaking, we do not differentiate between the prophets. Ibrahim is one of a group of prophets that is singled out; among them, we find Ibrahim, Musa, Issa and Mohammed. Prophet Mohammed described once to his followers the physical appearance of the different prophets and when he reached Ibrahim he said "I am the closest among you from the physiognomy of Ibrahim", as a prerequisite and not anything else.

²⁵ Qur'an 2:285.

²⁶ Ibn Kathir, vol. 1, p. 313.

²⁷ Qur'an 6:89-90.

SECULARISM AND RELIGION: CAN THEY EXIST TOGETHER? A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE¹

Rabbi Michael Melchior

Chief Rabbi of Norway, Rabbi & Educator in Jerusalem

In order to make peace between Israel and its neighbors, there is first a need to bring about internal peace inside Israel. Whilst discussing the issue of peace with Palestinian friends, I have often heard it said that whenever there is an internal crisis in Israel, it inevitably helps the Palestinian cause, and I know that many Israelis believe that a crisis amongst the Palestinians is beneficial to the Israeli cause. I personally believe that the opposite is true, and that only if you feel sufficiently secure inside will you be strong enough to be able to deal with the matter at hand. A society that is torn cannot make the concessions that are necessary for peace to exist.

The conflict between religious and secular Israelis has always existed – as similar conflicts exist in every society in the world – but it has never been as threatening as it is today. Let me give you an example. The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* conducts a very significant monthly poll in order to gain an insight into the Israeli mood concerning peace. Most polls in Israel are not reliable, but this one is as it is done every month, which allows one to measure the changes from one month to another whilst knowing that the poll has been conducted in a professional, academic manner. The results of last month's poll were as follows:

¹ Presentation given at a PASSIA roundtable meeting on 25 February 1998.

What do you see as the current existential danger for Israeli society?

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1. External threats: | 30% |
| 2. Internal threats: | 60% |

Among the internal conflicts, what do you see as the main existential danger?

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Relations between rich and poor: | 2.0% |
| 2. Relations between Jews from Sephardi/
oriental Arab countries and Ashkenazi
Jews from Western countries: | 2.2% |
| 3. Relations between Right and Left: | 22.0% |
| 4. The rift between religious and secular: | 62.6% |

Every Western country, without exception, is witnessing conflicts over the relationship between religion and the State. In Israel, the issue is more complex because of the nature of Judaism.

The Zionist movement was not originally a political form of a religious movement. At the beginning of the 19th Century, large groups of Jews, students of the big leaders in Western Europe, came to Palestine, but the Zionist movement itself was in many ways a revolution against religion that was both partly socialist and partly non-socialist, there being different groups within the Zionist movement. There were some rabbis who supported the Zionist movement but they were never very significant, the most famous being the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi in Israel, Rabbi Kook, who became the spiritual father of the national religious movement in Israel.

There were several reasons why the religious Jews did not support Zionism, including the following:

- Jews believed that they had to wait for the Messiah to come before returning to their country. In other words, it was a question of timing and the timing was wrong.
- Others were against it for pragmatic reasons, including the fact that the leaders of the Zionist movement were not religious and, in some cases, were actually anti-religion.
- The third reason was a practical one. There are many Jewish laws that can only be fulfilled in Israel/Palestine, such as those pertaining

Because the previous messages suffered from changes and heavy editing at the hands of their followers, it was necessary to send revelation to remind people of the original message. Ultimately, humanity was ready for the final message and the last prophet:

*"Mohammed is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets ..."*¹¹

One might think that what happened to previous revelations might occur to the Qur'an. Obviously, to say that a message is final entails its protection for the same principle applied above is valid here too. Allah [S.W.T.] would not allow His final revealed book (i.e. the Qur'an) to be subject to human interference:

*"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)."*¹²

Without protecting the last message from the 'human factor', humanity would be left without an indubitable guidance throughout its remaining history (i.e., until the Day of Judgement). It is for this reason that Allah [SWT] challenges humanity to find contradictions within the Qur'an through what we call nowadays 'textual analysis':

*"Do they not ponder on the Qur'an? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy."*¹³

The epistemological supremacy of the Qur'an in relation to distorted records, but not to the original scriptures, of previously revealed messages is confirmed in many other verses:

*"To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it [muhaimin] in safety ..."*¹⁴

A commentary on *muhaimin* stated the following:

"After the corruption of the older revelations, the Qur'an comes with a twofold purpose: (1) to confirm the true and original Message, and (2)

¹¹ Qur'an 33:40.

¹² Qur'an 15:9.

¹³ Qur'an 4:82.

¹⁴ Qur'an 5:48.

to the Sabbath and agriculture. These laws are actually very difficult to fulfill today, mainly because of the financial situation, and they were certainly difficult to fulfill in the past, so many Jews found themselves asking the question: If Jews are returning to Israel yet are still unable to fulfill the Jewish laws, then what is the point in returning?

So, there was a split inside the religious movement: there were those who were Zionists and there were those who were against Zionism, while there were those who were neutral and the different camps were constantly fighting each other. All of this was true until World War II, when one third of the Jewish people was wiped out, including an astounding 90 percent of the Orthodox camp. The only large group of Jews that survived World War II were the Soviet Jews (3.5 million Jews), who had already been cut off from their religion by Stalin; from 1930 onwards, all Jewish religious activities in the Soviet Union had been forbidden and all synagogues and schools closed, with only a very few exceptions.

The second largest Jewish camp was in the US, but the Jews in this camp were not Orthodox. The first Jews to go to America were reform Jews, who were easily assimilated, and Orthodox Jews made up no more than five percent of the Jewish population. One can say, therefore, that although after the Holocaust a large number of the remaining Orthodox Jews came here to Israel when the state was born, they were not that significant and the secular Jews, with Ben Gurion at the top, were sure that this would be the last generation of Orthodox Jews. There was certainly a belief in some circles that there was no longer any reason for religion; progress would wipe it out, and although it would remain as a memory, it would no longer be of any relevance to Israeli society. This belief, however, did not stop the Zionist secular movement from using religious terminology and symbolism. Even though its members wanted to, they never succeeded in finding suitable alternative terminology that was common to all Jews.

It is very important to understand that Judaism is not just a religious connection, but also a national, cultural, and linguistic connection. Judaism covers everything, which is why there is this big discussion over the fact that the Jewish identity card, where it says *lia'om*, meaning nationality, then says Jewish. One could say that this makes us more modest in our aspirations than Christians and Moslems, who want to have the entire world under their authority, as we only aspire to control this relatively small area. Even to do that, however, is difficult enough, taking into ac-

count that there are other people living here, and we clearly need to find a way to live together. Jews do not want to control the world or see its entire population become Jewish, but want instead that everybody should find his way to the belief in the one God - that is basic Jewish philosophy.

The religious Jews who were Zionists, on the other hand, were convinced that the establishment of a Jewish state would result in all secular people becoming religious, so we could say that in 1948, both camps - the religious and the secular - were actually convinced that by the end of the next half-century, the other camp would no longer exist. With this in mind, they realized that it was important to ensure that some kind of *status quo* existed until such time as the other camp disappeared. Of course, 50 years later we are all still here, and neither camp has disappeared.

The group to which I belong, Meimad, has been trying over the past 14 months, together with a couple of important Knesset members including Yossi Beilin, to settle once and for all, using an original approach, the conflict between the State and religion. We do not believe that a division between State and religion is acceptable; certainly from a Jewish point of view, it is wrong to have a total division, besides which it cannot be achieved. So, on the one hand we want a deeper connection between the State and Judaism, while on the other we want to find a connection that does not threaten the democratic pluralistic side of the society, which entails both the religious and secular groups making certain concessions. The idea is that Israel could become more of a Jewish state, characterized by more Jewish education, Jewish values and social values, etc. This would entail a lot more thought being put into issues such as the relationship between the rich and poor and how we should deal with those we care about, financial issues, friends, foreigners and non-Jews inside our society, etc. according to Jewish beliefs. Certainly, every Jew who grows up in Israel should be taught much more about his Jewish heritage, which is something that even secular people like Beilin agree with, assuming that they are not taught by force or as the result of religious legislation.

Speaking as a rabbi and someone who is deeply religious, I say to you that religious legislation in a society is something that is undesirable and that does not work because it fails to bring people closer to religion and God. Instead, it makes people hate religion: believe me, if they are forced to go to the rabbi, they will end up hating him, whereas if they go to him out of their love for God, then it is a different story. Forcing people to do certain things in a free democratic society simply does not work.

What we are looking for, therefore, is civil solutions to religious questions, which should be decided upon by religious leaders and the community, not a secular Knesset. Although there is a certain separation, it is not total, because the Knesset can decide what kind of society we want, but not force it on anyone.

Let me give you one example of a very difficult problem that we are currently facing, namely the fact that a lot of Jews want to obey God's command by keeping the Sabbath, whilst others want it to be like any other day of the week. How do you appease both groups? Our compromise here was, on the one hand, we as religious people believe that this is a holy day and that there are certain things that we are forbidden from doing on this day, but on the other, we will not impose it on people who do not share our belief. We will turn a blind eye to public transportation on the Sabbath, and to the opening of restaurants, bars, discotheques, cinemas and everything else. Why? Because if I spend my Sabbath going to the synagogue, studying with my children and inviting guests for meals, whereas non-religious Jews want to spend theirs going to the cinema, I have no right to tell them that because I believe in God and want to obey his commands that they should follow my example. I can discuss the issue with them, but I do not have the right to enforce my beliefs on them.

As for the non-religious Jews, they too will make a concession by saying that on the Sabbath, there will be no consumer activity and the shops will remain closed. The reason behind their compromise has nothing to do with belief in God, but everything to do with the fact that there is a social value in the shops remaining closed for one day a week inasmuch as it guarantees that people get a rest from running after more products and more money.

Religious Jews have for some time now been demanding that there should be religious instruction in the secular school system, but we say no, we do not want this. I have no right to tell a non-religious Jew that he must teach his children religion like I teach mine, but what I can do is to say to him that we have a lot of common sources – be it the Torah or the Qur'an – from which he could benefit, from a cultural, social, historical, linguistic, and national point of view. I feel obliged to study the Torah and fulfill its commandments; for a non-religious Jew, these same holy books could provide a valuable source of inspiration and lead to important and beneficial discussion or dialogue.

In Israel, there is no such thing as civil marriage, and whether one is Jewish, Christian, or Moslem, in order to marry one must take part in a religious ceremony. This has resulted in some complex problems within the Jewish community. Say, for example, two Russian immigrants want to get married but find they cannot to so because, by Jewish definition, they are not considered Jewish, even though they came to Israel under the Law of Return. Not everyone who comes to Israel under this law is by definition a Jew: if you have one Jewish parent, you can come under the Law of Return, and if you are married to a Jew, you can come under the Law of Return, but what you cannot do is get married; you don't want to go to a Church because you are not Christian, nor to a mosque because you are not Moslem, nor to a synagogue because you are not Jewish – in any case, a rabbi would refuse to perform the ceremony. What are the hundreds of thousands of people facing such a dilemma supposed to do? Many of them find solutions such as going abroad to marry, but from my point of view, it is clearly very wrong for our legal system to force hundreds of thousands of people to go abroad simply to get married and there is a need to find some kind of civil solution to this problem and others like it.

Unfortunately, the ideas of my group are not shared by everyone. What is interesting, however, is that a big part of the Israeli public, including many rabbis and the Meretz Party, has said that it would be prepared to live with a model such as the one we have proposed.

DISCUSSION

HE Ahmed Kamal: Do you have any formulas for dealing with the issue of settlements?

Rabbi Melchior: Yes, we have formulas, but we also have formulated religious arguments and sources from the Torah and from the Talmud that support our arguments. We were the first ones in the Israeli public to put forward the program that we call *metapoustim*, the 'enclaves program', which is now supported by nearly all the political parties in Israel including the Likud and Meretz.

The settlements issue is extremely problematic, but I will tell you our political standpoint. To take the 180,000 people living in the settlements outside Jerusalem and move them would be impossible, and anyone who says that it can be done is misleading you. When Yitzhaq Rabin tried to

move seven families away from Hebron after the massacre there he was unable to do it, which supports my statement. One of the maps that used our proposal as a basis is the map called the 'Ultra Map', which includes an area representing some 11-12 percent of the land, in which 70-80 percent of the settlers live. What about the other settlements? Some will have to be abandoned, while others may continue to exist under Palestinian rule.

There is a chance that we would support the idea of a Palestinian state were certain conditions to be met. You might ask, "But how can you accept this in principle when the law prevents you from giving up the land?" I would answer that the reason we accept it is that Judaism has another law, which says that to save a human life outweighs all other considerations. If I am sick on the Sabbath and my life is in danger, I have a religious obligation to drive to the hospital and the doctor has a religious obligation to drive to the hospital and operate on me with a view to saving my life, even though driving and working on the Sabbath are prohibited. All Jewish laws are abandoned if life is in danger. I am speaking here, of course, from a religious point of view, but from a political point of view, I believe that if we do not have peace, the lives of Jews and Palestinians will be in danger. For this reason, I feel there is a religious obligation to seek an agreement, even though I believe just as much as the National Religious Party that this area is ours and that we are not supposed to give it away. To find a compromise to save lives is a religious obligation.

Unfortunately, the people who led the peace process were far away from religious terminology and instead of saying we gave away Hebron in order to save lives, said, more or less, that we gave away Hebron because we do not care about it. We do care about it – it is a part of our heritage and our culture - but we are willing to give away something we care about in order to save lives, and I tried very hard to persuade Yossi Beilin, Shimon Peres and Yitzhaq Rabin to make people understand this.

Rana Al-Issa: What is the point of view of the government?

Rabbi Melchior: We are not talking about governments but about religions. This is a law that is in the Torah; it is a part of our religious code and it guides us. The saving of human lives is always the prime consideration. This is the commandment of God, not the commandment of Man.

Gabi Baramki: When you talk about the land, are you talking about land you acquire, or land that you say God gave to you?

Rabbi Melchior: This is a big discussion also. What exactly is the land of Israel? The Bible says that God made a promise to Abraham, according to which He said, "I will give you the whole world for you and for your descendants, but it will take 400 years," i.e., you cannot have it now as there are people living there and they have the right to it for another 400 years. I do not want to get into this particular religious discussion, but I will say that the areas that were occupied in 1967 are places where Jews have lived for at least the last two thousand years. What is interesting is that even during Biblical times and during the Second Temple period, this land was only under Jewish rule for a very short period of time, during the reign of King David and King Solomon, and nobody said then that you have to go out and occupy all the land. It says in the Bible that King Solomon reached an agreement with the King of Tiers in Lebanon and he gave him cities. So what? He did not have a national religious party in his coalition so he could do that. What we say is that even if we accept that to keep the land is a religious obligation, it is only a minor obligation in comparison to the obligation to save human life. That does not mean, however, that the obligation is not disputed.

Gabi Baramki: Is it all the land that one can see as mentioned in the Bible?

Rabbi Melchior: Abraham traveled a lot, and the Bible contains various definitions, but I do not think that anybody is disputing the fact that the areas we are talking about here are included in the Land of Israel. The 1967 borders have been accepted by the internal community, the Arab community, the Arab countries and so on, and we have to find solutions that are practical. I believe that the kind of approach that led to the Beilin-Abu Mazen agreement is the kind of approach that is necessary.

In the Talmud there is a story about a man who owns a stable and inside this stable are some oxen. Suddenly, the oxen become sick and are taken from the stable to be treated. Meanwhile, the owner brings a horse into the stable and when the oxen come back, not even the owner of the stable can remove the horse. This is a 2,000-year-old picture, but common sense tells us that the oxen represent the Jewish people and the horse those who came into the country, who even the owner, God the Almighty, cannot throw out.

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi: But there is room for both to remain.

Rabbi Melchior: That is the concept of the Bible.

Rania Al-Issa: What about the issue of Jerusalem and Jerusalemites?

Rabbi Melchior: The number of horses - or Palestinians – has not diminished since 1967, nor has the percentage of Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Gabi Baramki: Does this mean that any Palestinian newborn must leave Jerusalem?

Rabbi Melchior: There is a problem here. Thousands of Palestinian babies have been born, and thousands of Jewish babies have been born, particularly in the Orthodox community, and there are limits as to how far things can go. I believe that the number of Jews leaving Jerusalem is higher than the number of Palestinians; certainly a lot of secular Jews are leaving because Jerusalem is becoming more religious, while religious Jews are moving because they cannot afford to stay due to the high cost of housing. We certainly need to find a solution to this particular problem.

Gabi Baramki: It is one thing if people leave of their own accord, but why are Jews – religious or secular – permitted to move into Jerusalem while Palestinians, the vast majority of whom were born in Jerusalem and have spent their entire life living here, are being kicked out as part of a systematic attempt to reduce the number of Palestinians living in the city?

There is also the question of Palestinian refugees who are not being allowed to return, even to the 'State' of Palestine and who have lost their property in Jerusalem and elsewhere. What about them?

Rabbi Melchior: If it is Israeli policy to make Jews more Jewish and to ensure that the Jewish population of Jerusalem increases, then we are doing a very bad job. According to the last census, the percentage of Palestinians has increased compared to 1967; do not forget that there was a Jewish majority in Jerusalem before Zionism. It is obvious that Israel will not permit the refugees to return, which means we have to find a political and humane solution for them - a two-state solution- and we have to find a financial solution to restore human dignity.

Mr. Walid Assali: I have four points to make:

1. I am a Moslem but I am not religious. As a Moslem, I believe in the Torah and in the Bible, as I am instructed to do by my religion. As far as I am concerned, if you say this land is yours, then I have as much right to say that it is mine too, according to what you are saying and to what I have been brought up to believe.
2. Why is the number of religious groups increasing?
3. Even Obadia Yossef supports the principle that life is more precious than land. If this principle is applicable in the West Bank, why is it not applicable regarding the settlements in the West Bank close to the Green Line? As you yourself noted, it is no longer a religious issue but a political one.
4. How do you, from the point of view of Meimad, see the Question of Jerusalem?

Rabbi Melchior: You claim the land is yours as a Moslem; I do not dispute that, I simply gave you my perspective on this particular issue.

Dr. Abdul Hadi: Are you saying it is yours and mine too?

Rabbi Melchior: No, what I am saying is that I am willing to give what is mine to you in order to save lives. No one would argue that Islam encourages the surrendering of land in return for the saving of lives. When it comes to the Jerusalem issue, Meimad as a party believes in a unified Jewish Jerusalem – as do all the political parties in Israel - but that does not mean that we should not try to find certain solutions. At this point, I would like to say that apart from respect for human life, I also have great respect for Islam, another monotheist religion, whose holy place is on the Temple Mount.

Certainly, if the Palestinian national movement had engaged in a political process at an earlier stage, in 1977 for example, we would not be facing the problems we are facing today. At that time, the Likud government was still new, there were very few settlers, and the whole issue would not have been raised. If you intend to wait for an Israeli government that will say we will return to the 1967 borders and move 180,000 people from the settlements, then you are wasting your time. What I am saying is that instead of banging our heads against the wall and screaming "It's not fair," we should try to find a solution that is fair and that includes compensation. This was part of the concept inherent in the Abu Mazen-Beilin agreement,

and although it was not accepted, neither by the Palestinians nor the Israeli Government, I believe that both sides will eventually look at it again and hope and pray that it will not take a terrible bloodbath to make them do so. I must tell you, however, that under normal circumstances, settlements are a good thing.

As to the question of religious parties and groups, I generally think it is a good thing that people are more religious. I want people to believe in God and to display good morals and values. Who are the people returning to religion today? It is mostly the Jews from Arab and oriental countries. When they came to Israel, they were stripped in many ways of their religion; the leadership was very secular and the Arab Jews were not as emancipated as the European Jews, which means that only a few very Arab Jews who came here were not religious, did not believe in God and did not fulfill all the Jewish commandments. Nevertheless, when they came here, they were told that they are coming to a modern secular society and that they could not continue with all these traditional habits and needed to be modern. I am simplifying things, but this is what happened. A lot of their children are the ones who today favor the Shas Party as a way of strengthening their cultural as well as their religious identity. I do not think that this has to threaten the peace process.

I also believe that religion can be a force of moderation rather than extremism. One of the threats Arabs see when Shimon Peres talks about 'The New Middle East' is that of Americanism, of the consumer society with all its negative aspects, even though I do not think that that is what Peres has in mind. If that is the perception, then I think that we as religious people, together with religious Moslems and Christians, should join forces and say that we want to fight for a society - but without resulting to religious coercion - that is characterized by strong cultural and moral values and in which all of us can live in peace.

In Norway, where I spend six months every year, I made a coalition with Christians, Moslems, socialists and feminists against pornography; this in a country where, according to what people here believe, there is sex in the streets. In this 'free' Norway, any pornographic satellite film must display a black slate on the TV screen. This is not a case of religious coercion, but a question of moral and cultural values, according to which pornography is viewed as violating a woman's body and dignity. In the Middle East, were we to every now and then put aside our differences and look at what we have in common, we could make an important contribution to the

solving of many problems, and perhaps, in the case of the current conflict, without even resorting to politics. Religion is not necessarily only a time bomb; it can work the other way.

Gabi Baramki: I think there is a misunderstanding or somehow a misrepresentation of what we are really talking about. We are talking about the extremists on both sides who in fact are on the fringe of religion. Many things have been said and done in the name of religion. The Jews, for example, have taken our land, whilst many Arabs and Moslems have committed atrocities in the name of religion that actually have no religious basis. As far as I can see, Arabs and Jews have lived together in the past and they should be able to do so again. I lived in Jerusalem not very far from here with Jews and there was mutual respect; they had their religion, and we had ours, and we lived together as human beings. Where did this 'either you or I' idea come from? Does one more Jew have to mean one less Palestinian? This, I think, is the problem of people on both sides.

Walid Assali: I am one of the people who believe the three religions should coexist, cooperate and work together and that religion should unite people not separate them. What do you think about the idea of a secular state in Palestine?

Rabbi Melchior: I do not think that would be a good solution. I would rather see a two-state solution or a confederation between Israel, Palestine and Jordan.

Dr. Abdul Hadi: Thank you very much.

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN PALESTINE: HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS¹

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ESTABLISHING THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT

Islamic activities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the 1970s were not isolated from other Islamic activities in other Arab and Islamic countries. In fact, they were an extension of the Islamic revival, which began in the aftermath of the June 1967 defeat and were a result of the failure of the secular and nationalist initiatives promoted to solve the problems facing the Arab and Islamic World. These activities grew and developed along with the growth and development of Islamic activities and the revival in other Arab and Islamic countries, especially in the countries neighboring the Occupied Territories. Accordingly, the Islamic movement in Palestine began to build its own educational, health, and social institutions as a means to interact with Palestinian society.

In the beginning, this process focused on educational, spiritual, and social activities to stimulate and activate Islamic thinking in the minds of the Palestinian people. The reason for this is that education and other forms of preparation take a long time to make minds accept something new. But this approach must not have dominance over other issues, since we live in an era of civilizational competition, political changes, and international developments. Thus, it is necessary for the Islamic movement to introduce its political agenda with confidence and with a steady pace into the political arena without any reluctance or hesitation. In order to give an explanation and an overview of the situation, it is essential to present a brief view of the status of the Islamic movement in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip before and after occupation.

¹ Presentation given in March 1998 at PASSIA as part of a Seminar on *The US and Canada*.

In the West Bank

The Islamic movement in the West Bank, especially the Moslem Brotherhood, is an extension of the Islamic movement in Palestine although its situation in the West Bank is a little better than its situation was in the Gaza Strip under the Egyptian administration. This is a result of the strained and deteriorating relationship between the Egyptian Government and the Brotherhood in Egypt. Nonetheless, the Brotherhood was allowed to be active in the West Bank and with the recognition of the Jordanian Government, which viewed the group as a purely social institution without any political practices or activities. With this limited freedom, the Brotherhood was able to publish books and promote its ideals. After the Israeli occupation in 1967, the Islamic movement viewed this defeat as a defeat for the secular, national, and social ideologies in the Arab World, and consequently, its members began a new stage of preparation, guidance, and education. They established student bodies in Palestinian institutes and universities as a nucleus for Islamic action, which proved to have a great effect on guiding and directing its activities afterwards.

In the Gaza Strip

The Islamic movement in the Gaza Strip is an extension of the Islamic activities in Egypt; it interacts with it in both negative and positive developments. The Brotherhood became popular in the Palestinian street as a result of its participation in the events of 1948, which were the cause for this support and admiration. Consequently, the Brotherhood grew to become one of the largest and most important organizations in the Gaza Strip. Most of the members of this organization were students and Palestinian refugees. The Israeli occupation of Arab territories in 1967 provided a good opportunity for the Brotherhood to form a central leadership inside the Occupied Territories to bolster and enhance its effectiveness.

Establishing the Islamic Assembly in the Gaza Strip as a public front for Islamic activities proved to be very effective in providing the right atmosphere for Moslem youth in the Gaza Strip. Subsequently, Islamic activities spread to all cities and refugee camps of Gaza. The vigorous personality of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the first head of this organization, helped in activating, developing, and promoting Islamic activities. Sheikh Yassin was charged by the Israeli authorities with organizing an armed organization, and consequently he was sentenced to 13 years in prison in April of 1984. He was released in an exchange-of-prisoners agreement with Ahmad Jibril (the General Command) in 1985, before being rearrested in 1989.

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT AND THE INTIFADA

It is true that the Intifada was not the outcome of specific planning or the product of a specific group. It was indeed a natural reaction by the Palestinian people in refugee camps and villages, as well as in cities. If we take into consideration the factors that led to the outbreak of the Intifada, we can conclude that the Islamic movement was the main element in this regard. These factors are:

- the frustration that prevailed among Palestinians in the aftermath of the events in Beirut, the exodus of civilians from the city, and the poor political performance of the PLO;
- the state of fragmentation and hostility that dominated the Arab countries after Sadat's trip to Jerusalem;
- the ugly forms of torture practiced by the occupation forces against the Palestinian people.
- the deteriorating social, economic, and security situations inside the Occupied Territories;
- the prominence of Islamic awareness within Palestinian Moslem society;
- active and noticeable participation of important leaders of the Islamic movement in the Intifada; its ability to influence the Palestinian street is a clear indication that it was one of the main forces that led to the outbreak of the Intifada.

Had the Islamic movement failed in preparing minds and had it not received favorable responses from the Palestinian masses and people, it would not have been any different from any of the pre-Intifada organizations, and the Intifada would have been just a temporary demonstration that would end with the end of an incident.

Subsequently, the Palestinian people in general were shocked to hear the news of the Oslo Agreement and the appointment of a delegation for negotiations. We issued a warning at that time that this agreement would create a division within the ranks of the Palestinian people for several reasons, which cannot be dealt with adequately in this paper.

The Islamic movement opposed and rejected this agreement because it bypassed many of the basic demands of the Palestinian people and de-

stroyed the aspirations of a large sector of the Palestinian people inside and outside the homeland. The agreement was vague regarding the issues important to the Palestinian cause and can be interpreted in many ways. The agreement was clear, however, on issues that dealt with Israeli concerns, and here the Israeli interpretation dominated. This agreement was concocted at a time when the Arab region was (and still is) suffering from fragmentation which it remains unable to recover from despite the attempts that have been made. Additionally, this agreement is taking place when the balance of power is in favor of Israel and when international decision-making is dominated by the United States.

The Palestinian opposition forces, Islamic as well as non-Islamic, united their efforts to confront the new developments arising from the Oslo Agreement despite their diverse agendas and strategies, but this attempt for many reasons did not succeed. The Palestinian opposition adopted many slogans to thwart the Oslo Agreement, but it did not prevail in turning any of these slogans into reality.

The opposition did not succeed in any of its joint efforts to confront the Oslo developments except for some celebrations and joint announcements. The reason for this is the opposition forces' mutual fear and lack of trust. To understand the status quo of the Islamic movement as the largest group in the Palestinian opposition inside and outside the homeland, we need to give an overview of the Islamic movement and identify its future role.

THE STATUS OF THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT WITHIN THE OCCUPIED HOMELAND

The Islamic movement was as active and influential in the Intifada as other Palestinian groups. It created a fundamental change in Palestinian society that no one can deny or ignore. In fact, the actions undertaken by the Islamic movement inside and outside the homeland astonished everybody. Some people, however, blamed the Islamic movement for being late in resisting the Israeli occupation, and some even dared to level charges against the movement. The Islamic movement was, in the meantime, educating and spiritually and morally preparing the state of mind of the people. When the time was ripe and the circumstances became intolerable, the powerful Intifada erupted to confront occupation, and as a result, we were subjected to intensive oppression and torture. This, in turn, had adverse effects on the movement's infrastructure and action.

One of the forms of subjugation was the collective deportation of the movement's leaders in an effort to paralyze and abort the movement. Nonetheless, the prudence of the deportees thwarted the plans of the enemy. Nevertheless, I believe that by failing to use deportation as a means to develop a clear Islamic political agenda, the movement missed an excellent opportunity to address the Palestinian people. Instead, the movement was content with emotional speeches, which were unable to confront the events that followed deportation such as the Oslo Agreement. I believe that the performance of the opposition, including the Islamic movement, was not adequate to confront the Oslo Agreement and its harmful stipulations, and, as a result, it became a status quo imposed on our people.

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OUTSIDE THE HOMELAND

I used to think that the Islamic movement outside the occupied homeland would be more forthcoming in specifying its position regarding what is taking place in Palestine and would prove to be a more powerful and effective force in communicating and delivering that message. The truth, however, is that the performance of the movement inside the homeland was far more effective and influential despite the restrictions imposed on it by the occupying forces. The movement outside the homeland limited its activities to issuing statements, holding celebrations, and giving speeches, which were carefully tailored so that they would not embarrass the various regimes.

By this I am not calling for confrontation with the regimes. No, I oppose confrontation with the systems in power, because I know what the outcome would be, and I know the potential of the Islamic movement. What I mean is that we need to develop a clear Islamic strategy and a defined agenda that can be widely and forcefully presented to the public. Not one of the leaders of the Islamic movement has come up with a clear plan except Dr. Musa Abu Marzouq. At the time he presented his initiative, I stated that it was an indication of the ability of the Islamic movement to deal dynamically with current events while at the same time upholding the inalienable and un-negotiable rights of the Palestinian people. I would like to emphasize here that politics are not so black and white. We know that international politics today are based on a balance of power and the interests of each individual country.

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT, THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, AND THE SUBSEQUENT AGREEMENTS

The Palestinian–Israeli Declaration of Principles created a new stage in Palestinian political life inside and outside the homeland. This agreement was the culmination of secret negotiations in Oslo that bypassed the Palestinian negotiating team in Washington, DC, which was a surprise to everyone. Moreover, dealing with this agreement and adapting to it came so quickly and was such a harmonious process that it exceeded all expectations. The reason for this is that the period of the previous negotiations, which started at the Madrid Conference, prepared the atmosphere and paved the way for accepting the new stage and dealing with it as the status quo on popular and political levels, especially when the PLO was recognized by Israel as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It is worthwhile to remember that this is recognition of an existing Palestinian authority by an occupying force that originally denied that Palestinian people even exist.

Despite this change in the Palestinian political situation, our political circumstances were shaped before the signing of this agreement. Nevertheless, this agreement did not create any changes at all in the political life of the Palestinian people or the Palestinian political map. On the contrary, the performance of the alliances that existed before the agreement deteriorated, the Islamic movement found itself besieged, and, consequently, it was forced to enter into alliances with groups that differ from it ideologically and politically. For example, most of the Palestinian opposition forces agreed to avoid using violence to express their rejection of the agreement or to thwart it. These forces resorted to the political option and relied on the people's choice. In my view, they adopted a historic and important position, which is responsible for the avoidance of internal fighting and the use of arms against the Authority.

At the same time, we find that the Islamic movement's opposition to the political settlement was stronger and clearer. While some of the opposition forces oppose the agreement as a tactical position and others as a strategic stand, the Islamic movement opposed it from an ideological viewpoint. I do not belittle the significance of this position, but it should be combined with a practical program that takes into consideration the present situation of the Islamic movement, its capabilities, its potentials, and its understanding of the international political system.

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT AFTER THE CREATION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

When the Palestinian Authority was established in Gaza and Jericho and became part of the status quo, the Islamic movement found itself facing a new situation; there was an Authority that exists regardless of its structure and mechanisms, and there was still an occupation of Palestine. The Palestinian Authority signs an agreement with the Israeli Government and considers any act that causes an embarrassment to the Israeli Government as a direct insult to the Authority. Under these circumstances, the Islamic movement was forced to continue opposing the Israeli occupation.

In the meantime, Israel held the Palestinian Authority responsible for any action directed against it from the Palestinian administered territories. To solve this complicated situation, confrontation became inevitable. The movement and the Authority adopted the position that internal fighting is outlawed and is a red line that is not to be crossed. There are some elements within the Authority, however, who consider the Islamic movement a threat to Palestinian rule, and there are those within the Islamic movement who consider the Authority an extension of the Israeli occupation.

As a result of this situation, great tension has developed and the relationship between the Authority and the Islamic movement has deteriorated. The massacre of Palestinian worshippers in the Palestine Mosque in Gaza and the assassination of some of the leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad by Israel led the two movements to defend themselves. Lack of trust and confidence became more profound, and, consequently, some attempts were made to prevent this situation from getting worse.

The options for the Islamic movement must be identified in order for it to be able to protect itself, its potential, and the respect it gained as a result of its numerous activities in Palestine. I disagree with those who claim that the Palestinian opposition forces, including the Islamic movement, cannot declare their real positions and strategies during the transitional stage, especially after it has become evident that the Agreement is a fact and the Authority is a reality. Moreover, the international consensus to end the conflict in the Middle East and to establish a (temporary) state of stability in the region requires the Islamic movement to announce its position and its strategy in a manner that fits its potential, capabilities, and responsibilities in building the Palestinian homeland. I do not believe that any agreement will be binding on our peoples forever. Accurate understanding of

the political status quo at every large stage can best identify the demands of any movement. Accordingly, the following steps must be taken:

- evaluate the Islamic movement's role in enforcing the Agreement and decide to what extent it can influence the course of events;
- work toward self-protection and protecting future gains;
- define its relationship with the rest of the opposition groups especially with those who deal with the situation from a tactical point of view;
- reevaluate the approach of education and guidance within the ranks of the movement and promote political awareness among the supporters of the Islamic movement;
- conduct a real internal dialogue based on scientific methods in order to allow new thoughts to be discussed within the ranks of the movement.

Unless it takes these steps, I believe that the Islamic movement will remain locked in a various cycle without achieving any renewal, and that this, in turn, will lead to the creation of factions within the Islamic movement and will eventually motivate the Authority to establish various Islamic groups in order to abort the larger movement. This is indeed what took place when Islamic groups and movements, official as well as semi-official, were licensed to operate by the Authority. The official media began to give them increasing coverage although the Palestinian masses hardly gave them any attention. In fact, some of these groups were limited to the members of the office staff, and their activities were limited to a poem or an article here and there and on various occasions.

I believe that the experiment of 'The Islamic Salvation Party' was aborted from the outset because the relationship between the movement and the party was misunderstood. Additionally, the desire of the movement to extend its control to the party, its ineffective interaction with the masses, and its attempt to impose restrictions on the party, hoping that elections within the party would enable it to play an effective role in Palestinian politics, were the most critical factors that led to its dissolution.

A vital Islamic party must be strong organizationally, forceful in presenting its agenda, steadfast in upholding its positions, and clear in its initiative. A party of this stature will be able to gain the support of the masses and

play an important political role in the Palestinian arena. But if the Islamic movement wants to keep the Islamic party within its political and decision-making domain, it will never succeed.

In order for the Islamic movement to remain strong, effective, and avoid a great deal of vacillation, a clear Islamic political agenda must be developed.

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT AND DIALOGUE WITH THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Taking the above thoughts into consideration and in view of the emergence of the Authority, we must learn from the lessons of the past, maintain the survival and gains of the Islamic movement, fulfill its obligations in building the infrastructure of the Palestinian homeland via existing institutions and reserve its right to express its positions on what is taking place on the Palestinian field, which is a right that no one can deprive. I believe that entering into a national dialogue with the Authority to reach an agreement on the basic issues will build a peaceful relationship with the Authority and enable the movement to interact with Palestinian society. If the Islamic movement remains unclear in its opposition, however, and keeps quarrelling with the Authority, it will provide the Authority with an opportunity to deal a blow to the movement. This would needlessly keep the movement in a constant state of alert and mobilization in order to survive. The present restrictions imposed on the movement are premeditated and carefully planned. The events that followed the Sharm Ash-Sheikh Conference is clear evidence of that. The international competition to appease the international Jewish lobby is nothing but a concerted international effort to end the conflict in the Middle East.

I am not calling for a dialogue similar to the Cairo Dialogue, which was designed only to obtain concessions, but a dialogue on the basis of mutual respect of the other's opinions and a commitment from the Authority to approve a multi-party system that would guarantee freedom of expression within Palestinian society.

The Islamic movement, Hamas in particular, cannot afford to remain marginal in Palestinian society. It is an important and integral part of this society. If we intend to bring an Islamic environment to Palestinian society, we must get involved with the people, interact with them, and endeavor to have them play an effective role in the society without becoming a part of the official authority. The situation in Palestine does not differ much from

the situation in Jordan. It is very important to initiate the role of a political party that enjoys freedom of expression and platform independence.

This forecast of the Islamic Movement's future is a loud voice from within the Islamic movement calling for a new approach. I hope that this will not be considered a defection or a departure from the ranks. I also hope that we have open minds and respect the other's opinion. At the same time, I hope that the others will respect our opinion as well.

NON-MOSLEMS IN MOSLEM SOCIETIES¹

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The attitude toward non-Moslems in Moslem society is an indivisible part of Islamic Law (*Shari'a*). From the time it first emerged, Islam began organizing the relationship between Moslems and non-Moslems. The issue was not limited to recognition, but went far beyond that to protection in an era when oppression of the other was permissible or even required. Any comparison between Moslem behavior toward non-Moslems and non-Moslem behavior towards dissenters reveals the superior nature of Moslem discipline, which derives from the clear terms of the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed). Any exceptions have been deviations from the values of Islam.

At a time when Islam provided the basic principles and foundations of belief and law, it also gave human beings the freedom to employ independent judgment. Islam lent flexibility to the Moslem's attitudes and behavior throughout history, which is why the attitude of Islamic scholars is affected by the general conditions of the Moslems and others. The drums of war definitely affect human jurisprudence, and today, many Moslems find it extremely difficult to accept the Jewish presence in Moslem society, because they regard Jews as untrustworthy enemies. This position directly contradicts the position of the Moslems in Al-Andalus, the reason being that the nature of relations is different in light of historical developments. At a time when we strive to be more flexible and tolerant in our dealings with others, we find ourselves unable to tolerate the crimes and aggressions of the Jews, which is why any calls for tolerance are cause for suspicion.

¹ Paper presented at PASSIA in December 1998.

When one's relations with the other are based on the beliefs, philosophy and laws of one's nation, this can lead to a situation that fluctuates between ugly racism – as exists in some systems and nations - and positive tolerance, as in Islam. The foundation of Islamic belief is that all people are originally brothers, equal in dignity. Islam has a clear position on other philosophies and laws, and it makes the racial and national differences between people a justification for meeting and coming closer. The Qur'an says:

"Oh people, We have created you male and female and made you into races and tribes to become acquainted. The closest to God is the most pious."²

At a time when Islam rejects hypocrisy and intellectual capitulation, we find that it approves of freedom of belief. Islam promulgated laws that organize the relationship between the Moslem and those who disagree with his beliefs and ideas, making the existence of others a given to the Moslem, a fact of life. In this way we have a safety valve, because differences of belief are the most important causes of hostility and conflict between nations. Further still, disagreement over an idea can ruin the relationship between man and wife, father and son, or brother and brother.

The Qur'an differentiated clearly between differences of religion and belief on the one hand and hostility on the other. In other words, someone with a different belief is not to be considered an enemy. God says in the Qur'an:

"God does not forbid you from being good and fair with those who have not fought you because of your religion and have not forced you from their homes. God loves those who are fair."³

The Qur'an in fact stressed the need to stick to the best ways in intellectual engagement: *"Do not debate the People of the Book except in the best of ways."⁴* The Qur'an also stressed the need to honor one's commitments and treaties: *"And if they ask for help in religion you must help them, except with a people that you have a treaty with."⁵*

'*Ahl Ad-Dhimma*' (The People of Responsibility) is a term that is not liked by non-Moslems; the reasons do not concern us here, but we must clarify the way in which the concept is perceived by Moslem scholars. To do this,

² Hujurat, verse 13.

³ Mumtahina, verse 8.

⁴ Ankabout, verse 46.

⁵ Anfal, verse 72.

we should consider the following comparison: In financial transactions debts are the responsibility (*dhimma*) of the debtor, who is responsible for returning the debt even if it disappears through no fault of his own. When money is a trust (*amana*), it is not a responsibility, and a trustworthy man who is entrusted with an amount of money as an *amana* is not responsible for it if it disappears through no fault of his own.

Majority populations in human societies have a tendency to oppress minorities, suppress their rights, dominate them or take them and their rights lightly. This is an ailment that afflicts societies to the point where it has become the natural state of things. Tolerance has become an ailment in some people's views. This is where the concept of *Ahl Ad-Dhimma* comes into play. According to the concept, the minority is the responsibility of the majority, which is obliged to protect the minority and to make sure that the minorities that differ in religion and belief are treated in a fair and just manner.

Some might say that the concept of an *Ahl Ad-Dhimma* might reinforce divisions in the same society, so it is better to ignore the differences. The truth is that such an escape from reality is too idealistic, has been proven impossible by history, and can only result in the rights of minorities being lost under the banner of 'awareness and life are enough to create equality'. Should Islam be blamed for confronting reality and refusing to leave things to the imaginary awareness and tolerance of people? Should it be blamed for making equality the basis of its laws?

The term *Ahl Ad-Dhimma* refers to non-Moslems living in the Islamic society and carrying the nationality of the Islamic country. In *The Encyclopedia of Islamic Law*, it says:

"The People of Responsibility are those peaceful Jews, Christians and others who live in Dar Al-Islam (The House of Islam)."⁶

The People of Responsibility have the same rights and responsibilities as Moslems. The following saying coined by Caliph Ali Ibn Abu Talib has become an Islamic rule: "They have what we have, and are obliged by what we are obliged by." It is clear from the above mentioned that responsibility is an obligatory pact between the Moslems and others. It is also eternal. *The Encyclopedia of Islamic Law* says:

⁶ *Kuwaiti Encyclopedia of Islamic Law*, Vol. 15, pp. 163-164.

“The People of Responsibility must approve. If the accord is given a deadline, it is void. The pact of responsibility, in its protection of the individual and his property, is the alternative to Islam. Islam is eternal, and so is its alternative, the pact of responsibility. This is an agreed-upon condition... The pact of responsibility is an eternal contract that the Moslems cannot break as long as the other side is committed to it.”⁷

Here arises a question: When is the pact of responsibility considered void? The scholars have differed in this. I am fond of the Hanafi tradition, which says:

“The pact of responsibility is broken by one of the following three: the non-Moslem converts to Islam; the non-Moslem joins the enemy; the non-Moslems become a majority and begin a war.”⁸

The pact of responsibility resulted from a desire to stress the rights of the minorities in Islamic society, and Moslems are as committed to upholding the pact as they are to their religion. These are some of the Prophet’s saying in this regard:

“Whoever kills a man from the People of Responsibility will never find the scent of heaven.”⁹

“Whoever kills a man who has a covenant (with the Moslems) will never smell the scent of heaven.”¹⁰

“Whoever oppresses a man who has a covenant, or cheats him, or brings to bear upon him more than he can bear, or takes from him something that he does not want to give away, I will defend the man of the covenant on Judgement Day.”¹¹

“Fear the prayer of the oppressed, even if he is a non-believer, because there is no separation between it and God.”¹²

The fame of such prophetic sayings helps a lot in accepting the other, which helps to create a society where all are equal, and efforts are redoubled. Relying on education and awareness is not enough; human experi-

⁷ Ibid, p. 165.

⁸ Ibid, p. 166.

⁹ Sunan a-Nisa’i, Book of Qasama, Hadith 4668.

¹⁰ Bukhari, Book of Minority Tax and Debts, Hadith 2930.

¹¹ Sunan Abu Daoud, Book of Taxes and Governance, Hadith 2654.

¹² Musnad Ahmad, Hadith 1291.

ences – in Yugoslavia and Ireland, for example - have proven repeatedly that religious belief is the source of intolerance or tolerance. The deteriorating conditions of Moslems in a country like France destroy the claims of democratic societies that ignore their role in planting and nurturing the notions of religious tolerance. The problem is not the existence of religions; the problem is ignoring the role of religions in solving problems. Differences between religion, belief and creed are inevitable, but religion must be used to bridge these differences. Islam explained to its followers that the existence of others is inevitable, because God did not want to make all of humanity one nation, nor did He want to make humans creatures of circumstance who have no freedom of choice. Religious beliefs cannot be imposed, as God says in the Qur'an: "*There is no compulsion in religion. Good is apparent and evil is apparent.*"¹³

The Prophet once wrote to the people of Yemen: "... Whoever remains Jewish or Christian will not be tested to change."¹⁴ "The scholars of Islam are unanimous in their ruling that the murder of a member of the People of Responsibility is one of the major forbiddens."¹⁵ In this way, Islam made the presence of others a fact of life in Moslem society.

'*Al-Jizya*' (Minority Tax) is a term that some would like to be replaced by the word 'tax', because *Al-Jizya* implies a tax that is enforced by power. In this respect, it is worth noting that collecting taxes by force is one of the most important pillars of modern and ancient states. As for *jizya*, which derives from the word *jaza* (compensation), it indicates that the State is carrying out a function for which it should be duly compensated. It seems that *jizya* is an alternative to *zakat* (alms), but *zakat* is a religious obligation before being an obligation to the State. We do not believe that any non-Moslem would feel happy about paying *zakat* to the poor on an equal footing with the Moslems, because *zakat* has religious significance.

Jizya is a commitment from the non-Moslem to the State, which fulfills its obligations to the citizen. It is the symbol of submission to its authority, which it derives from carrying out its duties. It is a form of compensation, not a gift, as is clear in the following verse: "*Until they pay the jizya subdued.*"¹⁶ The term 'subdued' does not point to responsibility at all, but to the submission of the taxpayer.

¹³ Al-Baqara, verse 256.

¹⁴ Al-Awwal, Abu Obeid, p. 31.

¹⁵ *Treatment of Non-Moslems in the Islamic State*, Ibrahim Isa, p.119.

¹⁶ Tawba, verse 29.

Since *jizya* is a tax imposed on non-Moslems, the term 'subdued', for them, has negative connotations. In the time of the Caliph Omar, the Taghlab tribe of Christians in present-day Syria felt that *jizya* was a form of humiliation; they asked Caliph Omar, may God accept him, if they could pay *zakat* instead, and he agreed. This means that the modern state could unify *zakat* and *jizya* in lay terms. It could collect *zakat* from the Moslems and the same rate from non-Moslems. For the Moslem, paying it would be an act of faith while for the non-Moslem it would be a commitment. The terminology is inconsequential because what is required is the commitment only.

A state is not Islamic until its constitution and laws are based on Islam. The head of state (*caliph*) is the protector of the constitution and law. He must be Moslem, and this is plain and simple. It is the basis of governance in Islam. It is obvious, because it would be unacceptable for someone to head a state when he does not believe in its constitutional principles.

In the secular state the constitution affirms the secularity of the state, so any citizen fulfilling the conditions – regardless of religion and creed – can become its leader. This is of course only true theoretically. Practically, the head of state is of the majority religion even though religion supposedly has nothing to do with the State. There are many examples of this: In the United States there has never been a non-Christian president, and the example also applies to Britain, France, the vast majority of Western European countries, and the rest of the democratic countries of the world. At any rate, having a head of state who represents the majority is logical and acceptable in societies where religion is important, but it is unacceptable and illogical in societies that have removed religion from their lives and are supposed champions of secularism.

Islamic legal books (*fiqh*) go into the details of the appointment of a non-Moslem cabinet minister, which means that Islamic society historically accepted non-Moslems in the highest governmental posts at a time when religious oppression was exercised with regard to dissenters. In practice, non-Moslems have held ministerial posts in more than one country and in more than one epoch. We read about non-Moslems who oppressed the masses in Islamic states. Today ministers are held at tight reign, and all sorts of monitoring systems have come into play to restrict their authority. Group decision making has taken over developed governmental systems. I can see nothing wrong in allowing non-Moslems to hold sensitive posi-

tions in an Islamic state. Of course, when the regime is a dictatorship, the interest of the Moslems is to oppose having any non-Moslems in high-level and sensitive posts in order to prevent them from taking advantage of their positions and working against the common good.

Islam allows the Moslem man to marry a Jew or Christian but forbids him to marry an idolater or a Hindu. However, it does not allow the Moslem woman to marry a non-Moslem, even if he is one of the People of the Book. This is a purely Moslem issue that has nothing to do with non-Moslems. If Christianity forbade marriage to non-Christians, the Moslems would find no problem in that, because it would be a matter of faith. It is not something that is open to interpretation. The Moslem has no choice in this issue, and cannot make it an issue of personal discretion. When non-Moslems understand this position, it is easy to bridge the gaps.

What goes for marriage goes for renunciation of the Islamic faith. This also is not open to interpretation. It relates to Moslems only and not to non-Moslems. Today, the laws of renunciation are not applied in the Moslem states ruled by dictatorships, while countries that hold free elections like Pakistan apply them.

In Islam the laws of renunciation are made to protect the social fiber. This is needed badly, especially in the non-Arab Islamic societies, because of the language barrier, because many of the Islamic societies are backward and poor, and because stronger and richer countries can brainwash them and take advantage of their ignorance and need for others. Arab societies are less susceptible to these problems than non-Arab societies. It seems this discrepancy is due to Arabic being the language of the Qur'an and the *Sunna*.

Islam is special in that it is a comprehensive religion. Islamic Law touches every facet of life and is the foundation of law in Islamic states. It is special in that it takes into consideration the particularities of the tenets of faith of other religions. In the Islamic state, the law is applied equally to all, as is the case in many modern countries, but Islamic Law is very special as it accommodates the basics of other faiths.

The modern secular state does not concern itself with the faith of the Moslem, Jew or Christian. It assumes that all of these religions are just relationships between the Creator and his creations. This might well apply

to Christianity, but it cannot apply to Islam, which is comprehensive and has legislation to govern every facet of life no matter how minute.

Islamic Law is closer to the Christian and Jewish spirit than secular law. Why then does the Christian or Jew reject it? If Islam, for instance, gives the guardians of the murdered the right to have an eye for an eye or to forgive – the killer might be executed, although some secular states have not sanctioned capital punishment – can a non-Moslem consider the application of Islamic justice in this case an intervention in the life of non-Moslems? If Islamic economics allows private and public ownership in a balanced framework, can the non-Moslem reject this framework because it is Islamic? If Islam fights usury, can the Jew or Christian demand the legality of usury because the law has an Islamic characteristic?

Islam forbids alcohol and fights its spread. The United States, a secular country, also prohibited alcohol in the early 1930s for almost three years because it realized that alcohol has terrible effects. The Islamic State took into consideration that alcohol has a certain status for the People of the Book, so it would not punish a non-Moslem for drinking and dictated that non-Moslems could possess alcohol, but could not market it to the people. So what is there to prevent equality before the penal laws? We punish for the public good, and not for religious considerations. This is the case in any law, and no law can make all people equal without considering the situation and circumstances.

When a Moslem kills a Christian, for example, there are schools of law (*fiqh*) that prohibit the execution of the Moslem, but the issue remains one that is debated among the *mazahib* (main schools of thought). This issue highlights the objectivity of the scholars and their rejection of extremism. The text is the basis for their rulings. The Hanafi School believes in execution of the Moslem if he kills a member of the People of Responsibility, and that the blood money of a *dhimmi* equals that of a Moslem.¹⁷

When we compare the Moslems' attitude toward non-Moslems in Islamic society with the attitude of other nations in the past, we find that the Islamic attitude was far superior, due to the religious guidance of the Qur'an and *Sunna*. However, this comparison is unacceptable Islamically, since we only measure issues by their distance from the fixed Islamic principles in the Qur'an and *Sunna*.

¹⁷ *Kuwaiti Encyclopedia of Islamic Law*, Vol. 7, p. 144; Vol. 3, p. 263.

Using this standard, we find the early Islamic era to be closest to the spirit of Islam in dealing with those of different faiths. Islamic history was not ideal in its different eras, for the conflict between Moslems and non-Moslems reverberated on the rulings of the scholars, in their understanding of the texts and in their analyses. Many of the texts attributed to the first caliphs appeared only in the later stages of the early era.

Dr. Subhi Saleh says, in his introduction to Ibn Al-Qayyim's book, *Laws Pertaining to the People of Responsibility*:

“The historians who contributed to the materials and details of this era (concerning the Covenant of Omar), especially in the issues of clothing and forcing the People of the Book to wear belts, were the later historians. Ibn Jarir At-Tabari and Al-Balazri, two imams of early history, never mentioned the dress of the People of Responsibility. It is surprising to find that Omar's Covenant was unknown during the first *hijri* century, and that it only began to appear at the end of the second *hijri* century.”

It is true that Moslem scholars have written on the subject of distinguishing People of Responsibility by forcing them to wear special clothes; in the Islamic State it was a part of Islamic politics, done for the public good. We find that in the old days clothing was associated with religion. The People of Responsibility held to their traditional clothing, and did not wish to imitate those of different religions. Moslems like to imitate the Prophet (peace be upon him) by wearing a head cap, for instance, in certain colors, and they may not like to see others wearing this same article of clothing.

To make an analogy, we say: “What if Christian priests wore the clothing of Islamic sheikhs, a long dress and white turban? Would that not be considered a transgression, a provocation?” Today this issue is no longer on the table, because it is a product of history and has nothing to do with any religious principles. Nevertheless, we find some practices that are similar to those of ancient history. Israel gives ID cards of a different color to Arabs and makes Arabs display different colored license plates. Such behavior might be considered unacceptable; on the other hand, one could say that the type of conflict here justifies it. The important thing is, it helps us to understand the issue and its relationship to reality and circumstance.

“The human being in the Islamic State – regardless of creed or race – has fixed rights to live in dignity. He has the right to choose to believe in the goals of the State and the principles it is built on... or reject them. If he believes in them he is a Moslem... and if he chooses to reject them he is forced to pledge allegiance to the State, recognize its legitimacy and not threaten general order if he is to have citizenship rights.”¹⁸

Before we conclude, it is useful to quote the American historian Draper, who wrote:

“The first Moslems, at the time of the caliphs, did not fail to deal with the Christian and Jewish scholars with respect. On the contrary, they gave them many major responsibilities and promoted them in the State offices... Many caliphs chose Jews and Christians as their ministers.”¹⁹

The claim that the separation of religion from life and public leadership eases the unity of people and turns them into one uniform nation is an unrealistic claim. It actually makes things more complicated. To conclude, the following must be kept in mind:

1. Religion is an inseparable part of the human spirit. There is no way to suppress the religious feelings of humans. The demise of Marxism in this century reinforces the credibility of this statement.
2. When we lose religion, everything loses its meaning, there is no reason to live and there are no reasons to have values. The call for equality between humans becomes empty, without content.
3. When the higher principles of religion are employed to bring people and nations together, we are relying on a strong foundation.
4. Religion is not used to by differentiate between people, they will differentiate themselves along other, man-made lines. At that point, we will lose all the controls keeping everyone in line.
5. Recognizing plurality, the need to co-exist, and the need to find formulas for co-existence is the ideal solution. Utopian ideas will remain the goals that people try to reach on the path to a better reality.

¹⁸ *Public Freedoms in the Islamic State*, Rashid Ghanouchi, p. 290.

¹⁹ *Public Freedoms in the Islamic State*, Rashid Ghanouchi, p. 292, quoting Hasan Zein's book, *Scholars in Islamic Society*.

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THE FEARS OF THE PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN MINORITY ARISING FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ISLAMIC STATE EMERGING IN PALESTINE¹

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INTRODUCTION

The present research is neither a utopic topic nor some form of intellectual theoretical indulgence. It is a realistic approach to an important issue and each word included in it - fears, minority, Islamic State, etc. - has a well-known historic and globally understood meaning. For the Middle East Peace Process to one day, in spite of the constant obstacles, bring a just and lasting peace 'that satisfies both sides' to the Palestine of today, there must exist an independent, sovereign Palestinian state. It is with this in mind that I, a Palestinian Roman Catholic Priest who lives in Palestine, submit the following ideas.

A MINORITY? YES AND NO

We start with the word 'minority', whose use seems innocuous. It implies that two or three percent of the Palestinians in Palestine are Christians, whereas 97 or 98 percent are Moslems. No problem! Over the years, however, the word has been used in the context of circumstances and ideologies that the contemporary Palestinian Christian no longer accepts (the *dhimmi* status in Islam, the regime of the *Millet* of the Ottomans, the notion of a 'religious minority' in the country). The basic idea that Christian Palestinians reject is that of a 'minority' that requires protection, tolerance,

¹ Paper presented at PASSIA in December 1998.

freedom of worship or a special status and privileges; in other words, a minority protected by a majority.

Christian Palestinians accept the fact that they constitute two or three percent of Palestinian citizens, albeit reluctantly. They also believe, however, that the numeric proportion is one thing, whereas rights and duties are another. The very fact that they are Palestinians (or Jordanians, Syrians or Egyptians) means that a hundred percent of the rights and duties of their fellow citizens, the Moslems, also apply to them because rights and duties are applicable to individuals, not numbers. The dignity of the citizen comes from his humanity and his faith, and both Christians and Moslems believe that man is the creature of God, although they express this same belief in different ways. Thus, Palestinian Christians like to describe themselves as "not being numerous" rather than as a "minority" for the sake of avoiding any misunderstanding.

FULL CITIZENSHIP

What do we mean by that? The Christian Palestinian needs to hear officially and without any ambiguity - not only politically - that he will enjoy full citizenship, exactly like his Moslem brother, in the future Palestinian state. There is no problem in asserting this as a policy or a tactic, or at a high academic level, thereby ensuring that there are no real problems in everyday life: work, trade, activities, education and social relations. The problem lies in a mentality whose development can be attributed to the acceleration of Islamist ideas and feelings and to the institutions responsible for the education of all citizens.

The mentality that emerged is the result of historic and sociopolitical factors that gave birth to an Islamist view of life: one with which the Christian Palestinians are not at all comfortable. Palestine is not described as 'Arab' but as 'Islamic', and Jerusalem becomes 'an Islamic waqf' while 'religion for God is Islam' and the atrocities of the West are said to be 'crusades' in which the 'enemies of the *Umma*' (Islamic community) are the infidels and the polytheists.

The ideologies of those responsible for the education of the Palestinian people in general and the Moslem Palestinians in particular appear in both the academic school syllabuses and the religious instruction and preaching in the mosques. The syllabuses of the Ministry of Education - which supposedly are a cultural first-class asset - do not invite the Mos-

lem Palestinian student to consider his fellow Palestinian Christian as a brother, equal to him in everything, in spite of his religion. The difficulty increases when one deals with Palestinian Moslems who are seldom in touch with Christians. It appears that the mosque preachers have not succeeded in summing up enough courage to tackle this issue or to affirm the brotherhood among Moslem and Christian preachers. Instead, they ignore or pretend to ignore this theme, and on the rare occasions when they tackle the issue, they merely present Christians as beneficiaries of Islamic tolerance or else bluntly attack Christianity.

What Christian Palestinians demand is that Palestinian students be taught that the Palestinian society is pluralistic (no matter the numeric proportions) and that *Al-Arroubah* (Pan-Arabism) puts Christians and Moslems in one furnace. Christian Palestinians wish to hear, from the loudspeakers of the mosques, the following enthusiastic statement: "Dear Moslems, the Palestinian Christians are your brothers, equal to you in duties and rights. They have nothing to do with the politics of the West. They have their religion as you have yours. You are both in one national trench. Both of you have the same history and destiny (or future)!" Such statements have never been heard, and one of the fears of Palestinian Christians pertaining to the possible establishment of an Islamic state is that it could result in the consecration and legalization of the negative attitude towards them. Religion - in the East at least - rules and influences all sectors of life, both public and private. Hence, the voice of religious leaders and their directives have a decisive influence on the hearts of the Faithful.

I know this what I propose is difficult: some mentalities have been already shaped and reactions have become part of the subconscious. The existence of prejudices and apprehension on the part of both sides is normal. I also know that what I demand here requires 'going against the tide'. Nevertheless, the Christian Palestinian leaderships took steps in this direction through addressing the Faithful, the conferences and pastoral letters and through sermons on various occasions in the churches and assemblies. Whatever the result of such an endeavor, the effort aims at changing the mentality of Christian Palestinians about their 'brothers' the Moslems. We are hoping to see such a similar endeavor on the part of our Moslem brothers, bearing in mind that Moslems represent a numeric majority.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

We aim at ensuring that Christian students in public government schools be taught their religion, despite their small number, so that in this field too they may be equal to the Moslem students as far as syllabuses, activities and final examinations are concerned. This would appear easy to do – and so it is, judging by the fact that this is what is already happening, in different degrees, in various Arab countries. But the general situation in Jordan, which is the closest Arab country to Palestine, as well as the present situation in the Palestinian territories is far removed from the goal I have just described.

SOCIAL SERVICES

This is a very broad domain. The Church, in general, and the Palestinian Church in particular, offers a big network of social services in various camps in several fields: the field of education (kindergartens, schools and universities), the field of social services (training centers, The Pontifical Mission, Caritas, The Catholic Relief Services, housing projects, centers for the family) and the field of health (hospitals, clinics, homes for the elderly, orphanages). These services go beyond the numeric size of the Palestinian Christian community, but they require guarantees and freedom of work and movement, far from suspicion, religious discrimination or accusations of proselytism.

The Church considers its social activities an essential part of its existence and mission, both in the world at large and in Palestine. Thus, it wishes to serve people without any restriction or discrimination. This is why the Palestinian Christian presence, with its religious, cultural and social activities, derives its significance from the close anthropological brotherly relation with the Palestinian Moslems, with whom it shares the same environment and heritage.

Christian fears arising from the possibility of an Islamic state being established in Palestine have not induced the Church to curtail these various activities and services, even though it fears that in the future, new laws and regulations will restrict and limit them, denying the Church the right to use whatever means it thinks appropriate in order to ensure their continuation, including the use of the mass media. The Church realizes that the freedom of movement and action that it asks for might arouse the

suspicious and fears of more than one party. Nevertheless, it considers such freedom its right, and it fears that an 'Islamic state' in Palestine might drastically affect this vital sector.

JERUSALEM

Christian Palestinians have always had a clear position with regard to Jerusalem. Their position is built on three basic points: the importance of the Holy City, the place and role of the Palestinian Christian in the city, and his political right to it.

The Importance of the Holy City: Jerusalem is a unique city with a unique character that all acknowledge. Its uniqueness lies also in the struggles within in and because of it. Historic events, especially in the last 50 years, have highlighted the political dimension of Jerusalem, in the context of complex situations resulting from a desire to dominate the land and the city and the measures taken to guarantee this domination. For Christian Palestinians, Jerusalem is the object and victim of a cruel international injustice. The present situation of the city has been imposed by force and is maintained through force. So, Christian Palestinians believe - and this is also the position of the Jerusalem local Church and of the Holy See - that the importance of the city requires that it be granted a special status and be protected by international guarantees. Practically, this requires the protection of the historical, material and cultural privileges of the city, that the three religious communities of Jerusalem enjoy equality in rights, in the framework of freedom of spiritual, cultural, civic and economic activities, and that the Holy Places be kept and venerated by the Faithful who enjoy freedom of worship and have free access to those shrines. Such an access should be granted to local people and to local and foreign pilgrims.

The Place and Role of the Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem: Jerusalem is an essential part of the Christian Palestinian presence and identity. It was in Jerusalem that Christ preached, died and rose from the dead. The first Church evolved in Jerusalem and from it the Good News spread all over the world. Since then, the Christian presence in Jerusalem has never been interrupted. This is why Christian Palestinians like to repeat the fact that they are the continuation of a history that dates back two thousand years and that they have undergone many hardships in order to stay faithful to their Faith and to their Holy Places. They consider that Jerusalem has two inseparable dimensions, a theological and a historical one:

the dimension of the Holy Places that witnessed the events of Salvation, and the dimension of the Christian community, which has constantly been present in the city since the birth of the Church.

The Right of the Palestinian Christian in Jerusalem: Christian Palestinians rely on their continuous historical presence in Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine in order to demand their rights therein. Their rights do not differ essentially from those of their fellow Palestinians, the Moslems, or those of the Jews. Christian Palestinians are not a 'third party' in the Question of Jerusalem, but rather a basic one. They refuse to be viewed and treated as a minority that submit themselves to the will of a majority that 'protects' or 'tolerates' them. Christian Palestinians refuse to be 'at the mercy' of the stronger party, which would be considered 'kind' if it respected their 'privileges'. Christian Palestinians do not request any privileges but full rights and duties as full first-class citizens whose rights and duties are unequivocal and inalienable. They are an essential part of the anthropological, social and political setting of Jerusalem, and they have their say regarding the political future of the Holy City.

FEARS

The Mingling of Politics and Religion in Islam

Islam does not separate between the State and Religion so Moslem Palestinians believe it is quite natural to combine their religious and political claims to Jerusalem into one. Christian Palestinians fear that the political right to Palestine will be restricted to the Islamic one, leaving them as outsiders. Thus, the history of the region might evolve without their participation and perhaps even go against them. They might also be treated as a numeric minority, which is precisely what they reject beforehand.

The Tendency to Monopolize Jerusalem

According to an ancient Roman saying, "History is the teacher of life" (*"Historia magistra vitae"*). This wisdom applies here: each time that a religion or a political power tried to monopolize Jerusalem, that attitude generated violence, wars and bloodshed because any monopolization - whether religious or political- of the Holy City contradicts the nature of Jerusalem and its special situation. The heads of the Jerusalem Churches expressed their deep concern in this respect in their memorandum about the city (on November 14, 1994):

“Jerusalem has had a long, eventful history. It has known numerous wars and conquests, has been destroyed time and time again only to be reborn anew... Religious motivations have always gone hand in hand with political and cultural aspirations ... This motivation has often led to exclusivity or at least to the supremacy of one people over the others. But every instance of exclusivity or even human supremacy is against the prophetic character of Jerusalem ... Jerusalem has ... witnessed throughout its history the successive advent of numerous new peoples: they came from the desert, from the sea, from the north, from the east. Most often the newcomers were gradually integrated into the local population...But when the newcomers tried to claim exclusive possession of the city and the land, or refused to integrate themselves, then the others rejected them.

“Jerusalem...cannot belong exclusively to one people or to only one religion. Jerusalem should be open to all, shared by all ... This universal vision of Jerusalem would help those who exercise power there to open it to others who also are fondly attached to it and accept sharing it with them” (n. 5).

One of the greatest fears of the Palestinian Christian is that Islam would reject this 'prophetic' view of Jerusalem if an Islamic state were to be established in the Holy Land.

Altering the Uniqueness of Jerusalem

The very thought of an Islamic state in Palestine fills the heart of the Christian Palestinian with concern about matters that he considers essential to the city and his relation with it. First, he fears for the special religious and anthropological nature of the city, especially the Holy Places and the religious communities who live in and around it. Secondly, he is worried about freedom of worship for all the inhabitants of the city and all pilgrims from abroad. Thirdly, Christian Palestinians ask for equality in rights and duties with their fellow citizens so that all be treated in the same way and are free to engage in their spiritual, cultural, professional, civic and economic activities. The Christian Palestinian community fears that it will 'get a bad deal', being numerically small, and not enjoying any political 'support'.

CONCLUSION

Paradoxically, one feels at ease when talking about one's fears! This is exactly what I feel, as a Christian Palestinian priest, trying to fulfil the wish of Christ: "Be mild like doves and wise like snakes" (*cf. Matthew 10:16*). Our fears concern ideas and institutions not persons, as a Christian does not have enemies. But if any emerge, then there should be a common endeavor to look for the truth and to behave lovingly in order to help the 'enemy' find that truth, thus freeing him from error. In this way, we realize our dignity, as God's creatures, and as real and genuine brothers.