

ABSTRACT

The Dilemma of Justice: How Religion Influences the Political Environment of Post-1948 Israel and Palestine

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This thesis examines the historical context, ideological traditions, and structures of power that animated relations between Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians during the twentieth century. Cognizant of the “prisms of pain” that have come to symbolize both Jewish and Palestinian identities, this thesis assumes that identities are in constant flux and are often determined by that which they negotiate against. Its first section considers some historical forces, specific inter-group events, and internal political tensions that intensified the early Jewish and Arab national projects against the British and later pitted each group against the other. The second section examines the values enshrined in the sacred texts of each monotheistic tradition and the extent to which such have influenced the political engagement between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It concludes that because religion can be used as a political tool of repression, a prophetic spirituality common to all three traditions is necessary for any sustainable project of social transformation and political reconciliation.

The Dilemma of Justice: How Religion Influences the
Political Environment of Post-1948 Israel and Palestine

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Church-State Studies



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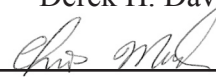
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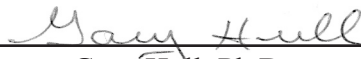
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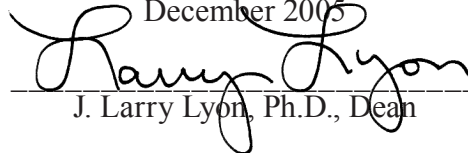


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To all those raised in the foothills of the prophets,
as enemies and trespassers to the modern state,
and strangers unto themselves.

Justicia vincit

CHAPTER ONE

Opening Considerations

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

~ Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

The context for a historical study of the political and religious dimensions of the twentieth and twenty-first century conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is found in the complexity and costs of nation-building, that quintessentially modern political enterprise. The urgency and depth of tragedy found in the study lie in the pattern of anxiety and prejudice that have grown out of what is, at its core, an ethno-religious contest for political sovereignty and geographic continuity. This situation and its human ramifications lead even the most informed observers to often ask, *Why?* Palestinians are one of the few remaining people in the world denied the right of self-determination and whose territory, twice reduced, remains occupied, thirty-eight years later. Israeli Jews, both secular and observant, are the people whose government has expelled and occupied Palestinians, despite the particular Jewish experience of social alienation and political disenfranchisement which led to the systematic destruction of over six million Jews under the National Socialist regime in Germany.

This story between Palestinians and the state of Israel and of Palestinians is not just a critique of state power; it is simultaneously a critique of religious belief and the authority some draw from exclusive readings of religion to commit cruel and ruthless acts that contradict the ethical foundation of prophetic justice shared among Judaism,

Christianity, and Islam. The tensions between the Self and the Other and between the individual and corporate dimensions of identity can be found in the biblical story of Abraham, his two wives (Sarah and Hagar), and his two sons (Isaac and Ishmael, respectively). The biblical resolution of those tensions was no more obvious than that of their contemporary manifestations.

Palestinians define their identity by starting with the cultural, political, and historical assertion that a Palestine people and territory exist. They move to the fact that every ethnic group of people has a right to be recognized and afforded protection under international law. They add that their disenfranchisement began with England's role in the demise of the Ottoman empire and that, as Arabs, they had nothing to do with the European anti-Semitism that led Jews to immigrate to historic Palestine in the late 1800s and early 1900s.¹

Palestinian definitions of their identity—as made by Palestinian geographer Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, for example—note the political effect of language and the ability of the rising Israeli nation-state to erase the Arab history of the region through its renaming of places, roads, buildings, even sacred locations.² The political act of naming and thereby claiming a territory as one's own has influenced and pre-determined the conflict in various ways, not only through the streamlining of Hebrew and the use of biblical names that were in line with the Zionist vision but also through the categorical denial

1. Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979; 1992). Said writes that “the question of Palestine is therefore the contest between an affirmation and a denial, and it is this prior context, dating back over a hundred years, which animates and makes sense of the current impasse between the Arab states and Israel” (8). See also Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

2. This effort was matched, if not superseded, by the effort in the 1940s and 50s to create a new Israeli culture through the recreation and homogenization of the Hebrew language and its replacement of both Arabic and English in Jerusalem. See Pappé, 169-170. See also Jewish philosopher S. H. Bergmann's first-person observations of changes (“a fearful danger”) underway in 1949 Jerusalem, as quoted in Tom Segev's *1949: The First Israelis*, 287. See also the story of the Arab village of Ein Houd, which was scattered by the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and repopulated in 1953 by the Israeli government as a Jewish artists' cooperative community called Ein Hod. See Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

that other names—seen here in the symbolic importance of international law as much as the continuity of Arab-Palestinian culture—are accurate, such as the debate between the words “West Bank” versus their ancient Hebrew appellation “Judea and Samaria.”³

The idea that the Palestinian territories are occupied is often denied through the use of the term “disputed” to refer to the twenty-two percent of land that remained for the Palestinians after the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Similar is the claim that the “wall” that Israel is constructing inside the 1967 Green Line surrounding the West Bank (Gaza having one long ago) is not in actuality a “wall,” but only a “separation barrier” or “security fence,” as in the poetic hope that “good fences make good neighbors.”⁴ Not surprisingly, the terms used have symbolic value as well as literal possibility, and are as important as the conclusions reached in diplomatic negotiations over final status issues like the status of Jerusalem, the political sovereignty afforded a Palestinian state, and so on. The Oslo Peace Process and subsequent summits failed to produce successful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, further enabling spin tactics and blame-throwing to take precedence over the lived reality of the issues and reducing what could be starting points for reconciliation to rhetorical tools for dominance.⁵

3. See for example the pro-settler website, “Please Help the Brave Communities in the Heart of Israel,” which uses pointed parenthetical remarks to tell readers how to refer to the 44 settlements it promotes and fund raises for. The website heading reads, “Brave Jews of Judea-Samaria (never refer to it as the ‘West Bank!’) and Gaza communities (they are NOT ‘settlements!’) are fighting daily for their very existence. And they are indeed Israel’s front lines of defense against Arab terrorism. Please help them defend themselves.” Available online at <http://www.masada2000.org/Help-Brave-Israeli-Communities.html> (accessed 21 December 04). See also Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (The Free Press, 2000).

4. The allusion to Robert Frost’s infamous line in “Mending Wall” (1914) is common in the controversy over the separation barrier Israel is building around the West Bank with Palestinian labor and confiscated Palestinian land. If good “fences” make good neighbors, the corollary could also be said: unjust, illegal fences make bad neighbors. Moreover, such divisions are based on exclusion and isolation—see David Newman, “Barriers or bridges? On borders, fences, and walls - Israel-Palestine,” *Tikkun* (Nov-Dec 2003); and Caroline A. Westerhoff, *Good Fences: The Boundaries of Hospitality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Books, 1999), 157.

5. See Clayton Swisher’s primary research challenging the prevailing view of American negotiators Dennis Ross and President Bill Clinton, in Swisher’s *The Truth About Camp David: The Untold Story About the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process* (Thunder’s Mouth, Nation Books, 2004).

Sociologist and historian Mark Tessler notes in *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* that “present-day issues must be approached with a recognition that neither the Arab-Israeli dispute in general nor the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular is based on or driven forward by primordial antagonisms, and that it has in fact been less than a century since Jews and Arabs began to view one another as enemies.”⁶ Most would take as axiomatic that the narration of the stories of Israel and Palestine (even the order and punctuation of the dual phrase) differs depending upon who wears the story-teller’s hat. However, these stories—including the internal spiritual aspirations of observant Jews, Muslims, and Christians—must be seen first in their contemporary political dimension(s).⁷

Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt is renowned for her argument that the events of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia must be judged within the context of the tyranny of all totalitarian regimes and ideologies. In such a vein, one might argue that from the Palestinian perspective, twentieth century events in historic Palestine (and especially in late twentieth-century occupied Palestine) also provide a backdrop against which to judge the broad themes of history, such as the homogenization and blind heroism inherent in nation-building, the brutality of ethnic nationalism, even the racism of religious nationalisms.

Indeed, Hannah Arendt addressed the reality of the Jewish state being constructed in Israel in her 1946 analysis of the writings of Leon Pinsker’s *Auto-Emancipation* (published in 1882) and Theodore Herzl’s *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution to the Jewish Question* (published in 1898). Arendt writes:

Some of the Zionist leaders pretend to believe that the Jews can maintain themselves in Palestine against the whole world and that they themselves can persevere in claiming everything or nothing against everybody and everything. However, behind this spurious

6. Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1.

7. See Paul Tillich, *Political Expectation* (NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971).

optimism lurks a despair of everything and a genuine readiness for suicide that can become extremely dangerous should they grow to be the mood and atmosphere of Palestinian politics. There is nothing in Herzlian Zionism that could act as a check on this; on the contrary, the utopian and ideological elements with which he injected the new Jewish will to political action are only too likely to lead the Jews out of reality once more—and out of the sphere of political action.⁸

For both Palestinians and Israelis, a broad historical perspective is mandatory—not only to understand the collective memory influencing each group and subgroup’s day-to-day actions, but most importantly—as Arendt concluded—to provide the foundation for political action needed to end the conflict and to hold the methods of that resolution accountable to their lived reality.

The rise of religious militancy as a response to political intransigence must also be seen in its historical context. Religious scholar Karen Armstrong argues that, “In the past, millennial movements often became more religious when conventional politics failed. So too in the Middle East. After the Six Day War of 1967, when nationalism and socialism seemed to have brought only humiliation and defeat, there was a revival of religious politics in the Arab world.”⁹ Armstrong notes that the Islamist parties finally emerged in 1987 despite Palestinians’ generally moderate (or secular) political/religious orientation and their initial patience that the ordinary political process would come through for them.

As Chapter Two addresses, the land of Palestine was governed by at least five outside powers during the twentieth century, starting with the imperial Ottoman Turks and British Mandate government, followed by the governorship of the West Bank and Jerusalem by Jordan and Gaza by Egypt between 1948 and 1967, and culminating in

8. Hannah Arendt, “The Jewish State: Fifty Years After—Where Have Herzl’s Politics Led? (1946), reproduced in *Zionism: The Dream and the Reality, A Jewish Critique*, Gary V. Smith, ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 66.

9. Karen Armstrong, “Our role in the terror,” *The Guardian* (18 September 2003), at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1044413,00.html> (accessed 31 October 2003). See also Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Ray Takeyh’s book *The Receding Shadow of the Prophet: The Rise and Fall of Radical Political Islam* (Praeger, 2004). They argue that the integration and economic stabilization of Eastern European religious minorities reduce the relevance of radical fringe movements.

Israel's annexation by force of the same regions in 1967, until its partial withdrawal from the urban centers in the West Bank during the 1990s. Leaving aside the additional, albeit divergent, interests of Syria and the United States on the territory, this pattern of political domination is the backdrop against which Palestinian nationalism emerged in the early 1900s if not before. It also provides insight as to why the demand for recognition of Palestinian identity, no less than of the suffering Palestinians have endured, is so deeply-seeded.

The religious context against which this political history has unfolded must not be flattened into a universal or one-sided manifestation of religious extremism. That is to say that to blame Islam for the narrow, exclusive reading of it claimed as justification for "suicide bombings" misses the point—such actions are not essentially or characteristically Islamic or Muslim. Such instances are responses to the compounded, destitute socio-political conditions in which many Palestinians (especially refugees) find themselves, whether the attacker is persuaded to do so by his own economic desperation, retaliation for family members killed by the enemy government, or what can only be called brainwashing by a religious enclave devoid of mediating influences, historical appreciation, and independent thought. The support that religious communities give to the families of such opposition members, whatever the moral bankruptcy of the individual's action against his perceived enemy, is an additional challenge as religious leaders struggle to find a constructive praxis in which religion is a constructive platform for liberation under the weight of occupation. The reasons and degree to which "political Islam" is actually a factor in the conflict is thus a vexing consideration, given the outsider status of those who claim it.

The effects of the protracted conflict—which began during the British Mandate, came to a head in the 1947-48 Arab-Israeli War, and deepened in the Six-Day War of 1967—must not overshadow or be confused with the causes of violence. For example, as I argue below, the rise of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood was a *reaction* to the

reigning political forces within the Palestinian political elite. Similarly, the Jewish fundamentalist who assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 was reacting to what he considered a betrayal of his rights to the land as a Jew. Such are examples of *internal* reactions directed first at the intransigence of one's own, rather than the aggression of the other. Both points are important in charting a path toward a political activism in the name of religion that does not lead to violence, which is the broader viewpoint this study intends. We will return to the role of religion in the conflict by looking at how such can be held in check by a countervailing, non-violent critique of power from a specifically and internally religious point of view.

Simply put, the region is a case-study in religious nationalism and ideological conflict, within Jewish as much as Arab societies.¹⁰ Discussion of Israel's extrajudicial assassinations, midnight raids, disproportional seizures of property, and house demolitions which the Israeli military regularly inflicts on Palestinians living under military rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories seems exaggerated, if comprehensible, at the apex of sympathy toward Jews in the West. Similarly, the atrocities and expulsion of non-Jewish Arabs that Jewish immigrants and soldiers committed during the 1948 War at Deir Yassin, Walid Salib, Ein Houd, and elsewhere seem incomprehensible if conducted by a country established on the liberal values of a European democracy. Indeed, the contradictions between liberal democratic theory and Israel's *de facto* discrimination against non-European Jews and Arabs, whether they are now considered Israeli citizens or not, has changed the landscape of Israeli democratic theory.¹¹

10. See in particular Rosemary Radford Ruether and Herman Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1989). See also the writings of Karen Armstrong, especially her *Jerusalem* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1997).

11. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Jeremy Allouche, "The Oriental Communities in Israel, 1948-2003," a dissertation for the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva (2003).

Such has led contemporary Jewish thinkers in Israel and in the United States—still the largest concentration of Jews in the world—to rethink Zionism and openly contest the militant status quo.¹² In doing so, they reclaim the message of early critics of Zionism by reclaiming the prophetic tradition within Judaism and by reconceptualizing what it means to be Jewish in light of Israeli empowerment and racist policies against the Palestinians.¹³

With the Palestinian uprisings and changes within Israeli and American Jewish thought, the voices emerging at the opening of the twenty-first century push through the rhetoric of power, shown time and again to lead toward more violence. They persuade their listeners with a compassion that holds their respective societies accountable to their own, internal standards of justice. This group—including journalists Amira Hass and Patrick Seale; post-Holocaust Jewish scholars Marc Ellis, Sara Roy, and Jacqueline Rose; Palestinian critics Edward Said and Hisham Sharabi; non-Zionist Israeli historians Israel Shahak, Ilan Pappé, Uri Davis, and others; American Catholic feminist liberation theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether; Protestant scholars and political activists Donald Wagner, Mitri Raheb, and Naim Ateek; and many others like British professor of cultural history Howard Caygill and American professor of religious studies Mark Chmiel—expands the boundaries of conscience and justice for their respective traditions as much as the international community at large.

The role religion is to play in creating the national collective presents a broad challenge to both the Palestinian and Israeli governments. This challenge is particularly notable within the respective national communities, more than toward each other. For example, Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi—a Palestinian Christian, elected representative of

12. For example, see Steven Rosenthal, *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2001); *The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent*, ed. by RoAne Carey and Anthony Lewis (The New Press, 2002); and *Zionism: The Dream and the Reality*, *ibid.*

13. Marc H. Ellis, *Unholy Alliance: Religion and Atrocity in Our Time* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 1-41.

Jerusalem to the Palestinian National Authority (PA), and the former spokeswoman for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) during the Oslo Peace Process—was asked about her long-standing disagreements with the late Palestinian Prime Minister Yasser Arafat, a Muslim. In particular, she was asked if such was over the alleged poor treatment of Christians by Muslims within the Palestinian Authority. She responded, “Quite the contrary. Arafat was much more conscious of supporting the Christians than I was, because I don’t look at people on the basis of their faith or their religion. I believe in separation of church and state.”¹⁴

Since the 1980s, the Palestinian Authority has declared that such a sovereign state would be procedurally secular and culturally tolerant for all persons who live within its territorial boundaries. Yet the ineffective compromises it made toward this end during the 1990s brought about a different kind of Palestinian nationalism after the demise of the Oslo Peace Process, one more aggressive in its use of Islam as a unifying counterpoint to the passive and corrupt plurality of the Palestinian establishment.¹⁵ The Muslim backlash against the passivity of the Palestinian Authority’s leadership, which in many ways motivates the open violence of the current al-Aqsa Intifada, raises questions about the dynamic between religious authority and procedural secularity within Palestinian public thought.

By the same token, as noted above, the experiences of Arab Israelis and Sephardic Jews increasingly point to the need for the same to be asked of Israel, that it be procedurally secular and culturally tolerant for all persons within its territorial boundary.¹⁶ The 1994 massacre of 27 Muslim men in prayer by a religious right-wing

14. “The Cause and the Effects: Veteran Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi on Arafat, Abbas, Bush, democracy, and suicide attacks,” interviewed by Ruthie Blum, *The International Jerusalem Post* (31 Dec. 2004), 9.

15. Beverly Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, “Elusive Ingredient: Hamas and the Peace Project,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 132, no. 23 (Summer 2004), 39-52.

16. See *Being Israeli* and *The Oriental Communities*, *ibid.*

Hebron settler, the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by a Jewish law student during a peace rally, and the largely positive public opinion in Israel regarding the 2004 assassinations of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and his successor, pediatrician and politician Abd Al-Aziz al-Rantisi, are further evidence that the struggle between religious authority and procedural secularity is just as present if not more vitriolic within Israel.

This use of religion to legitimate racism, violence, and murder is not new—one need only to consider the Crusades, the Moorish conquest of Spain, the Spanish Inquisition against Muslims and Jews, Christian acquiescence in Nazi Germany and the theological origins of “manifest destiny” in apartheid South Africa.¹⁷ Yet upon closer evaluation—and evaluation in a way only possible when the daily realities and internal political dynamics are seen through the lens of a broad historical perspective—the use of suicide bombers as political tools is not irrational or self-annihilating when seen in their historical context. Their use is caused by a context of psychological trauma, a popular desire to defend one’s self and one’s people, a political need to assert their political legitimacy over other political groups, and a religious desire to defend justice as they see it. In Ashrawi’s words, “Palestinian children don’t have to learn about violence from textbooks or TV. All they have to do is watch the news. . . [or] live in an area that is bombed or shelled or where their parents are arrested or beaten up.”¹⁸

Thus, on the other hand, that devout young Muslim men and women go to the length of killing themselves and harming others in the name of Islam seems equally illogical, especially for those who understand Islam as a house of salaam—that is,

17. For a discussion on the relationship and structural overlaps between South Africa and Israel, see Mustafa Mari’s “Negotiating Human Rights in Peace Processes: The Lessons of South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Palestinian-Israeli Situations,” Ph.D. diss. (University of Ulster, 2001); and Breyten Bretenbach, “You Won’t Break Them: A Leading South African Writer’s Passionate Open Letter to Ariel Sharon,” *The London Guardian* (13 April 2002), at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/comment/0,10551,683631,00.html> (accessed 3 July 2002).

18. “The Cause and the Effects,” *ibid.*

wholeness, peace, and divine order. Such raises serious questions about Muslims' conception of God and the role humans play in God's plan for the world. It also forces observers to ask about the causes of violence, and the legitimacy of the means used to struggle against a perceived enemy or unjust situation. Too often the complexity and virtue of *jihad* is oversimplified in non-Muslims' (and poorly educated Muslims') perception of the sacred struggle, both individual and corporate, toward righteousness and a just society, which the Prophet Mohammed instilled in his followers.¹⁹ As Karen Armstrong points out in her seminal study of fundamentalism, it is only inside the historical narrative of modernity that one can understand the internal spectrum of debate over power and authority within Islam, like the other major religious traditions.²⁰

It is the nature of identity politics to exhibit a subtle tension between the themes of peculiarity and commonality, empowerment and victimization.²¹ More circuitous is the attempt to understand contemporary Jewish identity—is Jewishness an ethnicity or a religion, a culture or an ideology? This tension has provided creative resources for Jews in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, in their process of acculturating into non-Jewish societies, or assimilating without losing their unique voice, memory, and vision. The problem of identity that Palestinians face, and through which they confront Israel, is what to do when the continuity of one national and cultural narrative is seen to be the denigration of another, when that “other” identity has just as much historical claim to the territory in question.²² How can a “Jewish democracy” be established unless

19. For a very informative analysis of the concept of “jihad,” see Harold Coward’s discussion of the four levels of “jihad” in *Pluralism: A Challenge to World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 46.

20. Karen Armstrong, *Battle for God* (NY: Knopf Publishing Group, 2000).

21. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). See also “Identity Politics,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (18 July 2002), at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity_politics (accessed 4 Feb 2003).

22. Tillich, 41. He argues that such a “radical criticism” is a stage of maturity inherent in every great religion.

the autonomy and self-determination of the non-Jewish community within its territorial boundaries is controlled? Such an ethnically-based state could only be considered democratic if it is not challenged by the pluralistic reality of non-Jews.²³

As the reader will likely note, this thesis takes a Palestinian perspective of the events and effects of the twentieth-century conflict between Israelis and Palestinians for one main reason: the relationship between Israel and Palestine is imbalanced with Israel retaining a vastly greater military might and persuasive power than Palestinians, who have neither an official military nor diplomatic recognition by most countries in the world, especially the United States. While the main concern of this thesis is how to create a viable path in which Israelis and Palestinians can live together and separately, the more important question is how to balance the power dynamic between them so as to transform the ways of thinking that lead both sides toward territorialism, social exclusion, economic dependence, militant internal backlashes, and a general disregard for the complex humanity of the “other.”

To demonstrate this imbalance, one need only read to read Palestinian memoirs and interviews, or talk to Palestinians directly. As Jewish political scientist and oral historian Wendy Pearlman writes in *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada*, “There is an imperative. . .for each side to hear the other side express itself in its own terms.”²⁴ She recognizes that in response to the stories of Palestinian suffering, some may respond, “Yes, but Israelis have suffered, too” and “given the suicide bombings, Israel must act to defend itself.” She responds to each assertion: “They too will be absolutely right and they too will have missed the point. These interviews paint a portrait of the kind of political and societal context that nourishes extremism. Anyone

23. Among the books seeking to maintain the narrative of Palestinian identity is Wendy Pearlman’s *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada*, with Laura Junka (NY: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2003).

24. Pearlman, 27.

who reads them should appreciate why making Palestinians miserable is not a viable counter-terrorism policy.”²⁵

Jewish and Palestinian histories are indelibly tied together due to the events of the second half of the twentieth century, yet their collective memories draw on events that preceded the creation of Israel in 1948 and are incomparable. This thesis challenges the foundation and exclusiveness of identity-based politics. It contends that a secular state apparatus is needed in both Israel and Palestine, which will protect the particularity of all respective religious and ethnic minorities while providing a common body politic in which the particular sufferings of the twentieth century can be openly acknowledged and dealt with. Even the recent events influencing their collective memories demonstrate significant differences. In particular, Israel is an occupying force with a military force and nuclear arsenal that no Arab nation approaches, let alone Palestinians. With the protection and support of the United States, it dominates the reality of Palestinians at both local and diplomatic levels. Separately, Israel is a complex, culturally mixed society fashioned out of the “melting-pot process” whereby the Jewish Diaspora was led to “return” to Israel as the modern “Zion.” In contrast, Palestinian society is largely homogenous—its Christian minority having dwindled below two percent of the population—with its people still emigrating outward away from the homeland, exiled in the Diaspora under both Arab and non-Arab host governments.

Religious sensibilities as addressed here are an expression of one’s life experience and worldview. They are also influenced by one’s historical and social context. Broad questions remain. For example, for whom does political negotiation exist? What is the true nature of religion? Is democracy a true safeguard against the tyranny of the majority? What do liberal democratic theories say when the metaphysical aspects of a religious minority’s worldview preclude its tolerance toward other minority groups?

25. Pearlman, *ibid.*

Palestinian identity represents another subliminal tension. Broadly speaking, it is that of the “subaltern,” or those whose stories have been overlooked and marginalized in history to the point that over time they seem to have never existed.²⁶ The problem of the subaltern is in part how to stand up for one’s own story, to tell it in the midst of preconceptions and prejudice, and to have its particularity recognized without such becoming itself repressive or essentializing. While post-colonial history and literary criticism during the twentieth century has exposed and validated many of these hidden stories, the problem of the “subaltern” remains to the extent that identity and ideology are based on exclusion and domination, or the “colonization of the mind” (a phrase coined by Franz Fanon).

If this thesis is weighted on the side of Palestinian history for the reasons above, it is not done so unknowingly or without historical reason. It finds instruction in the words of the late Palestinian-American literary critic Edward Said, who located the most tangible, political expression of this internal struggle in Palestine, as well as Ireland and South Africa.²⁷ For Said, a “colonization” of the Palestinian mind was found in the poor strategizing and visionless leadership of the PLO. “The sense of capitulation toward Israel and the United States that replaced defiant ‘non-recognition’ and is now so prevalent among our political elites, derives in the end from an absence of self-confidence and a spirit of passivity. . . . Moreover, rejectionism and servility are in the end little more than a reproduction of the colonial relationship between a weaker and a stronger culture.”²⁸ As Said and others note, Palestinians must begin to think differently.

26. See Antonio Gramsci’s *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, transl. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, 323-343; and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (NY: Routledge, 1995), 203-236.

27. Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. with intro by Gauri Viswanathan (NY: Vintage Books, 2001), 131-132.

28. Edward W. Said, “Decolonizing the Mind,” *Al-Hayat* (16 September 1994). Reproduced in his *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process*, with preface by Christopher Hitchens (New York: Vintage Books, 1993, 1995), 98.

“What we must have in other words are decolonized minds. . .for even if one has 40,000 policemen and bureaucrats, and perhaps even a little state, the general condition remains enslavement and unawareness.”²⁹

Just as European Jews took their fate into their own hands by immigrating to historic Palestine, whether for spiritual or national reasons, Muslims in Palestine have also faced existential changes during the twentieth century, for example in the suppression of modern Islamic reformists and the subsequent radicalization of the “Islamists.” While inter-Arab and even inter-Palestinian relations remain tense, Christian theologians Naim Ateek and Rosemary Radford Ruether reiterate that a just peace will remain elusive without a normalization of Palestinian society, which is dependent upon a sovereign and secular Palestinian state.

This study is based on the idea that if the politics of identity—founded as they often are on perceptions of one’s oppression—are not to become divisive after occupation ends and the immediate conflict subsides, a re-conceptualization of “self” as much as “society” will be necessary for all persons involved. To such an end, we attempt herein a concurrent reading of the interrelated history of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in historic Palestine during the second half of the twentieth-century.

The first section of this thesis surveys the major historical events and political issues which have resulted in the protracted, internecine conflicts among Israelis, among Palestinians, and between Israelis and Palestinians. The second portion of this thesis considers the political trajectories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in twentieth century historic Palestine, and critique the role of religious ideology, military force, and social memory in the creation of a nation-state. While the violence of religious nationalists is the more common perception of what happens when religion is in bed with politics, there is a ray of hope that religious faith could still provide a foundation from which peace and justice can develop organically, democratically, outside the realms of government.

29. Ibid., 99.

Cooperation between persons of faith and institutions of goodwill already provide pathways beyond rhetorical style, the status quo, and popular misunderstandings. Thus, part of each chapter in the second section of this thesis involves evaluating the resources within each monotheistic tradition to counteract—rather than perpetuate—socio-political inequality. Lastly, I conclude that prophetic spirituality is a necessary component of any temporal form of justice, and that such involves both the ability to ask hard questions about one’s own standing and to actively challenge unjust and inauthentic aspects of society³⁰; that such is already happening within Israel and Palestine, through both secular and religiously-grounded grassroots activist groups, as well as divestment movements by certain American corporations (in particular, universities and Protestant denominations); and that to be effective, public critiques of injustice must come from within, must encompass the narratives of one’s so-called enemy(ies), and must envision change tangibly and proactively.

I am indebted to a host of writers who embody the prophetic voice that American intellectual Cornel West describes as a rare mix of “personal integrity and political savvy, moral vision and prudential judgment, courageous defiance and organizational patience.”³¹ Frequently crossing the line between the religious and the secular, these voices are intuitively suspicious of public authority and state power, yet write from an intentionally religious perspective that takes seriously what is liberating within the sacred texts and symbolic traditions of the three monotheistic traditions in the world. In particular, Edward Said, the late Palestinian-American social critic and professor at Columbia University, provides an unparalleled foundation for much of my thought on these issues. His experiences of exile and of being Palestinian, along with his

30. I use Cornel West’s definition of public spirituality as a combination of Socratic, prophetic, and democratic principles in service to justice in human terms. In Cornel West, “Not a Minute to Hate,” *Tikkun* 18, no. 4 (July-Aug 2003): 11-12.

31. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 40. The book makes a profound analysis of race relations as indelibly linked to nihilism and a spiritual crisis in American society.

iconic criticism of the perspective from which Western intellectual and literary history has evolved, speaks directly to the questions of power and identity that animate both Palestinian and Israeli society. patience.”³² Frequently crossing the line between the religious and the secular, these voices are intuitively suspicious of public authority and state power, yet write from an intentionally religious perspective that takes seriously what is liberating within the sacred texts and symbolic traditions of the three monotheistic traditions in the world. In particular, Edward Said, the late Palestinian-American social critic and professor at Columbia University, provides an unparalleled foundation for much of my thought on these issues. His experiences of exile and of being Palestinian, along with his iconic criticism of the perspective from which Western intellectual and literary history has evolved, speaks directly to the questions of power and identity that animate both Palestinian and Israeli society.

32. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 40. The book makes a profound analysis of race relations as indelibly linked to nihilism and a spiritual crisis in American society.

CHAPTER TWO

Arab Nationalism and Palestinian Statelessness

A deserted refugee camp, rain-soaked, muddy, wind-racked, battered and bleak, a child's shoe.

A child. A picture: a child in Warsaw Ghetto, a child in Vietnam, a child at Avivim, a child in Lebanon. I take a picture of a child's shoe. Scorching sun and moaning wind. High noon. I am a refugee too: an exile from hope. Zionism was a dream, but the reality is a tragedy. 1979.

How are you? I ask a boy at Nahalein — "So long as you are well, I am ill. My home there has been blown up by your bretheren."

~ poem by Igaël Tumarkin, "Jericho, Twelve Years Later"¹

The purpose of this chapter is to chart the evolution of Palestinian political consciousness over the course of the twentieth century. For Palestinians, this evokes historical awareness of at least four main periods: 1) the idealistic early Arab activism that rebelled against the Ottoman Empire and assisted the British during WWI, only to realize their alliance had been in vain; 2) the fear, dispossession, forced expulsions, and destruction of Arab-Palestinian homes and villages by Jewish militants during the skirmishes and conflicts in the 1930s and 40s, leading to the 1947-48 Arab-Israeli war; 3) the Palestinian disillusionment that grows from the division of historic Palestine among Israel, Jordan and Egypt, and the pan-Arab army's failure to constrain Israel to its agreed-upon borders or to protect the Holy City of Jerusalem; and 4) the collective Palestinian rebellion against the ensuing Israeli occupation and the failure of the Palestinian leadership to effect positive change in Palestinians' quality of life and political autonomy as a nation-state.

This chapter surveys the evolution of Palestinian nationalism. While the events after 8 October 2000, when a second uprising (or intifada) was sparked by Israeli Prime

1. Igaël Tumarkin, "Jericho, Twelve Years Later," in *Both Sides of Peace: Israeli and Palestinian Political Poster Art*, curated by Dana Bartlett, Yossi Lemel, Fawzy El Emrany and Sliman Mansour (Raleigh, NC: Contemporary Art Museum, 1996), 123. The poem's title refers to Palestinian life after the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem and the West Bank, which began in 1967.

Minister Ariel Sharon's gratuitous show of military force at the al-Aqsa Mosque adjacent to the Temple Mount, are outside the limit of its time frame, they and the passing of Palestinian Prime Minister Yasser Arafat in November 2004 play a significant role in the development of Palestinian nationalism in the twenty-first century. In particular, the al-Aqsa Intifada and the subsequent democratic transition of power within Palestine mark a turning point in the story of secular Palestinian nationalism, as it is confronted by the Islamic opposition groups and general support for Muslim activist groups because of their steadfast resistance to Israel and broad social assistance to the Palestinian poor.

I. From Colonialism to the British Mandate, 1870s-1948

Increased archival resources and more institutional cooperation between English and Arabic-language research has led to a broader understanding of the interests and actions of Arabs during the late nineteenth century. The political struggles between various Arab states during the early twentieth century, particularly as related to the idea of a Greater Syria or a United Arab Republic as motivating Arab support for Britain's war with the Ottomans in WWI, have religious overtones.² They also are perhaps the most fundamental antecedent for social and political dissent among Palestinians today.³

Robert Brenton Betts, author of *Christians in the Arab East*—a mine of data about the identity and political engagement of Arab Christians in historic Palestine—writes that the “Greater Syria” idea was first coined by a Belgian Jesuit orientalist, Henri Lammens. It was politicized in the 1930s by a Greek Orthodox Lebanese-Brazilian émigré, for whom Syria was geographically synonymous with the historical patriarchate of Antioch

2. For the rise of Palestinian nationalism within the wider context of the older Greater Syrian movement, see Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalisms* (University Press of Florida, 2001). Religious historian Robert Brenton Betts points out in his review of the book that it is a gratifyingly less polemical work on Syria than Daniel Pipes's “Greater Syria—The History of an Ambition,” *Arab American Affairs* 35 (Winter 1990-91): 162-164. See Betts, “Syria and the Palestinians,” Book Reviews Section, *Middle East Policy Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 144-47.

3. Betts, 145. Betts is a religious historian known for his *Christians in the Arab East* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975; 1981) and *The Druze* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998; 2003).

(i.e., including all of today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Israel, as well as some claim to Cyprus and parts of southern Turkey). Betts writes,

The impact of this movement on regional politics cannot be underestimated, and when coupled with the rise of the Baath party (cofounded by another Orthodox Christian, Michael Aflaq) and the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), which grew out of the loss of Palestine in 1948, it largely overshadowed an independent nationalist movement, eventually to emerge in the late 1960s. . . . After the Baath party takeover in 1965, Syria saw itself as the leader in the fight to liberate the "southern Syrians," or Palestinians, from Zionist occupation. It is not surprising, therefore, that Syria tried to discourage any separatist nationalist movement in Palestine, and, when one began to emerge in the 1960s, used every possible means to keep it under her control.⁴

The importance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on contemporary Palestinian nationalism and the broad currents of Arab identity have a cultural as well as political aspect. Historians note that under the Ottoman Empire, society was loosely organized between the wealthy land-owning families (many of whom held prominent symbolic religious posts as well), the town tradespeople, and the peasants/ laborers. Ghada Karmi, a London-based Palestinian historian, writes: "Urban elites had always existed to a certain extent in the major cities, but. . .the traditions and customs that distinguish Palestine from its neighbours derive not from these people but from its peasant class."⁵ Rural artifacts such as glass-making in Hebron, cloth-weaving in Majdal, village pottery, traditional embroidery, and the *dabkke* (a group folk dance) were the economic and social backbone of upper-class Palestinian life during the time of the British Mandate. Traditional hand-crafts and agricultural products remain a source of Palestinians' economic self-reliance, providing a sense of independence, dignity, and

4. Betts, *ibid.*

5. Ghada Karmi, *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* (New York: Verso Press, 2004), 18.

productivity, and functioning as an instrument for the preservation and rebuilding of their national existence.⁶

Palestinian history has undergone a notable evolution over the course of the past century, although the exact point at which Palestinian identity diverged from Arab nationalism is a contested and often confusing point. Contrary to the traditional viewpoint that Arab nationalism developed in reaction to Jewish nationalism, and that Palestinians did not have a recognizable or coherent voice of their own until the last quarter of the twentieth century, “new” historians Baruch Kimmerling of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Joel Migdal of the University of Washington argue that “a sense of Palestinian identity and political self consciousness first emerged with the bloody revolt of the Arabs of Palestine in 1834 against Ibrahim Pasha’s short-lived and onerous Egyptian occupation, which was ultimately turned back by the Ottomans.”⁷ In addition to the sense of commonality fostered against the influx of Jewish immigration, the British Mandate and the Balfour Declaration, Kimmerling and Migdal stress that additional factors such as the growing trade between city and village, the process of urbanization, education, the Young Turk rebellion in 1908, and the growth of an Arab press all contributed to and accelerated “Palestinianism.”⁸

Another view of Palestinian history that is perpetuated as fact despite the conclusive evidence to the contrary is the idea that the land of Palestine was empty of an indigenous people when Jews began immigrating there. A corollary to this argument

6. Constantine Zurayk, foreword to *The Revival of Palestinian Traditional Heritage: Documentation of “Inaash” Embroidery over Thirty Years based on Traditional Old Palestinian* (Beirut, 2001), 5-6. Note Israeli claims to the culinary, dance, craftsmanship, and architecture of indigenous Arab culture obscure Palestinian identity generally as well as the livelihood and particularity of the Palestinian farmer and village peasant class more specifically in David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987; 2002), 343-345.

7. Philip C. Wilcox, book review of *The Palestinian People: A History*, by Baruch Kimberling and Joel S. Migdal (Harvard University Press, 2003), in *Middle East Policy Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 142.

8. Wilcox, *ibid.*

is that the region was of only mediocre importance to the Ottomans before the Turkish revolution and the events of World War I.⁹ Historian Beshara Doumani takes specific issue with such myths and argues that the modern history of Palestine and the Palestinian people—particularly their loss of political control over their homeland during the early twentieth century—is a result of specific ideological assumptions and historical contingencies that were and are out of Palestinians' control.¹⁰ Such conditions enabled historiographical strategies, or spin-tactics, to blind Israeli historians from the role that Palestinians played in the historical narrative of the region between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

Palestinian historian Butrus Abu-Manneh is at once sympathetic to the plight of Palestinians while still critical of their collective history. A citizen of Israel and long-time professor of Ottoman history at the University of Haifa, he is not content to simply blame Israel, arguing that the framework of reference and ideological foundation employed by twentieth century Palestinian decision-makers is much more complex.¹¹ He notes that the gross inequality in the distribution of land and agricultural capital under Ottoman rule was in part enabled by the ideological divide among the leading elite Palestinian families. He describes the differing political alliances between the liberal-minded Khalidis, who led the Shar'ia court for several generations and favored the mid-1800s Tanzimat reforms that aimed to unify and empower the Ottoman sub-provinces, and the more conservative Husayni (Husseini) family, which held the posts of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem from the late 1700s and the Sharif of Mecca, Medina and the Hijaz intermittently from the thirteenth century onwards and opposed such reforms.¹²

9. Beshara Doumani, "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 5-28.

10. Doumani, *ibid.*

11. Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Rise of the Sanjak of Jerusalem in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *The Israel/Palestine Question*, *ibid.*, 41, 46-48.

12. *Ibid.*

Non-Zionist Israeli historian Ilan Pappé has written that Ottoman ruler Mahmud Nedim made administrative changes to the status of Jerusalem in 1872 which proved significant over the course of the following century.¹³ By disestablishing Jerusalem as a sub-province under the jurisdiction of Damascus, and making it subject directly to Istanbul, Pappé says that Nedim situated the cosmopolitan city of Jerusalem as the foundation for an autonomous civil and political order and as the center for associational and familial identities of Arabs in the region. This status was in contradistinction from those cities in the sub-province of Damascus, in the then-called region of “Greater Syria.” This is an important consideration when tracing the trajectory of Palestinian nationalism as distinct from Syrian-Arab nationalism because, Pappé argues, it laid the groundwork for the character of all future Palestinian political negotiation.

This distinction points toward Jerusalem as a cosmopolitan city that belongs, ultimately, to whomever lives in it. In a recent study, Andrew Wheatcroft argued, “For centuries, except on a few rare occasions and regardless of who ruled the city, Jerusalem had been a neutral space.”¹⁴ This means that Jews, Christians and Muslims had operated under a collective peace of God. Pilgrims too could worship at their sacred places, and scholars could come closer to God through study, irregardless of geography or national origin.¹⁵ Jerusalem served, therefore, as a kind of informal academy where different faiths could debate the issues of belief and pursue religious reconciliation.¹⁶ Perhaps it was the first crusade that interrupted that long peaceful tradition, creating atavistic

13. Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 44, 46. See also Anthony O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society, 1800-1948,” in *Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land*, ed. by Anthony O’Mahony (London: Melisende, 1999), 27.

14. Andrew Wheatcroft, *Infidels: The Conflict between Christendom and Islam 638-2002* (New York: Viking, 2003), 193.

15. Ibid.

16. See also Edward Said, quoting Faysal Hussein on the “problem of Jerusalem.” “Everything he said about it confirmed that it was the city of all monotheistic religions and that it is the capital of religious reconciliation among people.” In Said’s *Peace and Its Discontents*, 178.

hatred, a sense of anger, and an anxious fear in both the Western Christian and the Mediterranean Islamic worlds.¹⁷

The sociological and historical research of American scholar Mark Tessler is founded on such a view, namely that the present-day conflict is not essential or religious in its origins. He argues that rather than being arch enemies, the self-determination movements of Jews and Arabs prior to the twentieth-century conflict were similar. In particular, he argues that as modern political Zionism sought the establishment of an autonomous and self-sufficient Jewish colony,

Nationalism in the Arab world, in Palestine as elsewhere, was similarly preoccupied with self-rule and auto-emancipation. Its goal was the construction of political communities run by and for the benefit of the indigenous population. These policies would defend their Arab inhabitants against the challenge of European imperialism, manage the task of improving the material circumstances of Arab life, and provide a framework within which the Arab world could at once defend and revitalize its classical civilization.¹⁸

While they would later clash in Palestine as both responded to a troubling new aggressiveness on the part of Europe, each nationalism—that is, of Jews and Arabs—“was irrelevant to the nationalism of the other” at the outset of the twentieth century.¹⁹ Nevertheless, they were interdependent. Tessler situates the origins of the Oslo peace process and contemporary negotiations between Israel and Palestine—complex and problematic as they were—within the relations between Chaim Weitzman, the leading British Zionist instrumental in negotiating the 1917 Balfour Declaration and later the first president of Israel, and the Arab leader Faycal Ibn Husayn (also “Husseini”), the third son of the *Sharif* of Mecca and founder of the Hashemite dynasty.²⁰

17. Ibid.

18. Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 4.

19. Ibid.

20. The current king of Jordan, Abdullah II, is great-great-grandson of the Hashemite leader Sharif Hussein bin Ali (1853-1931), who led the Arab Revolt of June 1916 against the Ottoman Empire in exchange for the Allies’ support of an Arab state. See “Sir Henry McMahon: The McMahon Letter (October 24, 1915),” in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, ed. by Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (NY: Penguin Books, 1985; 1995; 2001), 11-12.

The Zionist-Arab discussions in the spring of 1919 between Weitzmann and Ibn Husayn in Aqaba (now part of Jordan), just weeks before the Paris Peace Conference and the establishment of the international League of Nations, came at a time when the ruling Arab elite was finally convinced that their protestations to the Ottoman rulers on behalf of statehood would forever go unheeded.²¹ Following in the footsteps of his father who been appointed by the Turks as the local ruler of the *sanjak* of Jerusalem, Ibn Husayn went to Cairo in 1914 to meet with Lord Kitchner, the British High Commissioner, who promised him support for the Arab cause in exchange for his role in generating Arab support for the British government in World War I.²² It was in good faith, thus, that Faycal Ibn Husayn led the Arab forces successfully against the Ottoman Turks.

The 1919 agreement between Weizmann and Ibn Husayn explicitly established the right of Jews to immigrate to Palestine “on a large scale and as quickly as possible,” as well as for the Zionist Organization to send to Palestine a commission of experts to survey the country and propose plans for its best economic development. Tessler argues that Ibn Husayn was apparently well out of touch with the local Arab sentiment, saying that “Faycal had logically reasoned that the case for Arab independence would be greatly strengthened by an alliance with the Zionists,” that is, with Britain. He adds that Faycal also believed “and in this he was encouraged by Weizmann” that Zionism’s financial resources and political influence would be “helpful in securing international support for Arab self-determination.”²³ In a separate addendum signed by both parties, Faycal wrote by his own hand that “Provided the Arabs obtain their independence as demanded, . . . I

21. Tessler, 151-157 and 145-50.

22. Ibid., 146. See also David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922* (New York: Henry Holt, 1989), 39-50.

23. Tessler, 151.

shall concur in the above articles. But if the slightest modification or departure were to be made, I shall not then be bound by a single word of the present Agreement. . . .”²⁴

Both before and during World War I, Britain established various commissions to review the national aspirations of the European and British Zionist leaders. Britain’s authority in the region was established by the then-secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which proposed the division between the British and French governments of the region then-controlled by the Ottoman caliphate. The political class of indigenous Arabs in historic Palestine was dominated by conservative Muslim families whose political legitimacy was mirrored by their religious authority as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, as historian Abu-Manneh documents.

The fortunes of these conservative Muslim families were tied to the feudal social and economic structures that had been established under the distant Ottoman caliphate.²⁵ “Although most had initially been pro-Ottoman in orientation, many prominent sons of these families were now sincere Arab nationalists. . . largely devoid of concern for genuine modernization. Thus they saw Zionism not only in terms of the conflict between Arab and Jewish interests but also as the spearhead of a social revolution with the potential to undermine the political order on which their own status was founded.”²⁶

The most notable declaration by Britain on the national fate of historic Palestine was the 1917 Balfour Declaration—that is, the document that solidified the British Government’s support for the World Zionist Organization’s intentions in historic

24. Ibid., 152. Quoted from George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), 439. See also Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy, Volume I: Early Arab-Zionist Negotiation Attempts, 1913-1931* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), 147. For a discussion of the effect of the betrayal of Palestinian national aspirations by the United Nations and the British Mandate government, see Albert E. Glock, “Archaeology as Cultural Survival: The Future of the Palestinian Past,” in *Archaeology, History and Culture in Palestine and the Near East*, ibid., 302.

25. Tessler, 169. See also Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26-31. The book addresses the shortfalls in Arab culture stemming from its traditional and authoritarian family structure.

26. Tessler, 169.

Palestine. Then-British foreign secretary Lord Balfour submitted a letter to Lord Rothschild, who was head of the Jewish community in Britain at the time, confirming the “sympathy” of the British government for the Jewish Zionist aspirations which had been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet. The letter reads, very shortly,

His Majesty’s Government view[s] with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.²⁷

In 1922, the League of Nations gave Britain the mandate to administer historic Palestine indefinitely, based on its Balfour Declaration. The document, entitled “The Palestine Mandate,” is thus the most significant textual antecedent to which contemporary Palestinian feelings of marginalization can be directed.²⁸ It called for “an appropriate Jewish agency” (called elsewhere “the Zionist organization”) to be appointed with the task of “advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine. . . .”²⁹ In particular, the League of Nations ordered that:

The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home. . . and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for

27. Sir Arthur James Balfour, “Balfour Declaration of November 1917,” in Tessler, 148.

28. Michael Cohen, *The Origins and Evolution of the Arab-Zionist Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 64. He notes that the Mandate was finalized in July 1922 only after the American delegation withdrew at Versailles and left the division of the former Ottoman Empire to be decided by England and France in accordance with their prior negotiations in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement.

29. See “The Palestine Mandate,” article 4.

safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.³⁰

By not naming “the inhabitants” of Palestine or acknowledging their separate, active national aspirations, the Palestine Mandate given to Britain reiterated the limited vision of the 1917 declaration by Lord Balfour. Even the Balfour Declaration foresaw the dueling aims that haunt relations between Israelis and Palestinians today and anticipated the inappropriateness of a state in the region that was to be Jewish at the exclusion of Arabs’ claims to the land and its resources.

Later commissions included the Shaw and Hope-Simpson resolutions of 1929 and 1930 that advocated a reduction of Jewish immigration and tighter control over Jewish land purchases and the 1939 White Paper stressing the equality of Britain’s obligations to Arabs and Jews in Palestine. They concluded with the establishment of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in November 1945, which recommended issuance of 100,000 immigration certificates for European Jews and a removal of the restrictions on Jewish land purchases introduced by the White Paper.³¹ Its effect merely brought further condemnation of the British government by both Zionist and Arab leaders. Finally, in February 1947, after acknowledging what the locally divided community and the British officers on the ground in historic Palestine already knew too well, the British Parliament in London turned the matter over to the United Nations, the successor to the League of Nations, “on whose behalf Britain was, in theory at least, exercising the Mandate.”³² It had been unable to reconcile the contradictions inherent in the 1917 Balfour Declaration between supporting the establishment of a Zionist state while protecting the rights of the indigenous Arabs, so it simply left the scene.

30. “The Palestine Mandate of the League of Nations (1922),” Article 2. The full text of the Mandate is available at www.mideastweb.org/mandate.htm.

31. Tessler, 237.

32. Tessler, 258.

The UN General Assembly Resolution 181 outlined a partition plan upon Britain's recommendation, which aimed at establishing the boundaries and governing structure of both Israeli and separate Palestinian territories, and which was adopted by a two-thirds majority of the UN General Assembly on 29 November 1947. This plan was defeated, however, when the indigenous Arab leadership refused to accept a partition of their homeland that would cede over half of historic Palestine to a non-Arab Jewish minority that owned only 10 percent of the land.³³ As a result, the waves of immigrant Jews and the ideologically zealous Zionist leadership put campaigns into action that emptied and destroyed 418 villages of their Palestinian inhabitants during the 1947-49 war. Approximately 750,000 Palestinians fled out of fear as the news traveled and as the direct attacks became a reality.³⁴

II. al-Nakba and Palestinian Disillusionment, 1948-1967

The history of Palestinians' relationship with Israelis—and indeed, Israel's relationship with historic Palestine—is one where Palestinian nationalism looms large. This is precisely because Palestinians have been on the losing side of that history and cannot forget what has happened to them any more than Jews can forget the Holocaust. Political scientist Shibley Telhami, a professor at the University of Maryland, insightfully refers to this phenomenon as a “prism of pain,” or the reactive inability of a people to come to terms with or move beyond a catastrophic event to such a degree that it becomes a constitutive part of their identity. “The Holocaust is the prism of pain for the Jews, and for the Muslims it's the Palestine issue. Each group views the other with suspicion and is unable to put aside the hurt and anger and begin an honest and open dialogue to move

33. Hisham Sharabi, *Palestine and Israel: The Lethal Dilemma* (NY: Pegasus, 1969), 167. See also Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Occupation Must End,” in *Beyond Occupation: American Jewish, Christian, and Palestinian Voices for Peace*, ed. by Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marc H. Ellis (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1990), 184.

34. See “The Middle East: Fear, Flight and Forcible Exile,” Amnesty International Online, at <http://web.amnesty.org/802568F7005C4453/0/C51708C0DBF5A9B280256900006930BF?Open&Highlight=2,religion> (accessed 3 July 2002).

things forward.”³⁵ Palestinians view both *al-Nakba* of 1948 and the pan-Arab defeat of 1967 in such a way.

In December 1949, the United Nations created an entity to provide social and civil services for Palestinian refugees, or “anyone who lost both home and livelihood in 1948 after being in Mandate Palestine for the two years before that, from 1946-48.”³⁶ Fifty years later, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) still exists. It provides jobs, food, health care, and schools for 4.3 million Palestinian refugees spread throughout the Occupied Territories, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. What Palestinians faced as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War was worsened by a second wave of forced expulsion and mass emigration in 1967, when Israel unilaterally expanded its borders through an unforeseen war.³⁷

The refugee crises of 1948 and 1967 extenuated the inter-Arab tensions that remained long after British and French colonialism in the Arab world had officially ended. Palestinian refugees in southern Lebanon, for example, “remain in the eyes of many ordinary Lebanese as a sort of house enemy to be warded off and/or punished from time to time.”³⁸ The arrival of 400,000 Palestinian refugees, most of whom were Muslim and agrarian, threatened the delicate social and political balance in a very westernized, Francophone Lebanon. Today, they remain confined to camps, have little

35. This term was used by Shibley Telhami on a public diplomacy panel the author observed at the George Washington University (Washington, DC) in the spring of 2004. See also Shaista Aziz, “US, Muslim World Look Through ‘Prism of Pain,’” Special to *The Daily Star* (Beirut), at <http://www.aljazeera.com/Opinion/2004/20040124/US,%20Muslim%20world%20look%20through%20prism%20of%20pain%20By%20Shaista%20Aziz.htm> (24 January 2004).

36. This is according to UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd. See an unnamed summary of her briefing at The Palestine Center, entitled “The Role of UNRWA after the Gaza Disengagement,” *For the Record* No. 230 (14 September 2005), available at www.thejerusalemfund.org.

37. For a thorough analysis of the 1967 war Israel waged with Egypt, Jordan and Syria, see the Spring 1992 issue of *The Middle East Journal* (volume 46, no. 2), with articles by Richard Parker, William Quandt, Gideon Gera, Yezid Sayigh, and Yvonne Haddad.

38. Edward Said, in *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, ed. by Naseer Aruri (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 3. See also Wadie Said, “The Status of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” The Palestine Center Information Brief, no. 33 (24 May 2000).

legal or civil protection, experience routine discrimination in employment, do not have adequate medical care or insurance, and enjoy no ability to return to their homes or their own homeland despite the legal right they have to return or to be integrated into the host society.³⁹ While Lebanon may be coming to recognize the significance of Palestinian refugees and their humanitarian needs, it is not in the context of citizenship—yet Palestinian refugees themselves do not prefer Lebanese citizenship to a return to their own homeland.⁴⁰

Palestinian-Jordanian relations are equally complex. While Palestinian refugees have citizenship in Jordan and share a flag, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's absorption of the West Bank in 1949 and its failure to protect Palestinians' rights in 1967 have created a poor foundation for affectionate fraternal relations. Many factors have contributed to the tense relationship between the Jordanian and Palestinian people, including the burden Palestinian refugees fleeing eastward into Jordan in the late 1940s put on the land and economy of Jordan. The second influx of Palestinians in 1967 doubled the Palestinian population inside Jordan (that is, east of the Jordan River).

In particular, Palestinian resentment toward Jordan deepened as Palestinians perceived it to be collaborating with Israel to assure itself ownership of whatever Palestinian land remained, and as Jordan refused to allow the PLO to use Amman as an independent political base for organizing resistance to Israel. Suspicion over the loyalty of the Hashemite monarchy to its fellow Arabs went as far back as its dealings with the

39. Wadie Said, "The Obligations of Host Countries to Refugees under International Law: The Case of Lebanon," in *Palestinian Refugees*, 123-151. He notes that while Lebanon is not a signatory to the UN's 1951 convention or 1967 protocol regarding the status of refugees, such is moot given that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do not strive to gain asylum or absorption into Lebanon.

40. Ibid. See also the remarks of Dr. Clovis Maksoud, former U.S. Ambassador to the Arab League, entitled "Lebanon in Transition" (Washington, DC: The Palestine Center, 22 March 2005), online at <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/fortherecord.php?ID=229> (accessed 10 June 2005).

Zionists and Great Britain during the early twentieth century.⁴¹ In 1978, Jordan attacked the Palestinian Liberation Organization based in its upper northwest territory and killed nearly 2,000 Palestinians during what is known as Black September. While Jordan still provides some civil services to West Bank Palestinians such as travel documents and maintenance of the Muslim holy sites, it turned its political obligation to the people of the West Bank and its religious responsibility for the maintenance and safety of the al-Aqsa Mosque and other symbolic Muslim locations over to the Palestinian Authority in 1988 when the PLO declared its independence. Today, displaced Palestinians make up 45 percent of Jordanian citizens (approximately 1.6 million persons).

International law is a standard by which to judge Palestinian disillusionment with foreign rule, as well as the means and context of their resistance to occupation. Indeed, it protects the rights of any minority people to assert their equality and right of self-determination in many ways, but especially so for those whose homeland is occupied by another government. UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (14 December 1960) declares, *inter alia*, that 1) the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation; 2) all peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development; 3) inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence; and 4) all armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent peoples shall cease in order to enable them to exercise peacefully and freely their right to complete independence, and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected.

41. Martin Sicker, *Between Hashemites and Zionists: The Struggle for Palestine, 1908-1988* (NY: Holmes & Meier, 1989); see also Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); and Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Best of Enemies: Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948* (London, Frank Cass, 1987).

Moreover, the Fourth Geneva Convention establishes that “no protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited” (Article 33/1). It also protects persons in occupied territories from being “deprived, in any case or in any manner whatsoever, of the benefits of the present Convention, as the result of the occupation of a territory. . . [or] by any annexation by the [Occupying Power] of the whole or part of the occupied territory” (Article 47).⁴²

The obstacle Palestinians face in their struggle for statehood has two dimensions. The first is the political, civil, and diplomatic dimension—that is, for the means to create a state that is not only politically sovereign but also economically viable and socially cohesive. Here questions of regional autonomy and procedural secularity are as contentious as they are for any emerging national community. The second dimension, however, is a deeper one—it involves an existential dilemma over the right to belong, the sacred symbolism of land ownership, and the politics of identity. This is what makes Palestinians’ claim to an inalienable Right of Return so pernicious.⁴³

Separate from statistical and political theory, the statelessness of Palestinians is recognizable as a common motif of life in the Occupied Territories. This includes harassment and detention at checkpoints; mid-night raids and unprovoked house invasions; land expropriations for bypass roads or settlement outposts; imprisonment without due process, fair recourse, or a judicial system of one’s own people; public and unapologetic assassination campaigns; the protection of militant ultra-orthodox Jewish settlers over the rights of indigenous Palestinian land owners and farmers; the poverty of

42. “Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War,” dated 12 August 1949 and signed in Geneva, Switz. Available at www.icrc.org/ihl.sf/0/030537c0a8ee01dfc12563cd0042a6be?OpenDocument (accessed 21 March 2005).

43. Salman Abu-Sitta, “The Right of Return: Sacred, Legal and Possible,” in *Palestinian Refugees*, 195.

refugee camps and intolerable conditions of life where unemployment is nearly universal; and a general inability to move at will within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

As the violence and diplomatic negotiations over Israel-Palestine have become nightly news stories and fodder for pundits around the world, the Palestinian narrative is flattened into sound bites and a tit-for-tat debate.⁴⁴ A tugging subtlety remains: who benefits from the entrenched militarism, disillusionment, and unjust precedent? Who would lose if the conflict ended and each society normalized? One answer may be other nations in the region, for whom the conflict fits into a wider agenda. For example, Soviet support for Palestinians in the 1970s was based on the perception that Zionism was at its essence a form of imperialism and that, as such, Palestinian resistance forces were fighting against the same evil threatening their communist agenda.⁴⁵ Arab countries like Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have gained international repute and considerable U.S. foreign aid for their participation in peace negotiations and/or recognition of Israel—and lost American foreign aid if not.⁴⁶ The Palestinian uprising and violent backlashes against the illegal settler movement in Gaza further the goals of Israeli apologists and Jewish extremists as legitimization of disproportionate military incursions and violent retaliation.

While governments may find themselves in war, individuals do not. In oral and written memoirs, Palestinians describe the period after 1948 in varied terms ranging between resentment, alienation, shame, irony, determination, and hope. Karmi learned the hard way of what unites Palestinians, scattered across class and continent:

44. Striking footage and commentary on the media biases relating to the people and history of Palestine can be found in “Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land: U.S. Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” directed by Bathsheba Ratzkoff and Sut Jhally (2004).

45. Ivar Spector, “The Soviet Union and the Palestine Conflict,” in *The Transformation of Palestine: Essays on the Origin and Development of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, ed. by Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 387-412.

46. For status of relations between Arab League states and Israel, see “Many Arabs states shun ties with Israel,” *USA Today* (posted 2 June 2003), at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2003-06-02-arabs-israel-glance_x.htm.

the experience of being uprooted, dislocated, and desperate for a past that is no longer available. “Theirs was a typical Palestinian diaspora story, moving from one Arab state to another,” she writes of family members who had nowhere to go after *al-Nakba*, the chaotic catastrophe Palestinians experienced between 1947 and 49, after her own parents fled Jerusalem for London. “A little studying here, a job there, visas, expired work permits, running after residency permits, again visas, passports.” Finally, despairing of the Arab world and the Middle East, they ended up in Canada.⁴⁷ Such narratives of migration, exile, and unsuccessful attempts to assimilate into the new society have produced new generations of exiled Palestinian writers and artists like rapper Will Youmans (The Iron Sheik), comedienne Maysoon Zayed, slam poet Suheir Hammad, and others.⁴⁸

Wherever Palestinians live today—be it in metropolises of opportunity or in stateless camps of refugees—they are united by the feeling of internal displacement and homelessness. “Although it bears emphasizing that the Palestinian national movement predated the *nakba* by several decades, and many Palestinians’ sense of connection to their towns and lands extends back many generations further, it seems clear that nothing forged Palestinian identity so surely as the loss of Palestine,” writes one analyst.⁴⁹ For both legal and psychosocial reasons, displaced Palestinians (whether registered as refugees or not) have complex feelings toward the countries in which they find themselves today. Many do not identify with the nationality of their current residence, even if they

47. Karmi, 160. Said tells of similar experiences his family endured in *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Vintage Press, 2000).

48. For analysis of the lyrics and influences in Youman’s rap, see “The Iron Sheik Rapper Will Youmans taps into the American minority experience to address the Palestinian-Israeli conflict,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (22 August 2004): 8. For a discussion of the juxtaposition of American race relations and their Palestinian heritage in the work of poets Suheir Hammad, Diana Abu-Jaber and Naomi Shihab Nye, see Andrea Shalal-Esa, “Arab-American Writers Identify with Communities of Color,” *Al Jadid Magazine: A Review and Record of Arab Culture and Arts* 9, no. 42/43 (Winter/Spring 2003), at <http://www.aljadid.com/features/0942shalalesa.html>.

49. Omar Dajani, *How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Oslo Peace Process*, ed. Tamara Cofman Wittes (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 2005), 43.

were born there after 1948, yet neither do they fully identify with what it means to be Palestinian today.⁵⁰ Palestinian memoirist Ghada Karmi feels the ambiguity of this exile, so much that she suggests a certain envy toward Israelis of Palestinian descent who, despite their marginality in Israel, at least have a physical link to their homeland and a tangible sense of continuity with their past.

In the extent to which Palestinian memory goes back to the British Mandate and intransigence of the early Jewish militants, Palestinians find offense at Israeli offers of peace that deny Palestinians' suffering, dispossession, dependence, and the concessions they have already made. For example "land for peace" programs that demand a swap of nine acres of Palestinian land to one acre of Israeli territory, as was offered at Camp David in 1998 during the failed attempts to implement the second phase of the Oslo Peace Accords, were unthinkable specifically because of Israel's attitude of indemnity toward the events of 1946-48. Similarly, the determined and collective Palestinian resistance to the expansion of settlements, the continued and illegal development of Israeli "outposts," the confiscation of Palestinian land for Israeli "administrative" concerns (like the wall around the West Bank, which has annexed twelve percent more land into Israel), and so on, can only be understood within the context of the concessions Palestinians, whether they live abroad, in refugee camps, or under occupation, have already made to Israelis. When Palestinians talk of a viable sovereign territory, they refer to the 1967 borders in which eighty-eight percent of the territory was claimed by Israelis, and less than twenty-two percent was left to Palestinians. When this historical fact is ignored and when the obstacles to Palestinians' quality of life (such as checkpoints, closures, midnight raids, etc.) are normalized, it is little wonder that Palestinians resent the underlying Israeli claims of vulnerability and moral superiority.

50. Nathalie Handal, "Poetry as Homeland," in *Post-Gibran: Anthology of New Arab-American Writing*, ed. by Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash, 139-43. See also Edward W. Said, "No Reconciliation Allowed," *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss*, ed. André Aciman (NY: The New Press, 1999), 89.

One particularly thorny point of contention when it comes to the existential dimension of Palestinians is the accuracy and perspective of maps used in popular media coverage inside and outside of Israel, during lobbying and diplomatic negotiations, and in educational venues. The status of the land that Israel seized in 1967 cannot withstand scrutiny as “disputed” rather than “occupied” territory as was asserted by the foreign press at the start of the peace negotiations in Oslo.⁵¹ Many maps in Israel do not identify the borders between Israel and the pre-1967 borders of Palestinian land (the West Bank then under the jurisdiction of Jordan, and Gaza under Egypt). Even the “new” historians, sociologists, political scientists, and geographers themselves argue the maps are inaccurate. Between 1967 and 1993, Israel wielded total control over Palestinian life, from water and sewage policy to the uninterrupted import and export of goods, municipal permits for building, diplomatic and police protection, judicial procedure, and so on. Oslo did change this fact: it recognized and mandated the PA to enforce peace, even as it left the PA itself subject to Israel in all aspects of the PA’s ability to govern, including the public comings and goings of Palestinian leaders and political candidates, the collection and distribution of tax revenues from Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and so on. Palestinian leaders themselves are subject to the benevolence of Israeli soldiers for travel and safety inside the West Bank. After having ordered the assassinations of top Hamas leaders, the *USA Today* reported in 2003 a statement made by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on the safety of the now-late Palestinian president, Yassir Arafat. “I don’t see any plans to kill him,” Sharon said. “You don’t have to worry. He’s alive, and not only is he alive but very active [in the steps that lead to the] murder of children, civilians, the old.”⁵² The statement was carried on U.S. news channels without critique.

51. The difference between “disputed” and “occupied” suggests on the one hand a conflict between two equal nation-states, and on the other the reality of one side having the privileges and power as an overlord with the other side a subservient people subject to the rules and constraints of the first without the rights and privileges of citizenship, from equal political representation to adequate social services, diplomatic protection, free movement, economic mobilization, and so on.

52. Josef Federman, “No Plans to kill Arafat, Sharon Says,” *USA Today* (28 October 2003): 17A.

As envisioned by Palestinians, peace demands justice and justice demands a viable, independent nation whose sovereignty is respected and defended by the international community. Yet Palestinians' quality of life is dependent on their political sovereignty as a distinct ethno-cultural community (i.e., vis-à-vis other Arab states as much as Israel). Fairness and consistency in the distribution of goods, relationship between religious and political causes, the pedagogy of public education, and the psychological trauma of open violence on children are further elements to be considered in any conceptualization of how to transform the relations between Palestinians and Israelis.

The psychological trauma facing Palestinian children is an element of future peace proposals which cannot be overlooked as it represents a deeper level of national survival as it occupies the Palestinian consciousness. Eighty percent of Palestinian children currently experience a permanent sense of trauma.⁵³ Between 1987 and 1990, during the first Palestinian *intifada*, schools were closed seventeen out of twenty-eight months. Jacqueline Sfeir, director of Bethlehem University's Education Development Center, argues that students were advanced despite their lacking of basic knowledge and skills, leaving today's teachers, parents, and university students poorly equipped to deal with children living through another traumatic psychosocial period: the second Palestinian *intifada* that began in 2000.⁵⁴ She notes that with forty-five percent of the population under the age of fourteen, the long-term consequences are significant and likely to last at least three to five generations, were all forms of violence in the region to cease today. The compounded trauma experienced by Palestinians results from losing their land either literally or figuratively, having their memory circumscribed and

53. Hanan Ashrawi, "The Cause and the Effects," an interview with Ruthie Blum, *The International Jerusalem Post* (31 Dec. 2004): 10.

54. Jacqueline Sfeir, in a briefing at the Washington, D.C.-based Palestine Center on 17 November 2004. See "Education in Palestine: Coping with Challenges that Undermine Overall Development," *For the Record* no. 207 (24 Nov. 2004), available at <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/fortherecord.php?ID=221>.

controlled through means as vast as archaeology, civic instability, geographic expulsions, and being able to envision no improvement in their non-voluntary lot in the foreseeable future.

Understanding this historic dimension of the Palestinian narrative puts into perspective the violence witnessed so frequently on the ground. It suggests that there is more going on that meets the eye—or at least, the American network media’s camera lens. Not only have Israeli historians, sociologists and political scientists begun to consider the ways that direct violence may be allowed, legitimated, and/or demanded against Palestinians by Israeli citizens or military personnel themselves, but there are broader forms of structural and cultural violence that must be attended to equally before any cease-fire will occur without force or duplicity.⁵⁵

Even before the heady days of the 1967 War, the Munich Olympic reprisals (1972), Black September (1978), and so on, Palestinian memoirs place the beginning of their current collective narrative during the British Mandate, culminating and being solidified in the experiences surrounding the 1948 war. Such must begin at least in the early twentieth century and the growing fears and animosity that preceded the dispossession and collective displacement of Palestinians in the 1948 war.⁵⁶ This means that the Palestinian narrative cannot be viewed simply as a reaction to the creation of Israel, nor can Palestinians themselves be dismissed as essentially violent or politically dispensable.

In the narrative of both groups, universal return is a question that underpins and undermines the possibility of national survival. As recently as June 2003, the direct and reactionary violence following the high-level negotiations in Jordan over the Bush

55. See for example Benny Morris, “The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past,” *Tikkun* (Fall 1998); Neil Caplan, “The New Historians,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 96-103; Benny Morris, “Refabricating 1948” (review of *Fabricating Israeli History: The ‘New Historians’* by Efraim Karsh), *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 81-96; and Anita Shapira, “The failure of Israel’s ‘New Historians’ to Explain War and Peace—The Past is Not a Foreign Country,” *The New Republic* (29 November 1999): 26ff.

56. See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (NY: Avon Books, 1989).

Administration's "road map for peace" demonstrates that peace will not come easily, nor will it address at the outset the physical substance of the protracted crisis, much less the psychological and theological elements that cause more direct and structural imbalance. Both groups demand restorative justice for historic wrongs, without acknowledging that a simple transfer of power will only deepen the cycle of violence—not disrupt, transcend, or eradicate it. Peace cannot happen without internal ideological change and a multi-dimensional approach to diplomatic negotiations that addresses the immediate or basic needs of human survival and social development.

Recognizing the narrative of Palestinians raises deep emotional and existential questions for Jews, whereby the provoked ghosts of the past must still be silenced. As Said notes, "Because Palestine is uncomfortably, indeed scandalously, close to the Jewish experience of genocide, it has been difficult at times even to pronounce the word *Palestine*."⁵⁷ His writings, like those of Katherine Christison, argue that whatever lip-service U.S. administrations have given to the question of Palestine, a full appreciation of who Palestinians are and to what they aspire collectively has never been a part of the goal of U.S. policy toward the Middle East. Yet, this naming of and project to understand the collective will as *Palestinian* has strong support by many countries in the international community, and provides a foundation against which to imagine a resolution to the political conflict that has grown and endured in Israel/Palestine.⁵⁸

III. Situating the Non-Palestinian Gaze, Post-1967

Since the 1972 Munich Olympics, the word "Palestinian" has been as synonymous with "terrorist" for Americans as "Israel" has been with "vulnerable." This section challenges those views, arguing that both stereotypes are misnomers and reveal misconceptions about the political empowerment of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

57. Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), xxxiv.

58. See Doumani, *ibid*.

“Stripped of its context,” wrote Said, “an act of Palestinian desperation looks like wanton murder.” Said argues that the use of hijacking, kidnapping, and human bombs “must be understood in the context of day-to-day coercion and the brutality of a long military occupation.” Indeed, ignorant of the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and the reality of the Israeli social order and military policies, the American public’s view of the Palestinians is often accusatory, conflating resistance to occupation with an essential violence, while simultaneously absolving Israelis of their role and responsibility.⁵⁹ In his analysis of Palestinian self-determination, Said underscored that “since the early seventies, the PLO has avoided and condemned terror.”⁶⁰

This section surveys the main Palestinian political parties and non-affiliated opposition groups in an attempt to correct this misconception, which has wrought disastrous results for both Palestinians and Israelis during the past three decades. It finds a distinction between the post-Oslo Palestinian political establishment and the political opposition groups, some of whom are political parties if they were party to the PLO’s 1988 official recognition of the state of Israel. It also finds substantive differences in the vision of those who accommodate the use of armed resistance in light of the political context of the Israeli state. Some view violence as necessary for the establishment of an explicitly Islamic state based on an exclusive interpretation of Islamic *Shari’a* law, but there are also secular political parties who stand in opposition to both the Palestinian political establishment and the Israeli national apparatus. Such distinctions are important nuances within a comprehensive understanding of the social and political landscape of Palestine today.

While I tangentially address responses of Palestinian- and American-Muslims toward armed resistance in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the intentions

59. Edward Said, “Toward Palestinian Self-Determination,” *The Question of Palestine* (NY: Vintage Books, 1979; 1992), 171-72.

60. Ibid.

or identity of trans-national or non-Palestinian, armed opposition groups who espouse indiscriminate violence for political ends, such topics are largely outside the scope of this paper. Proper understandings of the role of armed resistance in the evolution of Palestinian nationalism do not assume and cannot historically validate an essential link between “Palestinians” and “terrorists.”⁶¹

As Said noted to, words like “terror” and “terrorist” must be defined if they are to be meaningful. Moreover, the context in which armed struggle is (and is not) used is a necessary consideration when understanding the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A casual review of the ways in which the idea and reality of “terrorism” are used in contemporary discourse suggests that it is a course of action requiring an opposing person or group. Without careful recognition of the contrasting subject, the words can be easily misapplied therefore. The resulting connotation often reflects the identity, context, and interests of the speaker, whether or not the misapplication was intentional.

For example, U.S. President George W. Bush’s June 2002 speech on Israel-Palestine, which many lauded as the first occasion a sitting U.S. president had called for the establishment of a Palestinian state, demonstrated a distinct bias in its use of words like “terror,” “terrorist,” and “terrorism.”⁶² Of the nineteen occurrences of the three words in President Bush’s speech, one in three referred to Palestinians as being either the person doing the action or the cause of the problem. The premise of his argument to give the Palestinians a state—a notably different objective than enabling or not preventing Palestinians from following through on their own national aspirations—hinged on Palestinian actions, not Israeli or international obligations. In essence, he said as soon as Palestinians learned to behave and stop acting like or cavorting with “terrorists,” they

61. Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 14.

62. For a transcript of this speech, see the official White House transcript at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html> (accessed 15 March 2005).

would have a sovereign state. No discussion was made of legitimate Palestinian security concerns, the imbalance of power between Israeli and Palestinian security forces, or the obligation Israel has to recognize and uphold the international treaties governing its occupation of Palestinian territory regardless of Palestinian extremist actions.

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on "Patterns of Global Terrorism" defines "terrorism" as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."⁶³ It says terrorist acts are "part of a larger phenomenon of politically inspired violence," acknowledging that at times "the line between the two can become difficult to draw." However, by referring repeatedly to "Palestinian terrorism," occasionally to "Jewish extremism," and rarely to Israel's disproportionate use of military responses or lack of diplomatic resolution for the issues (such as refugee camps) which enable the use of terrorism by some Palestinian extremists, the U.S. Department of State's annual reports reveal that they are poorly equipped to walk that line well.⁶⁴

There is a distinct shift in language from the 2000 report's "Middle East Overview" to that of the 2003 report, the most recent report currently available online. While the 2000 report noted that "Israeli-Palestinian violence also prompted widespread anger at Israel" and that several disrupted plans to attack U.S. and Israeli targets "purportedly were intended to demonstrate anger over Israel's sometimes disproportionate use of force to contain protests," the 2003 report listed al-Qaeda,

63. See "Introduction," *Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2000*, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/2419.htm> (posted 30 April 2001, accessed 17 August 2005). "Noncombatants" are defined as civilians and/or military personnel unarmed or not on duty at the time of the incident.

64. Ibid.

HAMAS,⁶⁵ Hizballah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and Ansar al-Islam, and Zargawi in the same sentence without context despite stating elsewhere that “there is no known al-Qaeda presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.” Indeed, “HAMAS publicly distanced itself from Usama Bin Ladin” following the 11 September 2001 attacks against the United States.”⁶⁶

Without recognition of the state terrorism and cultural violence endemic of Israel’s militarized national identity and “security” mentality, one cannot adequately contextualize the direct violence that a minority of Palestinians employ. Using “security” only in the context of Israeli claims of vulnerability and “terrorism” only in the context of Palestinian actions is historically inaccurate, albeit neither new or uncommon within America’s political and policy-making establishment.⁶⁷

Former CIA analyst and Middle East expert Kathleen Christison writes that “Terminology is the basic material for constructing the framework through which we view any situation. . . it becomes a way of seeing reality, and, finally, it is reality.”⁶⁸ She notes the effect of the use of words like “terrorists” and “outlaws” to describe Palestinian resistance to Israeli incursions into southern Lebanon in 1982, despite Israel’s actions being contrary to international law. She attributes this kind of coverage of Palestinians to “an Orientalist framework in which Palestine stood forth [during the early twentieth

65. HAMAS is the Arabic acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*, or Islamic Resistance Movement. Ziad Abu-Amr, “HAMAS: A Historical and Political Background,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 88, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 11. Abu Amr holds a PhD in political science from Georgetown University and is a professor at Birzeit University, where he has been teaching political science since 1985. He was elected in 1996 as a representative of Gaza to the Palestinian Legislative Council, the legislative body of the Palestinian Authority.

66. See “Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip,” *Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2001*, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, 53.

67. For a discussion of American negotiators’ expectations of Palestinian security obligations, see Clayton Swisher, *The Truth About Camp David: The Untold Story about the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process* (NY: Nation Books, 2004), 137.

68. Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (Berkeley: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 7.

century] as a holy and biblical land destined by divine writ for reclamation by Christians and Jews, and in which the native Arab inhabitants were unimportant.”⁶⁹

Christison says that despite progress toward resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, the notions that Palestinian national claims are “artificially and mischievously inspired and thus may be ignored” and that “the only real issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict is an unreasonable Arab refusal to accept Israel’s existence” have not changed since the late historian Malcolm Kerr’s observations in 1980.⁷⁰ Kerr wrote that a body of assumptions and misconceptions had grown up around the origins of the conflict and that serious discourse had ceased among the public and policy-makers following the Carter Administration and Henry Kissinger’s years as Secretary of State.

Unchallenged, one can see that this “orientalist” view and its terminology overlook the disproportionate means of control at Israel’s disposal, the significantly higher losses of life and property that Palestinians have incurred since 1948, especially since the first Intifada, and the well-documented, illegal reprisals Israeli soldiers regularly inflict on non-combatant Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.⁷¹ Such a view also

69. Christison, 25. An example of this is Barbara W. Tuchman’s *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956; 1984, which Edward Said and others criticize for a revision of history that negates the existence and legitimate grievances of Palestinians while absolving Israel of moral obligations toward Palestinians.

70. Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 1, drawing on Malcolm H. Kerr, “America’s Middle East Policy: Kissinger, Carter and the Future,” IPS Papers 14(E) (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1980), 8-9.

71. It is noteworthy to recognize that the invasion of the West Bank cities of Bethlehem, Jenin, Ramallah, and parts of Jerusalem in the spring of 2002 (called “Operation Defensive Shield” by Israel) was a coordinated effort to destroy the Palestinian infrastructure built with international aid after the Oslo Agreements and relative “calm” (for Israel) in the 1990s. This was in retaliation for the second Palestinian *intifada*, or uprising, which began in 2000 after Palestinians realized the compromises the PLO made under Oslo had afforded them little or no change in quality of life and freedom of movement, and that Israel was deepening its settlement and control in the Palestinian Territories. For anecdotal accounts, see Raheb, 76; Ramzy Baroud, ed., *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion 2002* (Seattle: Cune Press, 2003), 19-32; and Raja Shehadeh, *When the Birds Stopped Singing: Life in Ramallah Under Siege* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 2003), v-viii.

diminishes the effects of occupation, which are doubly bitter for Palestinians in light of the compromises their leadership made under Yasser Arafat.⁷²

For Palestinians, the word “terrorism” evokes images of life interminably controlled through closures and curfews; of armed Israeli helicopters flying day and night over Palestinian refugee camps and towns; and of armed Israeli snipers hiding on hill tops and roof-tops like they did during their 2002 invasion of Palestinian-controlled West Bank cities, shooting at anything that moved, including children, clerics, journalists, and medical personnel, despite their explicit rights and privileges during wartime under international law.⁷³ Palestinian lawyer Raja Shehadeh writes of the polarization of Palestinian society that developed after Oslo: “Before the Israeli oppressor we were all equal. Together we participated in the struggle of ridding our country from occupation. Now the false peace of Oslo divided us, made some believe they could pursue their private life despite the continuation of the occupation while others suffered in the worsening economic conditions.”⁷⁴

Whatever claims Sadaam Hussein and Osama bin Laden have made to be acting against the U.S. on behalf of Palestinians and against its relationship with Israel is irrelevant to Palestinians’ own actions, interests, and motivations. It must be said that the accusation of “terrorism,” or the use of intentional and indiscriminate killings on the scale of those coordinated by transnational groups like Al-Qaeda, cannot be accurately applied to the Palestinians. Palestinian frustration toward the U.S. is a direct result of Israeli occupation and internal Palestinian political tensions, not evidence of a Palestinian “strain” of global terrorists, an anti-Semitic hatred of all Jews, or an illiberal rejection of the plurality and prosperity of the “West.” In the United States, “Palestinians still often

72. Swisher, *ibid.*

73. Baroud quotes from the Fourth Geneva Convention (Art. 147) and the Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague. *ibid.*, 26-27

74. Shehadeh, 7.

face ethnic prejudice and political stereotyping. . . for no better reason than that they are Palestinian.”⁷⁵ However, Christison finds reassurance in their ability to recognize that government harassment is not the norm, to appreciate the American system despite disagreement with its foreign policies, and to focus on favorable changes in American society rather than on examples of discrimination. “The difficulties the U.S. has posed for Palestinians has served to reinforce their sense of being Palestinian. . . . This is as much a result of official American non-acceptance of Palestinians as a people, as it is the result of positive Palestinian accomplishments like the *intifada*.”⁷⁶ Within this context, Telhami argues that groups like al-Qaeda use the issue of Palestine because it resonates well with Arabs and Muslims, whereas al-Qaeda’s real agenda—a “Taliban-like state in the entire Muslim world”—does not.⁷⁷

Palestinian frustration is, however, a challenge to the policies and political history of the state of Israel, which is Palestinians’ right to express under international law as an occupied people. Occupation is defined here according to international law and the PLO’s acceptance of Israel’s pre-1967 borders (e.g., those based on the 1948 U.N. Armistice Line, known more commonly as the “Green Line”) as the international border between the states of Palestine and Israel. In other words, Palestinians have recognized Israel on seventy-eight percent of historic Palestine.⁷⁸ The Palestinians living within the remaining twenty-two percent of the land are considered to be living under a military occupation according to standards established under Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Regulations, which states that a “territory is considered occupied when it is actually

75. Christison, “American Experience,” 34-35.

76. Ibid.

77. The Palestine Center, “The Consequences of the Iraq War on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,” summary a briefing by Shibley Telhami. *For the Record* 199 (19 July 2004). Available online at <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/fortherecord.php?ID=218>.

78. See “Borders,” PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, available at http://www.nad-plo.org/inner.php?view=nego_permanent_summary_howsummerp (posted 3 February 2002).

placed under the authority of the hostile army.”⁷⁹ Members of the Palestinian Authority, or at least those who have not maintained their Jordanian travel documents, must secure permission to travel within much of the West Bank itself and their offices continue to be raided or attacked upon any suspicion by the Israeli Defense Force.⁸⁰

While Israel has used the current American-led “global war on terror” and its own ambiguous “security” concerns as cover for aggression against Palestinians, experts characterize the identity and vision behind Al-Qaeda-inspired attacks as a “radical tendency” within a broader Islamic movement known as the Salafi movement, which allows violence as a proper means of creating an Islamic society and protecting the *umma*, or Muslim community of believers. Whether or not the ideology of militants in Palestine draws on the Salafi canon of Islamic jurisprudence, religious historians Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner make a strong case that the militant, transnational interpretation of the Muslim struggle to implement the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (*jihad*) stands in contrast not only with the other canons of Islamic jurisprudence but even other Salafi groups, who propose to reform society instead through 1) personal piety and propagation of Muslim practices; 2) the private advice well-reputed religious scholars provide to national leaders on matters of Islamic law; and/or 3) the non-violent use of the *khutba* or Friday sermon, open letters, public speeches, and demonstrations to challenge un-Islamic actions or policies.⁸¹

This distinction notwithstanding, there are relevant political interpretations of Islam which impact Palestinian Muslim understandings of themselves, the teachings of the Prophet, and twentieth century history in the Occupied Territories. Georgetown

79. See “Occupation and International Humanitarian Law: Questions and Answers,” International Committee of the Red Cross, available at www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/634KFC (posted 08 April 2004, accessed 21 March 2005).

80. See for example Amy Klein’s report, “Husseini sleeping at Orient House,” *The Jerusalem Post* (May 6, 1999), at <http://www.jpost.com/com/Archive/06.May.1999/News/Article-3.html>.

81. Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, “Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda’s Justification for September 11,” *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 77-78.

University professor of Islamic history Yvonne Haddad writes that an “Islamist” view of the Arab-Israeli conflict rose in the past three decades and gained credibility because of five main things: 1) the Cold War during the 1970s and 1980s, 2) the “apparent inability of the United Nations to enforce its own decisions,” 3) the events that resulted from Israeli policies and actions “aimed at creating facts in the Occupied Territories,” 4) the perception of “unwavering” U.S. support for such actions, and 5) the “failure of Arab nations to take effective measures to counter Israel’s 1967 successes.”⁸²

IV. The Bifurcated Struggle against Israeli Occupation Post-1987

The use of violence as a means to a political end by various established and opposition groups in historic Palestine, many of whom act specifically in the name of religion, has a historical context that reveals the factors in a group’s rise to power, its organizational evolution, and its sought-after vision of the future.⁸³

Sociologists of religion argue that all “fundamentalist” religious minorities demonstrate “embattled forms of spirituality, which have emerged as a response to a perceived crisis.”⁸⁴ According to religious historian Karen Armstrong, such groups’ primary conflicts are with “enemies whose secularist policies and beliefs seem inimical to religion itself.” She adds, “Fundamentalists do not regard this battle as a conventional political struggle, but experience it as a cosmic war between the forces of good and evil.” Rather than merely isolate themselves from mainstream society, they do so to

82. Yvonne Haddad, “Islamists and the ‘Problem of Israel’: The 1967 Awakening,” *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 268. She draws on Ziad Abu Ghanima, *The Islamic Movement and the Issue of Palestine* (Arabic) (Amman: Matba’at al-Nur al-Namudhajiyya, 1989), 16.

83. This paper does not purport to be a comprehensive study and/or chronology of the Palestinian use of armed struggle in its national movement. For such a work, see Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 953 pp.

84. Karen Armstrong in *The Battle for God* (NY: Ballantine Books, 2000), xiii; drawing on Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 814-42.

create a counterculture and a plan of action. “Eventually they fight back and attempt to resacralize an increasingly skeptical world,” says Armstrong.⁸⁵

The use of armed struggle in historical Palestine is often portrayed as one unique to Muslim fundamentalists, or those who rely militantly on a literal translation of Islamic law to challenge the perceived injustices in their surrounding social order. Rather than equating suicide bombings to Arab anti-Semitism and Israeli vulnerability, analysis of the rise and evolution of Jewish nationalism (“Zionism”) demonstrates that Jews play a part too. Jewish fundamentalists, empowered by an exclusive social order in Israel and a complex psychology whereby both secular Jews and non-Jews are an offensive “other,” are as problematic to a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as Muslim extremists, if not more so. Jewish nationalists are thus both a counterpoint and a catalyst for Muslim nationalists. One might argue that where the former group’s zeal is offensive and ideological, the latter group’s motivation is defensive or reactionary, galvanizing collective anger based on lived experience more than an imagined future. While the terminology used to condemn phenomena like fundamentalism and terrorism are subject to the speaker’s bias, the consequence for Israeli identity that Jewish empowerment has had must be studied in order to understand the Jewish imagination, as the next chapter will show that dissenting scholars Marc Ellis, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Donald Wagner, Jacqueline Rose, and others have begun to do.

If Palestinian use of armed struggle is a response to their perceived lack of security and stands separate from international terrorism, the story of Palestinian national aspirations takes a serious turn when we consider some Palestinians’ use of armed struggle against their own people. Indeed, the political landscape in Palestine draws mainly on an internal tension between the two dominant power groups existing today. A shift in political power from the establishment toward the Islamists suggests that Islamist

85. Armstrong, *ibid.*

groups have gained considerable popular support and international significance since Arafat's passing in November 2004.

The Islamic movement as a whole has grown steadily since the mid-1970s, and is now one of the strongest political forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.⁸⁶ While there are Islamic parties (which do recognize Israel and are willing to negotiate with it over the future of Palestine) who are members of the PLO/PA and are internationally-recognized Palestinian political parties, HAMAS and Islamic Jihad they do not recognize either Israel or the PLO's negotiations with Israel. From a theoretical and doctrinal point of view, hard-line Palestinian Islamists dismiss the concept of democracy as a Western concept that has no place in a Muslim society, according to Ziad Abu-Amr, whose writings on the Islamists in Palestine are instrumental to understanding the use of Islam's spiritual teachings for (what we in the liberal West would consider) political ends.⁸⁷

An Islamic movement was established in the Gaza Strip by the Sunni Muslim leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin in 1971, after the suppression of PLO nationalists by Ariel Sharon, who was at the time head of Israel's Southern Command Staff.⁸⁸ The movement, known as Mujamah ("Congress"), became a charitable empire, running medical clinics, drug rehab programs, youth clubs, and more from an intentionally Muslim foundation. Armstrong notes that Yasin was a reformer fighting for "the soul of Palestine" against Palestinian nationalists like Yassir Arafat. "The cultural identity of the Palestinian people," Armstrong paraphrased Yasin, "should be Muslim rather than secular. The popularity of Mujamah showed that many Palestinians agreed."⁸⁹

86. Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 11.

87. Ibid., 130.

88. Armstrong, 350. Sharon is now Prime Minister of Israel, and authorized the successful extra-judicial plot to kill Yasin in 2004. For a biography of Sharon, see "Ariel Sharon, 1928–," Jewish Virtual Library, American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/sharon.html> (undated).

89. Armstrong, 351.

HAMAS was established at the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising (*intifada*) in December 1987 as a specific response to the Muslim Brotherhood's waning relevance after its suppression in the 1950s and the failure of the pan-Arab fervor of the 1960s. A number of prominent members of the Islamic Center of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza City (the Gaza Strip), especially Shaykh Yasin (who would be assassinated by Israel in 2004, along with Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Rantisi, his successor), called for such an organization given the Brotherhood's non-participation in the Palestinian national movement.⁹⁰ Israel initially supported HAMAS as a way of undercutting the PLO during the first Intifada and the preparations at Madrid and elsewhere for the start of the peace process.

The Islamic Jihad movement actually predates HAMAS, established in the early 1980s and shared with HAMAS its predecessor Mujamah's belief that "the Palestinian tragedy had. . . come about because the people had neglected their religion. Palestinians would only shake off Israeli rule when they returned to Islam."⁹¹ Based on the ideology of Egyptian Islamic reformer Sayyid Qutb, Armstrong notes that Islamic Jihad's radical or extreme interpretation of Islam and the political obligations it asks of believers is directly related to the alienation and repression that Muslim political reformers underwent at the hands of foreign-influenced and elite nationalist leaders.

HAMAS and Islamic Jihad can be contrasted to secular opposition groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), whose communist leanings call for a political regime at least nominally secular and which does participate in the PLO as an

90. Abu-Amr, "HAMAS," *JPS*, 10.

91. Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, xiv.

official political party.⁹² The PFLP, founded in 1967 by George Habash, a member of the PLO, was involved in international terrorist attacks during the 1970s, including an airline hijacking in 1970 that was part of what began the Black September raids that Jordan and Israel launched against exiled Palestinian nationalists in Amman. Despite its decline after the end of the Cold War and the Soviet's support, the PFLP sees the Palestinian struggle as a revolution against Western imperialism and thus remains opposed to current negotiations with Israel according to the U.S. Department of State.⁹³ It holds the Right of Return and Palestinian sovereignty in a secular, democratic state as the long-term strategic goals of every Palestinian.⁹⁴

Fatah, the once-guerrilla group headed by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, agreed to negotiations with Israel during the 1980s. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the world-wide group representing all Palestinians, has become largely defunct after Oslo. Its committees for housing, water, social services, education, health and social solidarity, though often controlled by Fatah, are divided by power struggles, jealousy, personality conflicts, and old-school systems of political decision-making.⁹⁵ Because of Israeli and U.S. officials' prejudice against Yasser Arafat, the PA was established during the peace process as a way of side-lining his representation of the Palestinians through his chairmanship of the PLO, explicitly confining its representation of Palestinian interests

92. Each group's vision of society should be understood as separate from an individual's rationale for the use of violence, murder, or suicide on behalf of that vision of society and the broader group's identity, and from the moral tradition from which that vision of society is derived. While HAMAS envisions an Islamic society, Samar Assad of the Palestine Center points out that one cannot say its use of violence is or is intended to be "Islamic." Her writings as Senior Analyst and Executive Director of The Palestine Center, formerly the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine (Washington, DC) are available at www.thejerusalemfund.org/palestinecenter.

93. See "PFLP" under "Appendix B," *Patterns of Global Terrorism - 2001*, *ibid*.

94. "Palestinian Secular Opposition at a Crossroads," Interview with PFLP's Abu Ali Mustafa and DFLP's Nayih Hawatimah, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 114 vol XXIX, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 80.

95. Patrick White, "Collapsing Peace Process Fractures Hard Won Palestinian Unity," Bethlehem Bulletin, *The Washington Report for Middle East Affairs* (February 1993): 25-26.

to the geographic region of the Territories. In the process, Palestinians' Right of Return, inalienable under international law, was taken off the table indefinitely.

The use of armed struggle by these two groups must be understood chronologically as well as qualitatively. Fatah rose out of the failure of the pan-Arab nationalist movement to assert itself against Israel during the 1970s. The PLO was established in May 1964, and in September of the same year established a military wing, The Palestine Liberation Army. It began "guerrilla attacks" against Israel in 1965.⁹⁶ Arafat himself rose to power because of this failure and gained the affection of Palestinians through his resolute struggle against Israel, as well as his ability to silence challenges among Palestinians to his power and role as national leader.⁹⁷ Through both force and persuasion, he was recognized after his passing as the single-most symbolic personality representing the struggle and complexity of the Palestinian people—yet also, for non-supporters of Palestinians, as the image of an untrustworthy statesman and Palestinian terrorist.

Fatah began with information-gathering and military training activities and unified the divergent Palestinian nationalists through its slogan of "above zero but below entanglement," or a delicate balance of confirming the legitimacy of armed struggle but postponing it in practice.⁹⁸ Hesitance toward armed struggle declined in particular after Israel's invasion of Arab-controlled lands in 1967 and the successful embarrassment of

96. Yezid Sayigh, "Restructuring the Paradox: The Arab Nationalist Movement, Armed Struggle, and Palestine, 1951-1966," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 608. Note that this point is demonstrated by the pan-Arab nationalist movement's failure to win the Six Day War against Israel in 1967.

97. Samar Assad, "Yasser Arafat: Four Decades of Resistance and Diplomacy" (Washington, DC: The Palestine Center, 11 November 2004), available at <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/informationbrief.php?ID=127>.

98. Sayigh, "Restructuring the Paradox," 622.

Israel by the Arab and Palestinian armies' near win in the subsequent Yom Kippur War of 1973.⁹⁹

Popular support for Fatah waned when it's renunciation of militancy and negotiation with Israel failed to yield tangible results for Palestinians living under occupation or denied the Right of Return. In the interim, support for HAMAS rose and led to the renewed (second) popular rebellion in 2000, known as the al-Aqsa *intifada*, or uprising.¹⁰⁰ Fatah's capitulation neither unified Palestinians nor lessened Israeli occupation.¹⁰¹ Although newly formed, HAMAS and its religiously-inspired militant reformers were in a perfect position to take over the authority. While Arafat, Fatah and the PLO retained control of the PA, they lost a lot of support among the people.

HAMAS's strong showing in the local and municipal elections in the spring and summer of 2005, as well as its' strong showing in university student body elections throughout the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip schools, and its recent willingness to participate in the political structure of a sovereign Palestinian nation-state, suggest a new dimension of internal Palestinian relations. Perhaps negotiations between HAMAS and the PA may be a concrete means for reducing the violence that "terrorizes" Israeli citizens and the respondent "state terror" of Israeli reprisals, to use such terms broadly.¹⁰²

99. Jewish literary critic Jacqueline Rose, author of *The Question of Zion* (Princeton University Press, 2005), made this observation in a briefing at the Palestine Center on 8 April 2005 entitled "Zionism Re-Examined," a summary of which is available at <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/fortherecord.php?ID=232>. Rose made reference to the regular articles and books that are discussed in the liberal Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* over what really happened in 1973. See also Michael C. Jordan, "The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: Arab Policies, Strategies, and Campaigns," available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1997/Jordan.htm> (accessed 15 April 2005).

100. The name draws on the event which tipped off the uprising, namely Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's flagrant show of armed power at the Muslim holy site Haram al-Sharif (al-Aqsa Mosque) in Jerusalem on 28 September 2000. For a statistical study, see Anita Fast, "On The Ground: The Al-Aqsa Intifada, A Statistical Picture of Palestinian Deaths and Injuries," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (December 2000): 11. For oral documentation, see Pearlman's *Occupied Voices*, *ibid*.

101. For more on the real nature and implications of that "offer," see Swisher, *ibid*. This does not refer to the refusal of Arafat to accept a supposedly "generous" offer at Camp David in 2000.

102. Beverly Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, "Elusive Ingredient: HAMAS and the Peace Process," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 132 XXXIII, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 39-52. See also Khaled Hroub's article in the same *JPS* issue, entitled "HAMAS After Shaykh Yasin and Rantisi," *JPS*: 21-38.

Abu-Amr argues that issues of democracy and pluralism have not so far been a matter of concern for the Islamic movement in the Occupied Territories, because they have simply not engaged with the political establishment and have gained persuasive power instead through extensive social and cultural activities. However, the Islamists believe their popular support is dependent on the perception that they have not capitulated, that they are the only group to stand up to Israel. This platform is short-sighted because while it is not involved in the corruption for which the PLO is hated, it is equally unversed in the negotiations which any leader of a sovereign Palestinian state would necessarily undertake with its neighboring countries, Israel being one of them. While refusing conciliatory gestures by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, HAMAS has begun to participate in elections as a political party. Its popular political power is growing, as demonstrated both by trends among the younger generation active in Palestinian university student body councils as well as by the Islamists' numerous wins during Palestinian local elections in the spring of 2005.¹⁰³

French journalist and Middle East expert Wendy Kristiansen argues that HAMAS was also threatened after Oslo by the Wye River memorandum's determination to destroy it as an opposition group, yet after the disarray following the Feb-March 1996 suicide bombings that set back the Oslo negotiations, HAMAS appeared to be on the upswing, with its top leadership back from Israeli prisons and with the forging of a new consensus within HAMAS.¹⁰⁴

Samar Assad, a former journalist based in Jerusalem with the *Los Angeles Times* and Associated Press during the Oslo Peace Process, notes that HAMAS completed

103. See Samar Assad, "On the Path of Democracy: The Palestinian Presidential Candidates," The Palestine Center, *Information Brief* no. 113 (10 December 2004), available at <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/informationbrief.php?ID=129>; and her summary of a talk on 11 January 2005 by Diana Buttu, former legal advisor to the PA, entitled "The Palestinian Presidential Elections: Exercising Democracy Under Occupation," available at <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/fortherecord.php?ID=223>. Local and national Palestinian elections were held on 10 January 2005.

104. Wendy Kristiansen, "Challenge and Counterchallenge: HAMAS's Response to Oslo," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 111/27, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 19-36.

its first suicide bombing in 1993, and that the timing is telling. It happened not at the beginning of the Palestinian uprising against Israel, as it would have been had the primary target of the violence been Israel, Assad suggests. Instead, the first bombing coincided with the beginning of the PLO's negotiations with Israel in Oslo, Norway. Assad argues that this fact demonstrates that HAMAS and the other fundamentalist Muslim groups are not truly "revolutionary" in the sense of being a revolutionary force against Israel.¹⁰⁵

Based on first-person interviews with members of HAMAS, Assad argues that there are three main rationales for completing "martyrdom operations," as they are termed by their supporters: 1) retaliation for specific actions committed by the occupying forces against a family member or friend (known in Israel as its Defense Force); 2) retribution for collective losses due sustained during or because of Jewish immigration, al-Nakba (the Catastrophe) of 1948, the Arab loss in the wars of 1967 and 1973, and/or the deepening control of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem during the first and second intifada; and 3) the lack of critical thinking caused by a specific Islamic pedagogy that does not hone students' capacity to reason critically and that limits young students' access to the humanities, the historical method, and other "soft" sciences. Assad notes that the third point enables a "group think" mentality to grow without challenge among fundamentalist Islamic communities, including some Muslim areas of the occupied Palestinian Territories.

In addition to such analysis, many suggest that a political manipulation of the Prophet Mohammed's sayings regarding the afterlife of believers creates a persuasive contrast between the "good" life after death and the "bad" of the hear-and-now. Fueled by the hard quality of life many Palestinians face, both individually and collectively, including poor educational attainment rates in rural areas during periods of open

105. For a profile of four boys in the West Bank village of Assira who grew up together and chose to die together, see Samar Assad, "Palestinian village friends choose the same path to suicide bombings," Associated Press (24 September 1997). Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, ibid.

conflict and violence, it is not difficult to imagine the many opportunities for anger, demoralization, desperation, resignation, and determination to develop and hyper-inflate for those without security, privilege, freedom, or contentment. Aggressive interpretations of Islam are further enhanced by the promise that the family of the “martyr” will be cared for materially and will gain social status the broader community after a successful campaign.¹⁰⁶

106. The film “Paradise Now,” released in 2005 by director Hany Abu-Assad, also tells of this kind of dilemma within the context of childhood friends who are confronted by their destitute future under occupation.

CHAPTER THREE

Jewish Nationalism and Israeli Statehood

A by-product of European nationalism, Jews in Russia, Germany, Britain, and elsewhere sought to ensure the unity, safety, and renewal of the Jewish people through the ascendance of the political ideology of Zionism. Its core objective was to (re)establish a Jewish homeland in the geographical region of the ancient Hebrews. While successful in creating—as well as expanding forcibly—that nation-state, it remains to be seen whether the state of Israel's creation has protected and enabled the continuity of the Jewish people or if it has, instead, exposed them to more dependency and internal fracture.

In analyzing the evolution of Jewish political thought and activity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one can argue that Christianity was the foil against which both imperialism and the modern nation-state were established in Europe, and that as such, Jews paid a special price as cultural outsiders. Even before national socialism rose to power in Germany, Jews began to seek support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. In fact, German Jews were largely against the religious Russian movement that was known as Zionism because of their more secular and assimilated demographic in Germany.¹ The more Jews struggled for acceptance, the less stable their relationship with the surrounding society became. In this context, Jewish Zionists saw Israel as their salvation even as they viewed their role there in equally messianic terms, such as through the imagery of “making the desert bloom.”

To the dismay of some Jews, the Zionist project shifted when Israel became a political reality in historic Palestine. It went from establishing autonomous socialist communities of spiritual renewal to creating and mobilizing a newly unified people

1. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (NY: Schocken Books, 1972), 157.

toward political and military strength. As observable today, the waves of immigration throughout the twentieth century brought ongoing ethnic and socio-economic tensions within the Jewish community long before such came to a head after the near loss of the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the political triumph of the Likud party. The popular uprising of the Palestinians in the 1980s was a wake-up call for many Jews in Israel and the United States, who began to question the effect that Israeli identity was having on Jewish identity as much as the Palestinian quality of life. Yet the political capital to be gained from the Jewish struggle for belonging was not expended, nor had Zionism achieved its full geographic vision. The international pressure for peace with the Palestinians brought a moderate willingness to negotiate and compromise on some points, but only after the important goals had been met, such as the consolidation of the territory of Jerusalem and the West Bank (what some Jews call “Judea and Samaria”).

I. Rise of Zionism as Strategy for Jewish Safety and Renewal

Quoting Theodor Herzl, historian Walter Laqueur writes that the basic aim of Zionism in the late 1800s and early 1900s was twofold: “to regain Jewish self-respect and dignity in the eyes of non-Jews; and to rebuild a Jewish national home, for Jews to ‘live as free men on their own soil, to die peacefully in their own homes.’”² However, because continuity between ancient and modern history of Jews has been forged through the subjective lens of memory and culture, the issue of what it means to be a Jew—or a Jewish state—has been a thorn in Israel’s side since the start of the Zionist movement.

The debate over who is Jewish, which goes back to the origins of Christianity in ancient Egyptian and Roman society, turned existential when Jews were targeted and expelled by the Spanish throne at the end of the fifteenth century. Religious historian Karen Armstrong notes that many Spanish Jews were forced to convert by a fledgling Catholic monarchy intent at establishing itself after Moorish rule, only to later be

2. Laqueur, 599.

expelled altogether if not killed at the stake.³ With them they brought the anti-Semitism of the medieval Catholic church. The result was frequent riots against the Spanish Jews between 1449 and 1474 and the death of some 13,000 “conversos,” many of whom were not Jewish at all. After the conquest of Granada in 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella signed the Edict of Expulsion that led to the conversion and inquisition of about 70,000 Jews and the exile of the remaining 130,000.⁴ Armstrong notes that this expulsion was not unique to Spain, but that throughout the fifteenth century Jews had been deported and expelled from cities throughout Western Europe, including Vienna, Cologne, Ausburg, Milan, and cities in Tuscany.⁵

Jews who established themselves in the Balkans and Eastern Europe were soon confronted by a new threat in the secularizing trend of modernization and the industrial revolution. Armstrong notes that Judaism’s non-cult like worship structure, its lack of a doctrinal canon, and changes occurring within the structure and authority of Rabbinical Judaism led some prominent Jewish families during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to seek acceptance within the dominant Christian society of Germany through assimilation and conversion, as well as increased study of their own heritage from a more secularized standpoint.⁶ Yet the opposite reaction was going on among Jews elsewhere—such as in southern Europe and western Russia, whose geographical isolation and political repression led to increased emphasis on the messianic

3. Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (NY: Random House, 2000), 7.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 8.

6. Ibid., 14, 104.

narrative within Judaism and the development of a deeper spiritual and communal dimension of the Jewish tradition.⁷

Consciousness of cultural and ethnic particularity began to grow among Jews. Marrano Jews like Uriel da Costa and Juan da Prado, whose families had converted to Christianity in fifteenth-century Spain, fled in the seventeenth century for the religiously tolerant Amsterdam but were soon disillusioned with the enlightened, individualistic, and non-mythical Judaism of northern Europe.⁸ Elsewhere the Jewish experience of ghettos was normative, where Jews were forced to live together in enclaves outside the center of Christian-dominated cities. Armstrong notes that this segregation and the surrounding anti-Semitic culture had a cyclical effect on Jews, who became by default self-contained, introverted, and isolated from the affluent and secularized outside world. While this led to the cyclical tradition of reading that characterizes Jewish philosophy today, this immersion in their own texts and cultural traditions also led some Jews (like Spinoza) to lash out against the tradition and others to over-concentrate on the minutia of the tradition—both as a way of holding at bay the onslaught of the outside world.⁹ This onslaught was most pronounced under the Cossack peasant cavalry in what is now Ukraine. The Cossacks, who hated both Jews and Poles, led a massacre that killed as many as 100,000 Jews and destroyed 300 Jewish communities in 1667.¹⁰

Arab and North African Jews followed a different, much more integrated trajectory in the Islamic world. As European thought placed increasing emphasis on individuality and rationality—thus affirming the changes in Jewish identity away from its strictly religious, Judaic elements—it led to an increased secularism, skepticism, nihilism, and privatization of faith that were not present in the spiritual observance of Jews in

7. Ibid., 9.

8. Ibid., 20, 21.

9. Ibid., 25.

10. Ibid.

the Islamic world. Like the twelfth-century philosopher Maimonides and even the messianic Jewish convert to Islam Shabbetai Zevi, Arab and North African Jews found a solace in their environment despite its culturally Islamic foundation because of the distinct absence of anti-Semitism in medieval Islamic thought. Indeed, twentieth-century Zionism has a curious precedent in the messianic Kabbalism of the Ashkenazic Jew Isaac Luria who settled among the Sephardic Jews of Safed (near Galilee) in the mid sixteenth century. Believing that the messiah would reveal himself in Galilee, these Jews and their successors believed that Jews could help to effect a restoration or healing (“*tikkun*”) of the divine light (believed to be separated from the Godhead because of Adam’s sin) through the return of “the Jewish people to the Promised Land” and “the rest of the world to its rightful state.”¹¹ While rejected by mainstream Arab and North African Jews, acceptance of the mythical tradition within Judaism among the Lurianic Kabbalists was retained within the broad conservative ethic of Jews in the Islamic world during the seventeen and eighteenth centuries.

Where the tradition had been taken for granted, Armstrong notes that Jews had to fight to be Orthodox in early nineteenth-century Europe because of its reliance on secular individualism, scientific reasoning, and industrial production. Hasidism, a conservative reform movement based on “the Lurianic symbol of divine sparks that had been trapped in matter during the primal catastrophe,” was in many ways the antithesis of the European Enlightenment and its Jewish corollaries—both the atheism of Spinoza and the *Haskalah* of Moses Mendelssohn.¹² Its renaissance of the spiritual and mystical dimensions of Judaism was paralleled, however, by a more moderate religious identity such as that of German rabbi Samuel Raphael Hirsch. A leader of the German Orthodox, Hirsch established in his schools a more culturally comprehensive curricula than that of

11. Ibid., 12, drawing on Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 246-49.

12. Armstrong, 100-01.

the ultra-Orthodox (Hasidic) *yeshiva*, which aimed to guard the minds of their students from the secular culture of Europe.¹³ Supported financially by the wealthy Rothschild family, Hirsch's schools followed the philosophy that Jews "should seek out the hidden, inner meaning of the various commandments by means of careful study and research."¹⁴ Hirsch believed that while "Jews had to hope and pray for their return to Zion," to actively seek "to accelerate the redemption was a sin and strictly prohibited."¹⁵ His views influenced the mainstream Orthodox of the early twentieth century, who viewed Zionism like they did Reform Judaism, as a "mortal enemy."¹⁶

As with all social and cultural phenomena, there are many factors involved, although most significantly one can see the disillusionment of power which has been the unexpected result of the Zionist desire to be treated as—and to have the freedom to act as—any other sovereign nation-state. The psychological toll that the urban warfare between the Israeli military (a service required of nearly all of its citizens, men, and women) has produced, along with the mounting tragedies caused by the contemporary use of human bombs, or suicide bombers, by Palestinians against Israelis as a strategy to be heard at any cost, push Jews around the world—like Muslims and Christians who are equally involved in the human condition, irregardless of national or political orientation—to question the ethical vacancy within the globalized and often anti-religious culture of the world today, and to search out the Divine in unfamiliar ways.

II. Israel, the Palestinians, and the Struggle of Defining Jewish Democracy

American and Israeli societies accept as legal the events surrounding the establishment of Israel as an independent state in 1948. Between Jews and Arabs,

13. Ibid., 111.

14. Ibid., 112.

15. Laqueur, 407.

16. Ibid.

however, there are different interpretations of that period of contemporary history. Most Israelis and Jews view the conflict as the “War of Independence,” whereas most Palestinians and Arabs know it as the “Year of the Catastrophe.”¹⁷ Historian and social scientist Mark Tessler writes that “The extent to which Palestinian psychology is marked by the events of this period cannot be overemphasized.”¹⁸ He points out that a significant number of Palestinians do not agree with conventional wisdom concerning the historical period of Israel’s origins, the Arab position having been consistent since 1948 in its view that “the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was an illegal and illegitimate act.”¹⁹

Palestinians today, many of whose families have lived in historic Palestine for two thousand years, fear that the Israeli government still desires total control of the area designated for a Jewish national home by the World Zionist Organization in 1919, at the conclusion of World War I. One of the reasons that this fear is palpable in the hearts and minds of Palestinians is the history of expulsion, dispossession, murder, and differentiation they have experienced individually and collectively since the end the British Mandate when Israel first expanded its land holdings beyond the 1947 United Nations partition plan. In particular, the April 1948 massacre of 254 unarmed civilians (including 100 women and children) in the village of Deir Yassin exemplifies for Palestinians the intransigence of the Jewish militias active in the late 1940s.²⁰ Tessler emphasizes that the major significance of the Deir Yassin massacre lies “not in a dispute

17. In 1944 David Ben Gurion, the Labor Zionist leader who became Israel’s first prime minister, called the dream of Israeli statehood a “consummation of the Jewish revolution,” and declared that “the meaning of the Jewish revolution is contained in one word—Independence.” Although Israel has no formal constitution, its foundational doctrine of state power is known as the “Declaration of Independence.” See Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 269.

18. Ibid., 281.

19. Tessler, 284.

20. For an account of this event, see part one of *Remembering Deir Yassin: The Future of Israel and Palestine*, ed. by Daniel McGowan and Mark H. Ellis (Brooklyn, NY: Olive Branch Press, 1998); and Peretz Kidron, “Truth Whereby Nations Live,” in *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, ed. by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (NY: Verso, 1988, 2001), 85-96.

about what really happened or about whether there could be any justification,” but rather in a “bitter disagreement about whether or not there was a systematic and calculated Zionist campaign of terror designed to drive Palestinians from the area that became the State of Israel.”²¹

Palestinian and Arab coverage of the Deir Yassin massacre mirrors the broader dispute between Arab and Israeli accounts of the mass exodus of Palestinians between 1947 and 1949, when the armistice line was established (creating a then-Jordanian ruled West Bank and an Egyptian-ruled Gaza Strip which lasted until 1967). Whatever the broader intention of Jewish leaders and militias were, the demographic effect is undeniable—in addition to the 300,000-plus indigenous Arab Palestinians who had already left their homes by Ben Gurion’s 1948 declaration of statehood, the number of refugees rose to at least 726,000 by the fall of 1949 according to UN figures.²² Only 150,000 Palestinians remained in the region that became Israel after the war.²³

Judaism itself, as much as *Jewishness*, is a complicated referent that encapsulates a broad spectrum of identity, in terms of traditional observation of the *mitzvot* and religious rituals, as much as linguistic heritage, geographical origin, and so on. Much of modern political struggles in Israel exist in the areas of race, class and ethnicity between secularized, white, and Labor-leaning Ashkenazi Jews from northern Europe (59 percent of the Israeli population) and more conservative, non-white, Likkud-leaning Mizrachim (41 percent). It is of no small consequence that Zionism, even in its secularized European ideology, was a return to a “holy” land for the purpose of creating a “holy” state—that

21. Tessler, 292.

22. Tessler, 789, fn. 22, drawing on an estimate made by the UN Economic Survey Mission to Palestine. Israeli historian Benny Morris puts the number somewhere between 600,000 and 760,000. See his *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.

23. Tessler, 279.

is, the national, cultural, *and spiritual* center of global Jewry.²⁴ This multi-dimensional vision gave way for the orthodox and ultra-orthodox to finally accept a national state, previously decried as a heretical appropriation of the ancient longing for a Messiah and the Judaic covenant of “chosen-ness,” when faced by the realities of yellow badges, concentration camps, death marches, and so on. Still today, there is significant tension between the ultra-Orthodox *heredim* and the Israeli Defense Force mandated to protect them, where one can safely say that the violence of extremists appropriating Islam for political gain is matched in full by the vitriolic passion of Constantinian Judaism.²⁵

Power is most subtly exercised through a mobilization of symbolic artifacts, social memory, and collective rituals. In addition to the menorah and Star of David previously mentioned, one can identify strong religious currents in the political culture of Israel through the enforced observation of the Sabbath among shop-keepers and average citizens; the public scheduling of specifically Jewish holidays like Passover and Yom Kippur as national events, and the symbolic exception of ultra-Orthodox (the *heredim*) from the universal obligation of Israelis to serve in the military. Most tellingly, the term used to denote the nationality of Israelis on passports and official documents is “Jewish,” as differentiated from “Arab,” i.e., Palestinian.

There is a tragic paradox to the contemporary story of Israel-Palestine, as Baroud suggested. While enduring and overcoming the prejudices of Western-European Christianity, Jewish Zionists did indeed establish Jewish power and achieve worldwide recognition as an autonomous, recognition-worthy people. They did this, however, at

24. It is important to note that Theodor Herzl and other political Zionists argued for a secular state from a Jewish milieu where much of the cultural and religious particularity of Jews had been assimilated into the larger Protestant and Catholic Christian contexts of northern/western Europe, and where “being Jewish” had been reduced to an ethnic or transnational sub-culture. Jews coming from Eastern Europe and southern Russia cared much less about the political structure of any future state than the spiritual, and intellectual role it would play in revitalizing Judaism. It was the latter who would settle only for Palestine as the state’s location, because of its historic and symbolic connections with Judaism (especially Jerusalem). See Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, *ibid*.

25. Marc Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation: The Challenge of the 21st Century*, 3rd expanded ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 178, 206.

the price of Palestinian Arabs' national and cultural survival. The tragedy does not end there, however, for either people. The events at Jenin raise questions about the nature and strategy of Israeli policy, rooted as it is in the Zionist worldview, and its effects on Israel's Jewish majority. Insufficient attention is given by most commentary on the Middle East crisis to the moral crisis they face, psychologically unprepared for the ethnic conflict, vitriolic animosity, and cultural desensitization that are inherent in Israeli society and the external defense project.

Some of the contradictions center on the experience of immigration, and disillusionment over the stratification and labor-oriented economy of Israel. Elias Chacour, Palestinian Christian minister and author of *Blood Brothers*, describes how newly arrived Jewish immigrants often did not understand the historical milieu they were entering, and became pawns of the Zionist leaders who thrust weapons into their hands and indoctrinated them about the evils of their new enemy, the Palestinians.²⁶ In the process of incorporation whereby thousands of culturally and linguistically diverse Jews became Israeli, Jewish military groups sometimes also targeted their own unsuspecting people as a way to break off relations between those Jews living in historic Palestine who were themselves Arab and sympathetic to the Christian and Muslim townspeople and customers with whom they had been friends for years, or by harassing Jewish women who dealt with Palestinian merchants and vandalizing the property of those who employed Palestinian labor in their shops or fields. "We expected Jerusalem. All gold. No Tel Aviv, no Haifa, no Sefad. All Jews. To live with Jews in Jerusalem. Also, without work. There are orange trees and, without working, you go and pick and eat. Life like, I don't know, the Garden of Eden. We came with that thought. And where is the reality?"

26. Elias Chacour with David Hazard, *Blood Brothers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1984), 121-122, 125.

said one Ethiopian immigrant who moved to Israel in 1993 with the waves of Ethiopian immigration.²⁷

Other disillusionment arises from the paradox of a divinely “chosen” people who nevertheless must protect itself against its neighboring enemies, and the compounded emotional desensitization and brutal, often unprovoked hand-to-hand combat that military service against the Palestinians has required since the first Palestinian uprising, or *intifada*, in 1989. Israeli citizens are required to serve a minimum of two years in the Israeli Defense Force, with the controversial exception of some religious groups and the *de facto* (not *de jure*, however) exception of Arab-Israelis—military service thus becoming a status symbol that reflects the differentiation and hierarchy of Israeli society.

In *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*, sociologists Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled argue that the conflict in the Middle East is much more complex than traditionally understood, if only because Israeli society—the dominant power on the ground—is more heterogeneous than traditionally conceived. Since 1967, they argue, Israel has increasingly reflected deep divisions between “hawks” and “doves,” Ashkenazim and Mizrachim, secular and Orthodox Jewish communities, Jews and non-Jews, and so on.²⁸ Shafir and Peled challenge the dualistic, functionalist mode of traditional explanations of the conflict and internal Israeli social relations, whereby the state is accepted as exclusively Jewish (in function at least, if not by definition too); the conflict with Arabs is assumed to have originated and developed externally; the Labor

27. Shafir and Peled, 320, drawing on a citation in Marian Freda Reiff’s “Immigration and Medicine: Stress, Culture and Power in Encounters between Ethiopian Immigrants and their Doctors in Israel,” doctoral dissertation, Columbia University (1997).

28. See also Benyamin Neuberger, “State, Society and Politics: Social Cleavages and Political Parties,” Seminar on Israel, at www.passia.org/seminars/2000/israel/part6.html. Neuberger expands those divisions to include, more specifically, left and right on economic issues; doves and hawks on military and border issues; religious Jews versus secular Jews on political and civil issues; Ashkenazi Israeli Jews versus Sephardic/Mizrachi Israeli Jews (those from North America, Russia and northern Europe versus those from southern Europe, Africa and Asia) on religious issues; Zionists versus non-Zionists on issues regarding state power and Israeli identity; and *Olim* versus *Vatikim* (new immigrants as opposed to those well-established and/or indigenous).

coalition is altruistically led by representatives of Judaism who have the best interests of all Jews at heart and who are saddened by the necessity of violence; and that Israeli political theory is appropriately described in terms of Jewish nationalism and ethnic democracy.²⁹

Shafir and Peled argue that this paradigm, while perhaps relevant in the first few decades of Israeli existence (for example, in explaining the ideal of the “Sabra hero”), is no longer complete. They say it must now include the internal struggle over the definition of citizenship and ethnic and religious expansion that has taken place in society since 1967 because of territorial expansions and immigrant integration. They argue that the internal status quo which leaves one million Arab-Israelis as second class citizens and 3.2 million Palestinians under a brutal Israeli occupation is not a result merely of the machinations of an elite Jewry with only the land or Jewish purity on its mind. Rather, they argue that Israeli military and civilian policies are continuing to develop as civil authority, social differentiation, and the definition of citizenship change—that is, that the struggle is now between a *declining* secular, European elite signified by a pioneering expansionist mentality and a colonial definition of civic republicanism, as with the Ashkenazi and Labor Settler Movement; and a *rising* group of ethnic and religious minorities (Mizrachim, National Religious Party and non-Jewish immigrant labor classes). This “frontier within,” as Shafir and Peled describe it, has developed since the 1967 Six Day War precisely because of groups like the Muslim and Christian Arab-Israelis (Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship because they remained within its borders in 1948 and 1967) and Jewish groups from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union,

29. Gershon Shafir and Yav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 335.

who together are pushing Israeli society closer toward a civil society in the liberal and market sense of the term.³⁰

The contradictions and inequalities of Israeli society came to the forefront in 1967 when the question of who was to be “incorporated” forever changed the face of Israel from both within and without. Major immigration to Israel during the past three decades has occurred from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. At that time, twelve percent of Israel was Arab; the population (many of whom were displaced in 1948, even within the formal state boundaries) numbered approximately 318,000 before June 1967 and approximately 326,000 after December of the same year.³¹

While Jewish Israeli anxiety over their self-defense jumped exponentially once the story hit the newsstands that the Israeli army had disabled the Egyptian army and captured Jerusalem (three days after the fact), Palestinian morale plummeted—as did that of most Arabs around the world. The land of historic Palestine was symbolic for religious as much as cultural and political reasons, but Jerusalem especially so. The military triumph did not ease social tensions in Israel, however, either for its growing population of Jews from developing and transitional states or for its internally displaced Arab-Israeli citizens.

It must be interjected that my cautionary projection of what is wrong with identity politics is not to suggest either that European Jewry should have, or Palestinians should, forego resistance to the causes of their collective suffering, for as Finkelstein says the slogan “Never again!” was not wrong, but elusive and misdirected. Take, for example, Salay Meridor, the head of the Settlements Division for the World Zionist Organization

30. “As the liberal discourse of the market seems to predominate, citizenship itself becomes more privatized and the overall commitment to social solidarity and to social rights is gradually diminished,” write Shafir and Peled, 307. See also their chapters “The frontier within: Palestinians as third-class citizens,” 110-136; and “Emergent citizenship groups? Immigrants from the FSU and Ethiopia and overseas labor migrants,” 308-333.

31. Said et al., “A Profile of the Palestinian People,” in *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (NY: Verso Press, 1988), 269.

and former policy advisor to the Israeli ministers of defense and foreign affairs. In an essay on the settlements published online by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Meridor writes calmly that, “For too long, the Israeli and Palestinian populations have viewed their relationship in the territories as a zero-sum game. However, the history of the communities there has demonstrated not only that the two sides can live together but that both can prosper simultaneously, and even as a result of the other’s presence.”

³² He lists areas of possible inter-dependence: jobs, economic development, health care, tourism, environmental protection. His solution? Joint sewage treatment plants, and jointly owned industrial parks and corporations—to “serve as a bridge between Israeli capital and the Palestinian population.” Tourism is argued as another area where “cooperation could produce both social harmony and economic welfare.”

III. Israeli Historiography: “New Historians” versus “Post-Zionists”

Simply put, neither Zionist nor conventional Israeli history even began to adequately account for the Palestinian narrative until recently—except perhaps through their silence. This has caused both an intellectual impasse in popular explanations for the direct, obvious violence which has not abated during the past fifty years, as well as a void for concrete and sufficient platforms for change or improvement in relations between the various parties to the conflict.

In 1979, Edward Said wrote that, “The fact of the matter is that today Palestine does not exist, except as a memory or, more importantly, as an idea, a political and human experience, and an act of sustained popular will.”³³ This situation has changed—and yet much is still the same a quarter century later. Distinct changes in the situation facing Palestinians began in the mid-1980s with a series of articles in the *Jewish American*

32. Salay Meridor, “The Jews of the West Bank and Gaza and the Peace Process” (Research Note 4), The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (November 1997), at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/junior/note4.htm>.

33. Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (NY: Vintage Press, 1979; 1992), 5.

magazine *Tikkun*, wherein Israeli historians began to re-examine the popular myths surrounding the origins of Israeli statehood. Known as the “new historian” movement, this expanded historical inquiry offered a documented structure upon which better relations between Israelis and Palestinian could grow, and it began to influence other academic disciplines, stereotypes, and areas of popular culture in Israel, as well as the framework of perception about Palestinians elsewhere in the world.

This generation of “new historians” investigated the atrocities at Lydda and Ramla as well as the 1948 massacre at Deir Yassin by the Jewish Irgun and Stern Gang soldiers, finding in the writings and political vision of key Labor Zionist leaders an awareness of the presence and the likely complications that the indigenous Arab population would pose for the establishment of a Jewish state in historic Palestine.³⁴ Israeli scholars like Benny Morris, Michael Cohen, Simha Flapan, Uri Bar-Joseph and Avi Shlaim have argued that the mass Palestinian exodus between 1947-49, during which the vast majority of the Arab community in historic Palestine left in fear or were physically forced from their villages, was directly caused by the armed forces in the Yishuv (the Zionist community of Palestine). These scholars have also shown that the Zionist armed forces (the Haganah, the Irgun, the Stern gang, and the Israeli Defense Force) were better armed and better trained in 1948 than the Arab armies were at the time, even though they were far outnumbered and even though a few squadrons of Zionist fighters were untrained, having been literally taken off the immigration boats, handed guns, and sent off to battle. Lastly, these scholars argue that some of the surrounding Arab leaders were willing to negotiate peace, or non-belligerency, whereas it was key Zionist leaders who prevented discussion, much less agreement. For example, Morris compares the words of King Abdullah of

34. See also *New Perspectives on Israeli History: The Early Years of the State*, ed. by Lawrence Silberstein (NY: New York University Press, 1991), 275 pp. The book is helpful in understanding the myths and symbolism by which Israeli independence signaled changes within the social structure of the European Jewish immigrant community and between the *Yishuv* and Diaspora Jews who have chosen to remain elsewhere even after 1948.

Jordan and President Hosni Zaim of Syria to Israeli Prime Ministers David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir.³⁵

In addition to the 1978 declassification of Israeli documents and archives, the backdrop for this shift in popular and academic commentary can be found in events such as the political changes in the Israeli government after the Yom Kippur War in October 1973 toward the more hawkish, ethnically diverse, political and religious conservatives on the right; the 1977 electoral triumph of the Likud coalition over the Ashkenazi-led Labor group; the ongoing, high-profile clashes between the Israeli government and Fatah, or the military wing of the Palestinian Liberation Organization; and the 1982 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon and controversy over Israel's indirect role in the massacre of Muslim Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. In this chaotic political context, Israeli scholars began to question the status quo relations they experienced daily on the ground, drawing parallels back to events and policies as early as the 1920s and 30s, for example David Ben-Gurion's policy of "transfer"—that is, the Zionist euphemism for what Palestinians call "dispossession" at best, "rape and pillage" at worst.³⁶

Palestinian historian Nur Masalha, a professor of history and politics at Beir Zeit University, has been particularly outspoken about the problematic viewpoint even among this "new historian" movement. His critiques have been most strongly directed at Israeli historian Benny Morris, the professor at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba who first coined the term, and to whom most scholars attribute the origins of this new genre of Israeli historiography. His articles and books in the 1980s and early 1990s were as controversial to Israelis as they were to Palestinians (particularly *The Birth of*

35. Benny Morris, "Looking back: a personal assessment of the Zionist experience" (Israel at 50), *Tikkun* 13, no. 2 (March-April 1998): 40-50.

36. Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought 1882-1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949), though obviously for differing reasons.³⁷ Masalha criticizes Morris and the others for what remains a positivist reading of history, despite an expanded scope, and their ignorance or disregard of the methodological or theoretical questions which might undermine the certainty of the Zionist project. He criticizes Morris in particular for the lack of primary oral Palestinian source material, and for his inability to provide the broader context in which Palestinian resistance to Jewish immigration and Israeli statehood might be understood as both historically reasonable and still germane.³⁸ Thus “new historians” like Morris are helpful in establishing a more factual and critical analysis of specific actions Israel took during the period of its inception, but they are incapable of helping a just peace to develop because they stop short of questioning the morality and legitimacy behind those actions, which constitute the context for violence today. Moreover, they stay within the Israeli framework of perception by not affirming Palestinian scholars’ own legitimacy and critical memory as historians.³⁹

Not all scholars of this generation remain within the Zionist framework of perception as Morris and those above do. Those who step out of it are able, as Nur Masalha advocated, to challenge the means and foundations of Israel’s dominant ideology, as much as its conclusions. At this other end of the spectrum are “post-Zionist” Israeli

37. Benny Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, *ibid.*; *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990; expanded ed. 1994); and *Israel’s Border Wars, 1949-1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

38. Nur Masalha, “‘1948 and After’ revisited,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 90-96. On the use of oral history, see Beshara B. Doumani, “Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History,” in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 5-28; republished in *The Israel/Palestine Question: Rewriting Histories*, ed. by Ilan Pappé (NY: Routledge, 1999), 11-40. See also Thomas M. Ricks, “Memories of Palestine: Uses of Oral History and Archaeology in Recovering the Palestinian Past,” in *Archaeology, History and Culture in Palestine and the Near East: Essays in Memory of Albert E. Glock*, ed. by Tomis Kapitan, American Schools of Oriental Research (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 23-46.

39. Key Palestinian historians include Rashid Khalidi, Sami Hadawi, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Lila Abu-Lughod, Edward Said, and Naseer Aruri, as much as sociologist Salim Tamari and Palestinian-Christian theologians Na’im Ateek, Elias Chacour, and Mitri Raheb who each present their theological arguments within a compelling historical context.

scholars like Baruch Kimmerling, Ilan Pappé, Yoav Peled, Uri Ram, Avi Slaim, Gershon Shafir and Yonathan Shapiro—those who are able to, most importantly, break down the broader conflict posited between Arabs and Israelis into a historically nuanced terrain, where external struggles like between the settlers and the indigenous Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are contextualized within internal ethnic and religious struggles between Israeli and Palestinian societies respectively.

As Ilan Pappé argues, from his research as professor of political science at Haifa University, the “new sociologists” and “post-Zionist political scientists” who followed the “new historian” movement, did more than just expose the dictatorial and arbitrary nature of the Jewish political system that existed during the Mandate period. He argues that their most important contribution was “the application of a colonialist perspective to the historical study of Zionism,” coming the closest to the Palestinian narrative that Israeli historians ever have.⁴⁰ The theoretical perspective has allowed them to look at Zionism as “a colonialist movement,” he says, without being accused of adopting unvarnished the Palestinian discourse.

Mark Tessler himself is a fascinating example of both the interdisciplinary nature of these new “post-Zionist” historians, sociologists, and political scientists, and their influence on critical thought even in the United States. A professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Tessler is known as much for his sociological surveys and historical acumen as for his work in analysis of the political economy of Tunisia, Israel, the West Bank, Egypt, and Morocco. His 1994 publication, *A History of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict*, raised the standard of American scholarship on the question of Palestine and provides a fair yet sympathetic profile of both Israeli and Palestinian nationalism during the twentieth century. It also provides an important foundation for future negotiations between Israeli, Palestinian, and American leaders

40. Ilan Pappé, “Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians (Part I): The Academic Debate,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 36.

and diplomats, particularly those who seek to understand the compounded and complex context in which a second *intifada* began on 28 September 2000, as described further below.

IV. The Transition of American Jewry From Assimilation to Militarism

The story is told of an Israeli physician who was called up for reserve duty in 1988, just months after the beginning of the first *intifada*, and assigned to the Ansar 2 prison. When he arrived, his colleagues informed him of his duties: “Mainly you examine prisoners before and after an investigation.” “After the investigation?” the physician queried. “Nothing special,” was the reply. “Sometimes there are fractures. For instance, yesterday they brought a twelve-year-old boy with two broken legs.”⁴¹ Only a month before, reports had emerged that shook Israeli society, concerning an ordered nighttime beating of twelve Palestinian villagers, so violent that it broke the clubs the Israeli soldiers used to break their arms and legs, leaving only one without broken legs so as to return to the village for help.⁴² Deeply disturbed at the inhumane methods of control and ‘investigation,’ the physician went to his commander. “My name is Marcus Levin and not Josef Mengele, and for reasons of conscience I refuse to serve in this place,” he declared, referring to the Nazi physician notorious for his cruelty. To add insult to injury, another doctor calmed him saying, “Marcus, first you feel like Mengele, but after a few days you get used to it.”⁴³

This line of thought influenced the ability of some Jewish soldiers to see the invasion of Jenin, Bethlehem, and Ramallah in March and April 2002 (“Operation

41. Gideon Spiro, “You Will Get Used to Being a Mengele,” *Al Hamishar* (19 September 1988), as quoted in Ellis and Ruether, 1-2.

42. Yossi Sarid, “The Night of the Broken Clubs,” *Ha’aretz* (4 May 1989), *ibid.*

43. Spiro, *ibid.*

Defense Shield”) as a necessary evil.⁴⁴ On the one hand, the violent actions by the Israeli military demonstrated what some considered only the latest clash of a century-long policy of repression and intimidation, and added yet another date to the already long list of brutality between Zionists and Arabs, or Israelis and Palestinians today (that is, 1920-21, 1936, 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, 1987, 1994, 2000, and many others); others deny that it happened at all, or view it as necessary for Israeli security. The invasions, particularly the reoccupation of the city of Jenin and its adjacent refugee camp on the northern-most border of the West Bank, are a focal point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for many people. In particular, Ramsey Baroud writes of Jenin that “the plight of this small camp with its impoverished refugees is representative of Israeli occupation and of Palestinian resistance. It reflects the victimization of the Palestinian people and also demonstrates their determination to use armed struggle to defy occupation. It also exemplifies Israel’s unwavering support of its army’s conduct in the occupied territories.”⁴⁵

The full story or exactly what happened during the 10-day siege in early April 2002 that left the homes and businesses of Palestinian families demolished may never be known. The camp was first established by the United Nations to house Palestinians displaced as early as 1953, following the Israeli “War of Independence” in 1948. It is located near the border of Israeli territory, and the Israeli government argues that it is a base for attacks on near-by cities like Haifa and Netanya. Baroud’s book is filled with first-person accounts of exactly how Israeli soldiers acted repugnantly during their invasion of the refugee camp, apparently consumed by hatred and inebriated with their strength—from defecating and urinating in homes and mosques, to defacing walls with racist anti-Arab slogans, using women and children as human shields and ploys, and

44. See Ramzy Baroud, *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion*, with preface by Noam Chomsky (Seattle, WA: Cune Press, 2003); and Raja Shehadeh, *When the Birds Stopped Singing: Life in Ramallah Under Siege* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 2003).

45. Baroud, 32. Baroud, a Palestinian-American scholar, was denied access to the territories by the Israeli border control, and thus had to rely on others to conduct the direct interviews which are published together in this book.

shooting unarmed civilians and children. One eye-witness said that they touched a gun barrel to a Palestinian infant's head and taunted his mother, "Should I kill him?"⁴⁶ The largest daily in Israel, *Yediot Aharonot*, interviewed one bulldozer operator known as "Kurdi Bear," who described his aptitude for "erasing" Palestinian homes and buildings as a kind of madness that prevented his ability to see his victims as human. "For three days, I just destroyed and destroyed. The whole area. Any house that they fired from came down. And to knock it down, I tore down some more. They were warned by loudspeaker to get out of the house before I come, but I gave no one a chance. I didn't wait."⁴⁷

Humanitarian reports note that contrary to international law, Israeli soldiers seized strategically-located mosques and homes; military commanders gave orders to shoot anything that moved (even non-combatants like nurses in full white uniform, the elderly, and children); helicopters fired missiles into the windows of occupied apartments; and all outside persons were denied entry into the camp, be they medics, social workers, journalists, or international jurists.⁴⁸ As first-person accounts began to surface after the invasion of the Jenin refugee camp, international actors like the United States came under increased pressure for its role in manufacturing, exporting, and subsidizing the sophisticated machinery and hardware used during the siege, as well as the United Nations for their ineffective monitoring of Israeli human rights violations and the Red Cross for their inability to gain access to the victims for several days. Palestinians

46. Ibid., 95.

47. Tsadok Yeheskeli, "I made them a stadium in the middle of the camp," *Yediot Aharonot* (31 May 2002), at www.gush-shalom.org/archives/kurdi_eng.html (accessed 11 February 2003). His name was reported to be a nickname given to him by his fellow soldiers for how forcefully he toppled Palestinian homes. See also Baroud, 27-29.

48. See for example Justin Huggler and Phil Reeves, "Human Rights Groups Find evidence of War Crimes in Jenin," *The Independent* (3 May 2002), at http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/story.jsp?story=291385 (accessed 11 February 2003); and "Amnesty International Calls on the UN Security Council to Immediately Deploy an Independent Investigation into Human Rights Abuses in Jenin," *Amnesty International* (press release), at <http://amnestyusa.org/news/2002/israel04162002> (accessed 11 February 2003).

asked with despair, “What did the world expect us to do? Should we have just laid down peacefully and been crushed under the treads of Israeli tanks?”⁴⁹ Calculations of the death toll differ, between 70-100 by official Israeli counts to 200-250 by Palestinian sources. Over three hundred Palestinians were held in prison and/or counted missing after the direct attack subsided. Approximately 23 Israeli soldiers were killed and another 150 injured, making it the most brutal exchange of the operation and one of the bloodiest for the Israeli military since the 1973 October War against Syria and Egypt (the Yom Kippur War).⁵⁰

The military invasion and indiscriminate destruction of Jenin, like the other military campaigns during the first and second *intifada*, is but one example of the contradictions of Jewish life in Israel that date back to the sieges and destruction in Deir Yassin, Hebron, Sabra and Shatila, Qalquil’ya, and elsewhere. The leaders of those attacks remain officially absolved of any indiscriminate or disproportional use of force, and are even championed within the settlements and right-leaning communities by a desensitized population whose primary view of Palestinians is one of an inhuman security threat. For example, no Israeli soldier, commander, and high-level officer has been charged with the deaths in Jenin in April 2002, reprimanded for their actions or given punitive sanctions—the bulldozer operator above even received a citation of honor from his military commanders for his service. The fact-finding mission into Jenin under United Nations Resolution 1405 was called off after—and perhaps because of—direct pressure by Israel on the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. The UN published instead an insubstantial report, using secondary sources only, which found both sides responsible for the atrocity. Only days later, however, the US-based non-governmental organization

49. Baroud, 31.

50. Ibid., 241-248. See also Huggler and Reeves, “What really happened in Jenin? Evidence of a Massacre,” *UK Independent* (25 April 2002), at www.zmag.org/content/Mideast/huggler-reeves_jenin-evidence.cfm, accessed 11 February 2003. For the U.S. response see Betsy Pisik and Ben Barber, “Powell finds no proof of Israeli massacre in Jenin,” *The Washington Times* (25 April 2002).

Human Rights Watch found “prima facie evidence that the Israeli army committed war crimes in the camp,” and called for a criminal investigation into the indiscriminate and excessive force during the operation, the deaths of twenty-two Palestinians confirmed to be civilians who were killed “willfully or unlawfully” by Israeli soldiers, and the documented use of Palestinian civilians as “human shields.”⁵¹

The events of 1967 began a new era in Israeli-American relations, particularly among their respective Jewish communities. American Jews became obsessed with Israel, sent their children to Hebrew class and Yeshiva, and advocated loudly for American-Israeli collaboration on issues of trade and economic development, military investment and expansion, and Judeo-Christian heritage. Historian Steven Rosenthal argues in *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel* that American Jews’ support for Israel began to wane because of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the fall-out of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, the Pollard spy case, and the Palestinian *intifada*. While most American Jews largely ignored Israel during the first few decades of its existence, except in its confirmation that Jews were “secular, progressive, pragmatic, and democratic,” events like the 1967 war and the Palestinian *intifada* significantly changed that.⁵² While attention and support for Israel expanded, so did the realization that to achieve its goal of being a nation “like any other,” Zionism would not be able to avoid the direct and cultural brutality inherent in nationalism. The Palestinian *intifada* became a signal to the Israeli leadership that Palestinians were not going to relinquish their claim to the land easily if at all.

Rosenthal notes that a second revolution has begun in the past decade since the first uprising and the beginning of the Oslo Peace Process, in American Jewish communities and against “a long history of Israeli psychological domination.” He writes

51. *Searching Jenin*, 42; and “Israel/Occupied Territories: Jenin War Crimes Investigation Needed; Human Rights Watch Report Finds Laws of War Violations,” Human Rights Watch (3 May 2002), at www.hrw.org/press/2002/05/jenin0503.htm.

52. Steven Rosenthal, xv.

that the fight has played out in synagogues, Jewish organizations, lobbying groups, and the Jewish press: “For the first time, mainstream Jewish American organizations, galvanized by the rank and file, not only criticized Israel for its past conduct of national defense but presumed to prescribe future courses of action.”⁵³ The *intifada* was as formative and even revolutionary for the Palestinian model of “self” as the Holocaust was for Israeli Jews. “The revolt. . . gave rise to a new self-respect that ultimately enabled [the Palestinians] to engage in fruitful negotiations with the Jewish state,” and destroyed Israeli illusions that the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank could continue without a hefty price.⁵⁴

The waves of refugees and exiles beleaguered by conquest and occupation have begun to generate an activism in the United States that is poised to affect the reigning framework of public opinion and foreign policy, especially as Arabs, Muslims, and ecumenical Christians and Jews unite to balance and develop more accurate American perceptions of the Middle East. American prejudices against Palestinians as Arabs and Muslims are neither recent nor uniform, but the dearth of factual, comprehensive, and constructive knowledge about the Middle East makes difficult critical thinking in America, in ways not that unlike the ignorance about American, European, and Jewish history that pervades most militant Islamist contexts. At the same time, there is a growing number of Jewish reservists and soldiers, known as *refuseniks*, who have refused

53. Ibid., 91.

54. Ibid., 93.

to serve in the Occupied Territories for reasons of conscience, 212 of whom have or are serving jail time in Israel for their stand, according to one 2003 report.⁵⁵

While they have not yet deployed or threatened to deploy them, the fact that Israel has several hundred nuclear warheads and is the fourth largest military in the world, cannot be underestimated when considering the imbalance of force demonstrated at Jenin and elsewhere in the spring of 2002.⁵⁶ Sixty percent of the three billion dollars that the United States gives annually to Israel through USAID, which is nearly doubled by corporate and trade agreements between American and Israeli companies, goes to its military budget and the mechanics of operations like those in Jenin, Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Jerusalem in April 2002. Rationalized by cultural myths of Jewish vulnerability, Israel has become dependent on U.S. aid, receiving over a third of all U.S. foreign aid allocations.⁵⁷ Information increasingly available to American legislators and policy-makers reveals such things as the disproportionate protection that militant settlers and illegal Jewish outposts in the West Bank and Gaza receive, in defiance of the Oslo Peace Accords as much as international law.

Armstrong chronicles the rise of the Jewish nationalist group Gush Emunim ('Bloc of the Faithful') after Israel's near loss in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Founded in 1974, Gush was a "pressure group" of ideological Jewish settlers and Orthodox

55. "How Many Refuseniks," Ozick News Service (March 2003), at <http://oznik.com/news/021225.html>; see also Joseph Al-Gazy, "The Peace Movement Revival: Israel's Army Refuseniks," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (March 2002); and Roane Carey and Jonathan Shainin, eds., *The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent*, foreword by Tom Segev, intro by Anthony Lewis (NY: The New Press, 2002), 123-150.

56. Pat McDonnell Twair, "Edward Said Addresses 9/11 Issues at Chapman University," *Washington Report for Middle East* (May 2002), 51, 113. See also "Israeli Systems: Nuclear Weapons," Federation of American Scientists (August 2000), at www.fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/nuke/; and Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1998).

57. Matt Bowles, "U.S. Aid: The Lifeblood of Occupation," *Left Turn*, March/April 2002; reprinted in *Washington Report for Middle East Affairs*, at www.wrmea.com/html/usaidthoisrael0001.htm. See also articles under "U.S. Financial Aid To Israel: Figures, Facts, and Impact," *Washington Report for Middle East Affairs*, at www.wrmea.com/html/us_aid_to_israel.htm. See also, "Fact Sheet: Land and Settlements," Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), at www.pas-sia.org/palestine_facts/pdf/pdf2002/land.pdf.

youth “working to bring about a great awakening of the Jewish people towards full implementation of the Zionist vision” during the 1970s.⁵⁸ It followed in the footsteps of Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak Kook, the Zionist rabbi who saw the early settler communities (*kibbutzim*) in turn-of-the-century Palestine as a redemptive enterprise against a Jewish Orthodoxy demoralized by the eighteenth century German Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*).⁵⁹ Gush became the settlement arm of the right-wing Likud government in Israel after its rise to power in 1977, establishing more than twice as many settlements in 1977 as were established under the Labor government between 1973-77.⁶⁰ Its messianism came about at a time when Orthodox youth organizations were filling the gap between the diluted colonial discourse of early Ashkenazi, secular “pioneers” who were active in Israel’s establishment and the renewed practice of border (“frontier”) expansion enabled by the empowerment of the Mizrachim (or religious communities who immigrated from the Mediterranean, Africa and Asia) under Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.⁶¹

Gush Emunim settlers, who were graduates of the higher Merkaz Harav Yeshiva and lived in the Gush Etzion and Kiryat Arba settlements, ushered in a new phase of Israeli nationalism that cultivated “the image of the Arab above all as the enemy,” fostered “feelings of hatred toward Arabs,” and aroused “deep-seated emotions and sympathy among fairly large and diverse sectors of the Israeli public.”⁶² The direct result was a vicious cycle of violence whereby “land expropriation, road construction, and

58. Armstrong, 280.

59. Ibid., 184-188. Armstrong points out that Kook died in 1935, before Israel’s creation in 1948, and thus did not see the mass flight by which 750,000 Palestinians fled their homes in 1948 and lost their lives because of the oppression of both religious and secular Zionism, which remained in tension throughout the next half-century.

60. Gershon Shafir and Yav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 171.

61. Ibid., 166.

62. Ibid., 167 and 171, quoting Danny Rubinstein, *On the Lord’s Side: Gush Emunim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1982), 92 and 95 (in Hebrew).

rumors of impending settlement propel Palestinian youths to stone Israeli vehicles, which in turn leads to settler vigilantism in the form of vandalism, beatings, and the use of firearms.”⁶³ Gush’s fledgling community of rabbis, hawkish young secularists, religious Zionists, and former soldiers agreed with Kook’s “kabalistic piety” and apolitical conviction that secularism was the greatest threat to Jews in Israel, but they went a step further by taking up arms and forcibly settling the West Bank for annexation to Israel, often in the middle of the night and despite formal opposition by the Israeli government.⁶⁴ By organizing hikes, marches, battles with the Israeli army, and illegal squats on Palestinian land, Armstrong writes that Kookist members of Gush Emunim “suddenly felt that they were at the center of things and on the front line of a cosmic war,” after years of feeling inferior to both the secular pioneers and the scholarly Haredim.⁶⁵

The indirect result of Rabbi Kook and Gush Emunim was the precedent for off-shoot militant Jewish fundamentalists, or ultra-Orthodox groups using violence to implement and/or defend their vision of the Jewish state. One such follower was the Israeli-American Rabbi Meir Kahane, whose “reductive” interpretation of the Jewish doctrine of holiness led him to believe that God desired Jews to have “the least possible contact with what is foreign,” justifying both the restoration of the biblical state of Israel and harassment of Palestinians as a way of forcing them to exit that region.⁶⁶ Kahane’s rhetoric inspired Jewish terrorist Dr. Baruch Goldstein to massacre close to thirty

63. Ibid., 171.

64. Ibid., 282-83. Armstrong notes that between 1974 and 1977, Gush formed a master plan for the settlement of the whole of the West Bank, aiming “to import hundreds of thousands of Jews into the area and to colonize all the strategic mountain strongholds.”

65. Ibid. See also Shafir and Peled, 166-67.

66. Armstrong, 349. Kahane’s group, known as Kach, and the group his son established after his assassination, known as Kahane Chai (“Kahane Lives”), were designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the U.S. Department of State in 1997, after being declared terrorist organizations by the Israeli Cabinet in March 1994 under the 1948 Terrorism Law. See “Kach” under “Appendix B: Background Information on Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” *Patterns of Global Terrorism - 2001*, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10252.htm> (posted 21 May 2002).

Palestinian men prostrated at the Patriarch's Cave in Hebron in February 1994 in the early morning of Purim, claiming retribution for a massacre of fifty-nine Jews in August 1929, sixty-five years earlier to the day. Goldstein's revenge brought about a spike in Palestinian attacks in the Territories and in Israel.⁶⁷ The Gush Emunim movement of fundamentalist Jewish settlers who used terrorism to achieve their political goals culminated in the 4 November 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, a 27-year-old *yeshiva* graduate, law student and ardent supporter of religious settlement in the West Bank.⁶⁸ The assassination brought the peace processes to a grinding halt.

What hope grew after the negotiations and Declaration of Principles at Oslo in 1994 and at Camp David in 1998 for Palestinian national sovereignty beyond the nominal, was dashed by the intransigence this movement fostered in Israel. Palestinian legislators note that even after the peace process, "There is no state! There is no sovereignty! Palestinian 'ministers' cannot themselves get past checkpoints—they are totally dependent."⁶⁹ A discussion of the identity formation of Palestine on the brink of territorial sovereignty involves tracing not only the supposed origins and historical trajectory of its invaders and rulers, but also a history of the ideas and tragedies used to assert the vulnerability and lack of political consciousness among its people. As such, the traditional telling of the narrative of Palestinian consciousness displaces and undermines the agency of contemporary Arab Palestinians. It suggests their formation is mimicry and *essentially* reactionary toward European movements. This is tantamount to saying that the rise of Jews was contingent upon the fall of Christians. Because thinking of oneself as *Palestinian* appeared after the decline and dissolution of the Ottoman

67. Armstrong, 350.

68. Ibid., 172.

69. Dr. Azmi Bishara, an Arab member of the Israeli Knesset, in his speech, "Path Less Traveled: The Roadmap to Middle East Peace," presented to the Washington Interfaith Alliance on Middle East Affairs at St. Alban's Cathedral in Washington, DC (16 May 2003).

Empire, it is sometimes viewed as contingent upon and subordinate to the activities and necessities of Jewish nationalism. History is never so simple, however, as much as the victors might like it to be.

The events at Jenin raise many questions regarding the cause and effect of occupation. There is at base the question of the origins and nature of Zionist/Israeli control over Arab/Palestinian land—when did it begin, how much land is at issue, and if the establishment of Israel involved injustice why has it continued to exist uncontested? The atrocities have directly enabled a scattering of approximately nine million Palestinians, whether they find themselves today within Israel (eleven percent), in the West Bank and Gaza (thirty-six percent), in refugee camps throughout the Arab world (forty-seven percent), in Europe (three percent), or in North America (two and a half percent).⁷⁰ Memoirs, diplomatic statements, and humanitarian records show that half of the indigenous population, a total of roughly four and a half million Palestinians, has been forced off its land and/or refused re-entry in on-going waves of eviction over the past fifty years. Israeli leaders refuse to discuss refugees' claims to return, repatriation and/or compensation, and regularly hold up peace negotiations until all mention of such is removed and/or deferred indefinitely.

70. "Middle East: The Faultline," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, at <http://mondediplo.com/focus/middle-east/question-3-3-1-en> (accessed 4 November 2002). See also Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, at www.pdbs.org/temp/pales002/pal_e.pdf (accessed 4 February 2003); Edward Said, "Introduction: The Right of Return at Last," in *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, ed. Naeer Aruri (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001), 1-6; and Kathleen Christison, "The American Experience: Palestinians in the United States," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18:4 (Summer 1989): 18-36.

CHAPTER FOUR

Palestinians between *al-Nakba* and the *Intifada*: Finding a New Political Imagination among Palestinian and American Christians

The goal ought not to be to transfer power from men to women, or from Israelis to Palestinians. Rather, it is the transformation from militaristic coercion to peaceful cooperation. . .and from a God above to the God within.

~ Jean Zaru¹

In determining how Christian Palestinians have responded to and influenced the political milieu in which they have lived during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, one finds that they do not describe the religious dimensions of the conflict between the state of Israel and the Palestinians because the conflict itself is religious. Indeed, most Palestinian Christians do not believe the conflict over the land and resources of Palestine to be religiously-motivated. Rather, they see its motivation as a compound of ideological and political struggles that grew out of two embattled ethno-national communities who each sought security on the problematic model of European nationalism.²

Christian Palestinian views on the proper relationship between religion and politics in a future Palestinian state note that only a secular state apparatus will safeguard the rights of all persons within whatever state(s) emerge from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, an evaluation of Palestinian Christian engagement in the socio-political order is necessary, in part to situate it within the religious critiques of power that emerged in the mid- to late-twentieth century among Black, Latin American, feminist, Jewish, and Palestinian theologians. More than that, it is to discern the particular insight that Chris-

1. Jean Zaru, in a speech attended by the author entitled "Peace and Justice for Palestinians," St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Washington, DC (14 May 2003).

2. Father Bryan Hehir, "Religion and American Foreign Policy: Prophetic, Perilous, Inevitable," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, ed. Arthur Allen Cohen and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (NY: Macmillan Library Reference, 1986). See also Mitri Raheb, *I am a Palestinian Christian*, with a foreword by Rosemary Radford Ruether (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 37-38. Raheb adds that "European nationalism fell on fruitful soil in the Middle East, and was adopted by the Arab World, in order to free itself from Turkish yoke."

tian Palestinians bring to what it means to be Christian in the secularized, commercialized, and fragmented world of the twenty-first century.

I. The Compounded Burden of Occupation on Christian Palestinians

Christian Palestinians have been engaged in the political situation of the Arab world throughout the post-Ottoman era. Their dedication to the cause of Arab self-determination is long standing. Renowned historian of Arab Christianity Robert Brenton Betts writes that in the early twentieth century, “the indigenous Christian population, between ten and fifteen percent of the Arab total, had provided much of the initial leadership in the early opposition to Zionist expansion, and earned for their communities—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant alike—an enviable record of unselfish dedication to the cause of Arab Palestine.”³

a. Demographic and Historical Overview

Christians’ influence in historic Palestine has waned in the late twentieth century because of emigration and specific tensions with Israel.⁴ Christians are a minority, today numbering only one and a half percent of the population by current estimates. Religious Historian Robert Brenton Betts writes that in 1948, “Christians formed nearly a quarter of the remaining Arab population of some 150,000, and in large part shared the all-too-familiar cup of second-class citizenship with their Muslim neighbors.”⁵ While approximately four percent of Jerusalem’s inhabitants were Palestinian-Christian in 1967, that number dropped to about three percent in 1983, two percent in 1992, and one and a

3. Robert Brenton Betts, *Christians in the Arab East: A Political Study* (Athens: Lycabettus Press, 1975; 1978), 39.

4. Raheb, *I am a Palestinian Christian*, 15-24; and Livia Rokach, *The Catholic Church and the Question of Palestine* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Saqi Books, 1987), 37 and 41.

5. Betts, 40.

half percent by 1998.⁶ The primary reason for this is the current political and economic situation, which has led many Christians to emigrate from the West Bank.⁷

One-fifth the population of Israel is Arab Palestinian (approximately one million citizens according to the Israeli census), a small portion of whom are Christian. Their political identity is complicated—on the one hand, their citizenship affords them a higher standard of living than enjoyed by non-citizen Palestinians living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the surrounding refugee camps who are both dependent on and excluded from the Israeli labor market. On the other hand, ethnic Palestinians living in Israel are “third class citizens” in comparison to Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews of Latin America, the Mediterranean, Africa, and Asia.⁸ Many Arab villages are unrecognized by the Israeli government and are not provided adequate state services. Most Palestinians within Israel are considered internally displaced persons (IDPs), due to the Arab-Israeli fighting of the 1930s and 40s and the wars of 1948 and 1967, and have a relationship with the Israeli government as contradictory as their status among Palestinians.⁹

Christian Palestinians’ political consciousness was formed long ago by not only the aggression of early Zionists, but also the isolation and inadequate political infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰ It continues today to be expressed in ways similar to the memory and collective identity of Muslim Palestinians. In short, the national struggle in which all Palestinians find themselves is

6. Bernard Sabella (a Palestinian sociologist at Bethlehem University), “Socio-Economic Characteristics and Challenges to Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land,” in *Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land*, ed. by Anthony O’Mahony (London: Melisende, 1999), 90.

7. Ibid.

8. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73.

9. While Palestinian Israelis are allowed to visit Arab villages of their youth, over 400 villages no longer exist. See historical studies by PASSIA and Dr. Salman Abu Sitta’s Palestine Land Society.

10. Raheb, 38.

the single greatest factor influencing Palestinian identity.¹¹ Samia Khoury argues that, “We have always been Christians; but in our struggle for liberation we are together as Palestinians, Christians, and Muslims alike.” She laments the “mentality of colonization and occupation” that she sees as an attempt to divide Palestinians on the basis of religion. She refers to the Allenby Bridge, the border checkpoint between Jordan and the occupied West Bank, in her pointed query, “Why do the security police at the bridge ask me whether I am Christian or Muslim? What does that have to do with his obsession with security other than to create confusion and mistrust amongst us Palestinians?”¹²

In their witness to American Christians and Jews, Raheb is himself an example of the ancient ties that Christians have to the land of Israel and Palestine. “The Christian Palestinians of today are nothing else than the Christian remnant that has remained steadfast despite all the persecutions in Palestine,” affirms Raheb, whose family has lived in Bethlehem for centuries and has been Christian since before the ancient Palestinian Christians became the religious majority in Palestine around the fourth century.¹³ Most other Christian religious leaders in Palestine, whether Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Lutheran, have family roots to go back to the early Church in Palestine. As Anglican Canon Naim Stifan Ateek describes in the opening to his writings on social justice from a Palestinian perspective, Christian Palestinians lived beside Muslims, Jews,

11. Chatterjee notes that religion is significant in establishing institutional as much as individual identity—but not always determinative—in his comparison of the civil orientation of locals during stable periods of colonial rule versus a more tumultuous political orientation during transition to independence and self-rule. See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

12. Samia Khoury, in her foreword to *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices*, ed. by Naim S. Ateek, Marc H. Ellis and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), vii [bracketed explanation the editors].

13. Raheb, 3-14. He notes that there are about 30,000 Christians in and around Bethlehem, the city of the Incarnation; about 20,000 in and around Jerusalem, the city of the cross and Resurrection; and approximately 100,000 Christian Palestinians in and around Nazareth, the city of Annunciation. About 320,000 other Christian Palestinians live in the Palestinian Diaspora. As of 1998, the total number of Palestinians throughout the world was thought to be just over eight million, according to *Le Monde Diplomatique*. “The Palestinian Diaspora,” <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/question-3-3-1-en> (accessed 4 September 2002).

Druze and even Baha'is for centuries and were the second largest demographic group until the 1920s when European Jews began flocking into Palestine.¹⁴

b. The Effects of Colonialism and Nationalism on the Arab Mind

Christian Palestinians face a multifaceted threat in the increasing growth of religious fundamentalism among neoconservative Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Addressing the complex history in which religious nationalists became an affront to Christian Palestinians, Palestinian Lutheran minister Mitri Raheb describes the challenge to Christian Palestinians as multifaceted. They are confronted not only by the “failure of secular ideas to create a just, equal, and peaceful society,” but also the emergence of religious fanaticism among Jews and Muslims, as well as the collapse of communism in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, he says. The backdrop to contemporary events, in Raheb’s experience, is not just geopolitical changes that have led Palestinian Christians to question their cultural tradition of separating religion from the state, which he says the people in historic Palestine have claimed for the past 150 years. The backdrop is, more broadly, a confluence of events that included the rise of oil production as a political weapon and Israel’s success in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and which created the context in which new fundamentalist religious movements were fostered. The greatest threat to Palestinian Christians, Raheb says, is the unification of religion and state in a way that now allows religion—be it Judaism or Islam—to control all aspects of life in the land of Israel and Palestine.¹⁵

This search for stability, which leads many to retreat into the certainty of traditional religious modes of thought, is the result of social fragmentation. Sociologist Partha Chatterjee sees this fragmentation more broadly, as a legacy of both colonialism and nationalism, or that which followed colonialism in the modern European political era.

14. Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice*, 14-15.

15. Raheb, 42-43.

He views the nationalism which has come to dominate both the Israeli and Palestinian minds as problematic and ultimately unfruitful. Chatterjee begins with sociologist Benedict Anderson's thesis that nationalism is the result of a specific process by which one bases her perceptions of the world, others, new contexts, and specific ideas on an imagined conception of oneself. Chatterjee asks whether it is possible to see outside of one's political milieu if its system of thought is totalizing. "If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them. . . what do they have left to imagine?"¹⁶

Chatterjee, like other sociologists, is worried about the way that nationalism feeds off itself and denies its adherents the intellectual space and material resources needed to re-think modernity and retain the culture and autonomy of their prior identities. Chatterjee believes that the phenomenon of nationalism leads people to remain "consumers of modernity" even after it, like colonialism, has proved disastrous. The result, he warns, is that a people's political and cultural imagination will remain "forever colonized."¹⁷ Here within the context of the intellectual problems that Edward Said and Hisham Sharabi identified, respectively, toward "Orientalist thinking" and the "neopatriarchal" reliance of Arab culture on hierarchal structures, the education pedagogy of Brazilian anti-colonialist Paulo Friere seems relevant to a vision of political engagement, intellectual production, and social imagination that are not be limited to one's colonialized heritage.¹⁸

Friere writes that "the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through praxis commit themselves to its transformation. . . . [A pedagogy of the oppressed] ceases

16. Chatterjee, 5. Here he is responding to the thesis of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 1991), 204.

17. Chatterjee, *ibid.*

18. Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Herder & Herder, Inc., 1970). See also Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1988).

to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all [people]. . .in the process of permanent liberation.”¹⁹ Could it be an act of respect toward Judaism that Palestinians, Christian and Muslim, challenge the violence that has come to dominate Jewish identity in Israel and elsewhere, which Marc Ellis recalls in the phrase a “liturgy of destruction”? If occupation is an affront to Judaism and Christianity, not just to Palestinians in their nationalist context, what might Palestinians have to contribute toward universal standards of justice?

Chatterjee’s study of the fragmentation of modernity suggests that in Israel and Palestine, the most significant transformations occurring today are within political society—that is, at the level of political parties, popular movements, and oppositional (non-party) political groupings—and in reaction to the inadequate foundations for true (“radical”) democracy to evolve organically. Samia Khoury’s contention above, that the political and economic dimensions of Palestinian identity are more significant than their religious identity or social affiliation, thus makes sense within Chatterjee’s findings if one considers Palestinian political consciousness and protracted struggle for self-determination to be the result of a long history of imperial power and exclusive nationalism.

Khoury’s parenthetical comment is also telling about Palestinians’ mistrust of Israeli interests and motivation given the shared history that Jews, Christians and Muslims have toward Jerusalem and its environs. Chatterjee says that there is a tension emerging between civil and political society, but that it need not be a totalizing fracture. Like the parallel dimensions of American cultural and economic imperialism, which posit political capital as both material and symbolic, the tension between civil and political society in Palestine exists at a crossroads in which Palestinians have the opportunity to deepen their critique of the political than mere reactions to Jewish nationalism and Israeli

19. Friere, 40.

occupation allow.²⁰ The question at issue is who Palestine wants to become, and what role religious and social minorities will play within that identity if and when it gains sovereignty at the local, regional, and international levels.

The demographics and geographical distribution of Palestinian Christians are variables within this expanded political context, as theorized by Chatterjee, and provide insight into why popular resistance and armed struggle remain elements of Palestinian identity, just as power struggles between the secular and religious visions of a Palestinian state remain characteristic of current tensions between HAMAS and the Palestinian National Authority led by President Mahmoud Abbas. The nuances of Palestinian identity are more than footnotes to understanding the role Christian Palestinians play in today's political landscape.²¹ While this chapter spotlights the views of Palestinian adherents and clergy members, it is no coincidence that the substance of their views is an example itself of the enlarged sense of spiritual community and socio-political obligation that has emerged among ecumenical groups in light of the theological debates surrounding the Second Vatican Council, the political implications of Christians' concern for anti-Semitism after the Holocaust, and the geopolitical shifts brought on by the end of the Cold War and the phenomenon of globalization.

With the changing Palestinian political landscape and the politically dim prospects for a fully sovereign Palestinian state after Oslo, there is both much to be concerned about—yet much about which to remain constructively engaged and resolute. One little-pursued venue is the witness Palestinian Christians have in healing the Christian-Muslim dissension that is perhaps more present beneath the surface of contemporary relations

20. Chatterjee, "Two Poets and Death: On civil and Political Society in the Non-Christian world," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. by Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Press, 2000), 47. He defines democracy as the form of mobilization by which political society tries to channel and order popular demands on the development state (ibid.).

21. This approach stems from the argument of Samia Khoury, "Foreword," *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), vii.

between the people of the Middle East, Europe, and North America than that between Arabs and Israelis.

Chatterjee's theory, described above, stands in contrast to the symmetry of such structures within the political theory of Samuel Huntington, famous for his polemical essay "The Clash of Civilizations?" in a 1993 edition of *Foreign Affairs* where he mapped the world into a series of homogenous zones ("civilizations") on the basis of language, religion, history and tradition, and warned that not only would the Islamic world (along with China and Japan) be the next threat to the West, but that any cultural accommodation within the West would lead to the downfall of Western power. In his words, "The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations."²² The fundamental dilemma facing the world today in Huntington's view is "the preservation of the United States and the West," which requires the renewal of Western identity, versus "the security of the world," which requires acceptance of a global multiculturalism that is non-American in its essence.²³

While plausible, this line of theorizing is monolithic and lends itself to the conclusion the United States, as part of a Judeo-Christian civilization shared with Europe and Israel, is under an irrational, ahistoric, and inevitable threat. Indeed, Huntington's essay and subsequent book on the same subject dovetail neatly into political theorist Francis Fukuyama's argument that American liberal democracy is the triumphant

22. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1993): 22. Huntington uses the terms "multi-cultural," "multi-civilizational," and "multi-polar" interchangeably.

23. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," 318.

culmination of human history and “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the final form of human government.”²⁴

Huntington sees the prestige of European culture and its share of political, economic, and military power in the world (“Western Civilization”) in decline and at risk because of globalization and the growing power of the Islamic Middle East. Territorial in his views of the history of ideas, Huntington reads history as a linear trajectory by which civilizations rise and fall, conquering and succeeding each other in distinguishable eras—the most notable example of which is a supposed eternal conflict between Islam and Christianity. “The twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and Christianity,” writes Huntington.²⁵

The question that Palestinian Christians pose to Huntington and his colleagues is whether this version of history of enmity and exclusion, be it in the past or the present, is absolute. He forces the link between religion and culture to an irrational conclusion, and fails to explain anomalies such as religious conversions and cultural migration; alternative religious and cultural forms (e.g., secularity) within a cultural zone; disparity between the geographic boundaries on maps and the cultural patterns that cross borders through language and social behavior; and the use of violence against members of one’s own ‘civilization,’ such as gender-based “honor killings,” sectarian repression, political fratricide, and so on. Huntington agrees with Karen Armstrong, John Esposito, Tariq Ramadan, and others who see the twentieth-century resurgence of Islam (both “Shi’ite and Sunni fundamentalism”) as a formative framework that rivals the sixteenth-century Calvinist Protestant Reformation, late eighteenth-century American and French

24. Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *National Interest* (Summer 1989). See also Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Penguin, 1992).

25. Huntington, 209.

revolutions, and twentieth-century dissolution of the Soviet Union in their effect on the world. However, Huntington also sees the success of Islamist movements and their incorporation of Islamic (read: anti-Western) symbols and practices into the policies and laws of their regime as a direct affront to Christianity and Judaism, not just secular European (Western) civilization.²⁶

The grand theories of Huntington do not withstand close scrutiny when one looks at such phenomena as Jewish democracy and political Islam from a Palestinian perspective. As noted above, Palestinian Christian voices are crucial not because the conflict is a religious one or their suffering is unique. As Abu-Amr suggests, it is because they bring with them a strong commitment to education, a well-developed body of literature on how to do a critical reading of the social and political order from an intentionally religious perspective, and a vision of the world and of time that asks “self” to be set aside for the good of the “other” and of God’s will on earth. The future of Palestinian identity—indeed, the future of any historical community—would lose something very valuable if indigenous Christians were no longer present in historic Palestine.

c. Predisposition of Christians for “Zion,” against Palestinians

Canon Naim Ateek was eleven when his family fled from Beisan, south of the Sea of Galilee, fearing that their village too would face a massacre by the invading Jewish soldiers along the lines of what happened in Deir Yassin.²⁷ After a lifetime of ministering to the Palestinians, Ateek, like Raheb, views the challenge that religious nationalism

26. Huntington, 109-120; 209, 213. Huntington capitalizes “Resurgence” to signal its moral equivalence to the “Reformation” and “Revolution” of those societies.

27. Ateek is founder and director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in East Jerusalem, and author of *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989). He has contributed to and co-edited several other books, including *Faith and the Intifada* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989); *Jerusalem: What Makes for Peace!* (London: Melisende, 1997); *Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee: God, Justice and the Palestinians* (London: Melisende, 1999); and *Our Story: The Palestinians* (Jerusalem: Sabeel, 1999).

poses to Christian Palestinians as a spiritual one that demands both a reconciliation with Orthodox Jewish Israelis, and a confrontation with the Christian Zionism of mainstream and evangelical Christians in Europe and North America.

Most Palestinians do not believe either that Israel as a democratic nation-state is an absolute evil or that Jews ought not to exist in Palestine whatsoever; nor do all or even many Palestinians use terrorism as a means of responding to the abnormal life that occupation has wrought on Palestinians.²⁸ Such fallacious arguments are made for the purpose of silencing critiques of Israeli policies toward Palestinians, based as they are on a (now exclusive) definition of being Jewish. Palestinians would argue, however, as many have, that Israeli policies as they exist today are both discriminatory and prejudicial and have caused great harm to the Palestinian people. An increasing number of Christian and Jewish voices agree.²⁹

Ateek in particular rejects the territory-based identities that have grown out of the political struggle over land, calling attention to the issue of land from a biblical perspective because of his belief that Palestinian suffering is an example of an abuse the Scriptures and story of Revelation have undergone. He begins his argument for a just peace by recalling that the absolute ownership of land is greater than any people and remains God's alone. A contextual Palestinian Christian theology is therefore a direct challenge to not only Jewish nationalists but also "Christian Zionists," or those who

28. Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice*, 14. He acknowledges that Palestinians know very little of the Ashkenazi Jewish experience under Hitler in Nazi Germany, and do not fully understand its role in legitimizing the establishment of the state of Israel in historic Palestine. Arab comments on the Holocaust, as that experience is more widely known in the United States, sometimes betray this ignorance and/or cultural misunderstanding.

29. As noted in previous chapters, Ilan Pappé and Benny Morris are two Israeli historians of particular interest and represent opposing sides of the "new historian" debate in Israel, which emerged after the first *intifada*. Morris is controversial for having written a landmark study on what happened to Palestinian villages in 1948, only to later reveal that he did not fully disagree with the way in which Israel forced its establishment on the indigenous population, even in light of what his own studies had revealed. See Benny Morris, "The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past," *Tikkun Magazine* (Fall 1998); and *ibid.*, "Refabricating 1948" (review of *Fabricating Israeli History: The 'New Historians'* by Efraim Karsh), *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 81-96. See also Neil Caplan, "The New Historians," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 96-103.

provide unqualified political support for Israel because of their religious belief that its existence as an apocalyptic necessity for their salvation and the return of Jesus to earth. For a sustainable peace to develop, Ateek believes that the issue of political sovereignty over the finite territory of historic Palestine must be settled. “Israeli Jews must come to accept the fact that, in order to live their religious faith, they do not have to have an exclusive political control of the whole of Palestine.”³⁰

Scholars and critics of Christian Zionism say that it is a tradition that interprets Revelation to say that history is a series of “dispensations” which can be heralded or waylaid by human action. They interpret the biblical texts of Daniel and Revelation to argue first that human society has become more sinful over time, and second, that there must be a literal consolidation (“return”) of all Christians and Jews to the plain of Meggion (northern Israel on contemporary maps), where the ultimate battle between Good and Evil is thought to occur, before its salvation in the return of Christ and the thousand-year reign of the faithful in Heaven (noted by the term “pre-millennialist”) can happen. This “pre-millennialist, dispensationalist” interpretation of history and prophesy is an affront to many Catholic, Orthodox, and ecumenical Christian communities indigenous to the Middle East.

While few Christian Zionists live in Palestine, many live in and historically have had considerable influence on the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. Like Steven Rosenthal, who has documented the “waning love affair” among American Jews toward Israel, Ellis’s search for contemporary Jewish identity was also triggered by the belief that changes were occurring within American Jewish community that was “still liberal in rhetoric but increasingly conservative in its activities.”³¹ This political and social shift was met with an uneasy collaboration among Orthodox Jewish

30. Naim S. Ateek, “A Palestinian Perspective: Biblical Perspectives on the Land,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991; 1995), 275-76.

31. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd ed.), 5-6.

leaders and conservative Christian fundamentalists on behalf of Christians support for Israel. This stratagem risks the very covenant which the Jewish people are called to uphold, in Ellis's view, and requires the "deabsolutizing" of Israel to undo and prevent repetition.³²

II. The Development of Contextual Theology in Palestine

Oxford professor of religion Christopher Rowland writes of six characteristics common to the reemphasis on the liberating and prophetic critique of the Bible whatever its cultural context. They include a focus on the daily experience of poverty and socio-political rejection; a (re)interpretation of Scripture based on that experience; an articulation of that approach from within the structure and life of the Church; a popular orientation, or broad expression in grassroots and local community settings; an organic, holistic and integrated resolution of the tensions between self and society; and the reclamation of non-dominant, submerged narratives within the sacred texts and later exegetical writings.³³

As Raheb and Ateek show, a contextual theology grew among Christian Palestinians after the articulation of Palestinian nationalism that followed the Six Day War, provides a constructive vision of a just peace and a pragmatic call for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.³⁴ Occupation is a major motif in their response because of its role in causing the insecurity that characterizes the life of their parishioners and in galvanizing support for the popular uprising (*intifada*) that lasted from 1987-93 and

32. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (2nd ed.), 132-33.

33. Christopher Rowland, "Introduction: the Theology of Liberation," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. by Christopher Rowland (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-2.

34. Naim S. Ateek, "The Emergence of a Palestinian Christian Theology," in *Faith and the Intifada*, 2-3. In addition to his pastoral duties, Ateek is founder and director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in East Jerusalem and author of *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989). He has contributed to and co-edited several other books, including *Faith and the Intifada* (Orbis, 1989); *Jerusalem: What Makes for Peace!* (London: Melisende, 1997); *Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee: God, Justice and the Palestinians* (Melisende, 1999); and *Our Story: The Palestinians* (Jerusalem: Sabeel, 1999).

was renewed in 2000. Interestingly, these theologians address Palestinian poverty and oppression in ways reminiscent of both the modern Muslim reformers in Egypt during the late 1800s and early 1900s, as well as the call for a theology of liberation that grew in within the Catholic Church during the 1960s and 70s.

a. The Catholic Church and Jewish Nationalism in Palestine

Israeli sociologists Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled report that until 1966, the legal rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel were suspended, and they were subject to severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and economic opportunities as well as being placed under surveillance and military law.³⁵ Four decades later, this shared experience of suffering by Arab Israelis (or “citizen Palestinians” in Shafir and Peled’s terminology) continues. Palestinian citizens of Israel are discriminated against in many ways separate from broad Jewish, ethno-national discourse of Israeli society, including land expropriation and inadequate compensation programs, discrimination in the leasing of land and availability of water for agricultural use, discrimination in the hiring and occupational distribution of Arab workers, segregationist public education policies, limited participation in national political parties, exclusion from defining and attending to the common good of Israeli society, and an “unofficial economic boycott of the citizen Palestinians. . . that resulted in a fifty percent decline in the volume of Palestinian business within Israel.”³⁶

This situation was one that the early Catholic Church feared, were a Jewish homeland were to be created in historic Palestine at the cost of its indigenous Arab community. While the views of the leadership of the indigenous Christian churches in Palestine toward Israel significantly changed during the twentieth century, the Catholic

35. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 111-12. Shafir and Peled call Palestinians in Israel as third-class citizens, after the Ashkenazi elite (of northern European, American, and Russian descent) and the Miz-rachim (of southern European, Middle Eastern, African, and Asian descent).

36. Shafir and Peled, 135, and 113-36 generally.

church in the 1920s was concerned primarily with four things. According to Italian historian of religion Sergio Minerbi's historical account of the Vatican's relations with the Jewish government, the Church's concerns were: 1) the secular nature of the Zionists which it saw to belie their claims of fulfilling biblical prophecy; 2) the possibility that Zionist immigration would "sweep the Christians out of Palestine and would destroy the country's Christian character;" 3) the "intolerable" possibility that a Jewish government would be formed in the region; and 4) the effect on the moral values of the traditional Arab life-style of the "accelerated modernization" among immigrating European Jews.³⁷

The Balfour Declaration and the 1917 conquest of Jerusalem by General Allenby "awakened anxieties in the Vatican," as did "the appearance in Palestine of Jewish pioneers whom [the Vatican] pictured as Bolsheviks threatening the traditional way of life in that land," Minerbi argues.³⁸ The Vatican also came to fear during the Mandate Period that its extensive school system would be harmed and that the imperial powers would support its rivals, the Greek Orthodox and the Protestants. He notes that its historic interest in safeguarding the "Holy Land" was a counterpoint to the claims made on the region by the Greek Orthodox Church. Regardless of whatever rivalry they had, both equally sought "to ward off the danger of Jewish domination of the Holy Places," however.³⁹ Minerbi writes that the Church's position on Zionism was influenced by the rising Arab nationalism among the people of Palestine, as well as by, possibly, the anti-Semitic prejudices and propaganda that were widespread in secular circles in Europe and the United States at the time. He concludes his study with a call for further study into

37. Sergio I. Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism: Conflict in the Holy Land, 1895-1925*, translated from Hebrew by Arnold Schwartz for the Studies in Jewish History Series, ed. by Jehuda Reinhar (NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 198.

38. Ibid., 197-98.

39. Ibid., 198.

the inherent theological difficulty he sees Christianity, or at least the Catholic Church, as having in approaching Jews without prejudice.⁴⁰

Catholic historian Geoge Emile Irani sees the Vatican/Holy See as “an important transnational actor,” in light of the activist policy adopted by Pope John Paul II, which intervenes in world affairs as a religious institution and thus relies on the moral prestige of the Pope to contribute toward peace. He relates it to Arabs and Israelis within their individual and corporate religious categories, in its focus on the intertwined nature of the spiritual with the temporal. He compares the Vatican to the U.S. government, which relates to Arabs and Israelis on the basis of its own political interests. “When the pope enters the fray, it is of necessity as the head of the Roman Catholic Church, and papal diplomacy always concentrates on concerns that are spiritual in nature.”⁴¹ Irani writes that because policy is formulated at a global level, it is characterized by “consistency and pragmatism” in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the status of Jerusalem and the Holy Places, and the Lebanese War.⁴²

Monsenior Beltritti, the former Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, argued in a 19 November 1978 article in the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano* that, “The new generations must not feel strangers in the land in which they were born. The profession of faith must not be reduced to something merely private; it requires a space for expression through communion, in the institutions. The sanctuaries must be dynamic centers of evangelic testimony and of fervent ecclesiastic presence.”⁴³ This vision of Palestinian continuity in the Holy Land was a different one than his processors, revealing

40. Ibid., 199.

41. Geoge E. Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East: The Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1962-1984* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 158-59.

42. Ibid., 160.

43. Livia Rokach, *The Catholic Church and the Question of Palestine* (London: Saqi Books, 1987), 172-73. She writes that in the 30 years following the creation of the state of Israel, 100,000 Christians left the country and the then-present Christian population in Palestine was 94,742 Catholics; 80,233 Orthodox and 7,200 Protestants.

the effect that the Second Vatican Council and the theological revolution of liberation theology would have on Catholic approaches to the problem of Israeli and Palestinian national aspirations in the last few decades of the twentieth century.

As Mitri Raheb notes, the *intifada* generated a particular shift away from internal Church doctrine and hierarchy, which had characterized clerical concerns prior to the first Palestinian uprising; it also led to increased attention to the external world—that is, the social and political order and structural causes that led to Palestinian insecurity. He notes that during the 2002 Israeli reprisal on the town of Bethlehem, he struggled to denounce the violence of Palestinians’ resistance to occupation when it was contrasted with and seen against the backdrop of an equally violent occupation with both past and present dimensions. Israel’s “Operation Defensive Shield” across the West Bank had been set off by a suicide bombing in West Jerusalem by a young Palestinian woman from the Deheishe refugee camp near Bethlehem (south of Jerusalem).⁴⁴

The contextual Palestinian Christian theology that has grown out of Catholic liberation theology, which bishops in Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere brought before the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, provides Palestinian Christians of all stripes a new form of ecumenicism in which they can respond from a unified religious and political platform without flattening their individual or communal histories. Whatever the specific doctrinal disagreements between Palestinian Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox, and evangelicals, this tradition of prophetic critique, as resuscitated from its ancient Jewish tradition, is an emerging foundation for creative and constructive

44. Raheb, 76.

socio-political action among Palestinian Christians that is an important counterbalance to the fragmented foundation for political action of Palestinian nationalism.

b. Christian Palestinians Coexistence within Arab-Islamic World

Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, such as Canon Ateek, are examples of the role of peacemaking that Palestinian Christians play in the region. They argue that acceptance of Israel's existence does not mean that Palestinians cannot critique the policies and means by which Palestinians have been historically and continue to be currently subjugated by the Israeli government. Similarly, they suggest that being ethnically and culturally Arab does not prevent their critique of the policies by which the surrounding Arab states have maneuvered themselves in the international community, often against the interests of the Palestinians for whom they claimed to act. Indeed, a radical critique of the way politics is done by both communities groups vis-à-vis the Palestinians is the precise place at which Palestinian Christian voices must be understood and heard the most.

Walking this line is not easy, but the particular experiences of Palestinian Christians provide a fruitful platform for reconciling Jews and Muslims and working toward a more constructive relationship between Palestinians and other Arabs. Christian and Muslims' shared experience of dispossession and occupation by Israel during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is not the only foundation for hope in a pluralistic future Palestinian state.⁴⁵ From a historical perspective Islam is both the chronological and theological successor to Christianity, and therefore to Judaism as well. Similarly, in their traditional social rituals and paradigms of behavior, Christians share much with Muslims, like Jews.

45. Jeanne Kattan, "A Study of Muslim and Christian Students' Attitudes Towards Each Other at Bethlehem University," in *Christians in the Holy Land*, ed. Michael Prior and William Taylor (London: World of Islam, Festival Trust, 1994), 89-97.

Whatever their *de facto* coexistence among Christians and Muslims of historic Palestine, the Christian churches in Palestine remained isolated from and reactionary toward the political and national interests of Arabs, until the 1980s when biblical motifs of justice were claimed as a source of liberation rather than oppression for Palestinians.⁴⁶ Relations between Christians and Muslims is an important consideration for the future of Palestine, not only as a way of preventing a new kind of Arab overlord for Palestinian Christians, or even as a way of addressing the reactionary nature of past approaches among Christians to political developments in the Arab world.

Palestinian Christians exhibit conflicted attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict and subsequent relations with both Israel and other Arabs. In his detailed study of the role the Catholic Church has played in the twentieth-century Middle East, Arab historian George Irani writes that Arab Christians differ in their relations with Islam on the basis of the society in which they live and the fate of Christian communities therein, such as in Lebanon. Arab Christian communities in Israel are characterized by their status of being “minorities three times over,” Irani writes. They are minorities 1) as Arabs among Jews, 2) Christian Arabs among Arab Muslims, and 3) minorities within the larger Christian society.⁴⁷

Raheb concurs, writing that “ever since the seventh century, Arab Christians have lived in an Islamic world, where Islam was the state religion. As a result, Christianity was the religion of the minority.”⁴⁸ Raheb mentions a difference between Arab and European Christian trajectories, given that in Europe, Christianity was officially the religion of state from the fourth to the twelfth centuries and remained closely affiliated until industrial revolution and the secularization of modernity around the sixteenth

46. Jean Zaru, “Justice and Peace,” in *Christians in the Holy Land*, *ibid.*, 69.

47. George E. Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East: The Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1962-1984* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 3.

48. Raheb, *I am a Palestinian Christian*, 38.

century. Despite the legacy of the Crusades and the continuation of Roman Catholic (Latin), Greek Orthodox, and Anglican adherents in the region of historic Palestine, Christianity is not aligned with the state in the same way that either Judaism now is in Israel and Islam now is among other countries in the Middle East.

This official secularity has not prevented the Christian churches from having an impact on the cultural and political environment in which they exist; however, such has not always been for the better. Palestinian educator Dr. Jacqueline Sfeir of Bethlehem University writes that early nineteenth-century Christian missionary schools in the region played a role not in uniting people, but in “dividing the already fragile Palestinian Christian community and alienating it from its mother culture” through a curriculum that placed sectarian identity over national cohesion. She says that “because the emphasis was on religious, rather than national identity, the school . . . provided [the educated local Christian] with a direct link to the West, and became a catalyst to the evacuation of the Palestinian Christian community.”⁴⁹

Sfeir writes that Palestinian educational standards took drastic hits not only by early British colonialism, in which the Arab school system was left to its own demise in Sfeir’s view, but also in the later years under Jordanian, Egyptian, and Israeli occupation when curricula was controlled and public resources withheld, especially in comparison with comparable Jewish educational capacities. She is critical of the effect that both Israeli reprisals against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have had since the first *intifada*, and the evolution of Christian sectarianism within the educational system. She says that Christian schools still retain an element of prestige and survive based on the collection of school fees, which make educational attainment under their roof an increasing corollary to class and the socio-economic standing of a student’s family. This effect thereby deepens yet another fault line among Palestinian Christians and Muslims.

49. Jacqueline Sfeir, “Education in the Holy Land,” in *Christians in the Holy Land*, ed. by Michael Prior and William Taylor (London: World of Islam, Festival Trust, 1994), 86-87 and 75-88.

Except in the case of parish schools that are subsidized by the international Church, Sfeir says that as of the early 1990s, “the Christian school is beginning to disadvantage poorer Christians. . . [which] perpetuates the cycle of social discrimination” as it is based on socio-economic and religious factors.⁵⁰

American feminist Christian theologian Letty Russell has written a critique of oppression whereby “vertical violence,” like that facing Palestinians, has “horizontal” consequences.⁵¹ Russell writes that the “vertical” dimension of oppression is one in which “social, psychological, and physical violence is exerted against the oppressed.” Like Chatterjee’s political theory and Sfeir’s statistics, Russell finds that oppression entails what she calls a “horizontal violence” that affects the capacity of victims of oppression to enter into dialogue with each other or break out of the categories of oppression and the history that have been forced on them.

Russell argues that in order to “move together in the dialectic of liberation, toward new awareness and ability to act,” attention must be given to the subject of oppression, or “the fabric of society in which people are locked into. . . a vicious circle that dehumanizes both the oppressor and the oppressed.”⁵² She argues that in this situation, “The oppressed. . . are not necessarily the “virtuous” ones who are always right. The danger they risk in struggling to transform the world is that of adopting an ideology which asserts that they will automatically become virtuous rulers over others, should they come to power.” Russell argues, “Our gaze must constantly be focused on ways of changing the hierarchical structure of society and not simply raising up a new set of oppressors.”⁵³

50. Sfeir, 87.

51. Letty M. Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1974), 167.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 168. Here she draws on an article by Rosemary Radford Ruether entitled “Sexism,” in *The Christian Century* (12 December 1973): 1228-29.

This shadow is present in the debates about political power and authority in the modern Middle East. Tensions between Palestinians and Arabs are complex and often involve deeper memories than are reflected in news and popular coverage outside of the Arab world. While the time may not yet have come for inter-Arab reconciliation, still reeling as Palestinians are under the weight of occupation, poverty, and exile (whether forced or voluntary), Christian Palestinians seem to stand at a unique precipice in their witness for justice beneath a superficial cohesion against Israel.

c. Palestinian Challenges to Western Christianity

The history and perceptions that have come to characterize Palestinian and Israeli nationalisms, particularly in the case of the extremist communities within each group, are incomplete without the response of Palestinian Christians. Given the limitations that cultural-linguistic biases as well as the theoretical nature of international law have placed on the implementation of Palestinian human rights, it is not impossible to see how the use of armed struggle has evolved within twentieth century Palestinian nationalism. In this context, religious leaders are most persuasive when they call for a critique of state power and challenge, on theological grounds, the social and political alienation of an already-victimized minority.

In liberation theology's attempt to do religion according to a more just worldview, in accordance with its interpretation of the Bible according to Christ's life and the Bible's "preferential option for the poor," as Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez called it, it is important to note that who one considers the "oppressed" and who are the "oppressors" makes all the difference in how one understands the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Liberation theology seeks to understand the nature and actions of God on the assumption that the oppressed are a chosen people. Arthur Pressley writes that for Palestinian Christians, "The assumption is that if God is fundamentally oriented toward justice, and

the oppressed have not received justice, it must follow that God has their condition as a primary concern.”⁵⁴

What emerges is indeed a contradiction in being both *Palestinian* and *Christian*, which Ateek and others find in the difficulty of observing Jesus’ exhortations to “love your enemies and pray for your persecutors” while confronted by the belligerence and brutality of occupation and the injustice of Palestinians’ contemporary context.⁵⁵ As Marc Ellis notes in his reflection on what the witness of Palestinian Christians means to Jews today, the imagery of the verse “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people” poses a particular difficulty to Palestinians still waiting for the temporal redemption—read here as the cessation of Israeli helicopter gunships, the provision of political sovereignty to Palestinians, and the stability to rebuild their fledgling peoplehood in dignity and justice.⁵⁶

“A major task of Palestinian theology of liberation is to liberate the Bible for Palestinian use, a task that begins with biblical understanding of the land and of justice,” writes Ellis.⁵⁷ In their development of a contextual theology, Palestinian Christian theologians must therefore address the ethics of violence as a form of political resistance; the role of transparency as the standard for judging political organization or kinship politics; and the Holocaust as a turning point not only for Jewish identity but also Christian morality. The dichotomies of meaning between the literal and metaphoric meanings of the state of “Israel,” as Christians understand it from the perspective of the “New” Testament, are just one way that the Israeli state has been a “seismic tremor of enormous magnitude” that has shaken the very core of Christian belief, according to

54. Arthur Pressley in *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices*, ed. by Naim Ateek, Marc Ellis, and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 174.

55..Matthew 5:43-44, *The Holy Bible* (King James Version). Ateek, “The Emergence,” 3.

56. Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 3rd expanded ed., with a foreword by Desmond Tutu and Gustavo Gutiérrez (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 158.

57. Ibid., 158.

Ateek. There is also the tension when the theological and internally-oriented narratives of the Bible and Jesus' life of Jesus are juxtaposed against the historical, externally-oriented meanings of the biblical themes which make up the bridge on which Palestinian Christians mediate relations between Jews and Palestinians.

The rise of Jewish religious and Western Christian fundamentalism after Israel's preemptive strike against its Arab neighbors in 1967, and the development of a Holocaust theology in Europe and the United States whereby political support for Israel became a religious necessity among mainstream Jewish and liberal Christian thinkers, together led Ateek to develop a uniquely Palestinian Christian theology of liberation. "Western Christians and many religious Jews were using the same Bible as us," he writes, "but claiming to take from it a revelation from God that justified the conquest of our land and the extermination of our people. This demanded a religious response from us, both biblical and theological."

Publishing *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* in 1989, just after the start of the first Palestinian *intifada*, Ateek was intimately familiar with the social, political, and economic context of Palestinians' frustration and resentment toward Israel. Not only did he face it daily in his pastoral duties, he was raised and spent his formative years amidst the destruction wrought on Palestinians by the state of Israel's creation and expansion. Ateek sees four factors influencing a Christian Palestinian's understanding of "liberation": 1) the pastoral aspect of listening to the cries of the people in the pews; 2) the connection between the indigenous people and their land, which Christian priests and ministers felt themselves as Palestinians displaced in their homeland; 3) the biblical question of how to keep the Bible relevant under occupation and after generations of dispossession and suffering; and 4) the pernicious theological question of how Christ is relevant to the historical process.⁵⁸ He seeks to find what is left of Christianity for as Palestinian Christians to cling to in so far as the coming of

58. Ateek, "The Emergence of a Palestinian Christian Theology," *Faith and the Intifada*, 4.

Christ and claims of messianic fulfillment are used by Jews and by Western Christians to oppress and destroy Palestinians.⁵⁹

To respond to the violence brought forth by both Jewish nationalism and Christian Zionism, Ateek writes about both the spiritual contingencies that the ancient Jewish covenant placed on Jews' behavior in the land of Canaan and the non-preferential meaning of the "land" that was provided to the Jews by that covenant.⁶⁰ He emphasizes the spiritual nature of the metaphor of "Zion" as it figures in Jewish and Christian liturgies, and calls for a more pragmatic model of justice than that afforded by the traditional narrative of the Jews' exodus from Egypt.

For Ateek, the core of both Judaism and Christianity are at stake in so far as Palestinians are treated unjustly on the basis of biblical authority, especially at the hands of governments conceived and led by people supposedly representing those spiritual traditions. Ateek does not diminish the stain of anti-Semitism on Christian theology or the role that the Holocaust and "hysterical climax" of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany still play on the Jewish mind today, generations later. In an example of what it means to risk hospitality toward the Other, as called for by Christian ethics, Ateek says that Palestinians must educate themselves on the Holocaust in a way similar to non-European Jews for whom the Holocaust was not a direct experience. "Admittedly, we as Palestinians have refused to accept, much less internalize, the horrible tragedy of the Holocaust. We have resisted even acknowledging it, believing that we have been subjugated to our own holocaust at the hands of the Jews," Ateek writes.⁶¹

While much is said of the declining presence of Palestinian Christians "in the Holy Land," Ateek's writings lead one to consider a deeper level of solidarity as

59. Ibid.

60. Ateek, "A Palestinian Perspective," 268.

61. Ateek, *Justice*, 168. For a systematic treatment of the "risk of hospitality" within Christian ethics and a culturally plural world, see Martin E. Mary, *When Faiths Collide* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 124-148.

represented by Palestinian Christians than one simply bolstered by a call for renewal based on their flagging demographic presence or a thin denominational affiliation. As the writings of Ateek, Ellis, and others eloquently demonstrate, a militarization of suffering and exclusive claim of victimization are not solid foundations on which to build a future identity or by which to establish moral authority. The protracted cultural violence at work in Israel and America toward the Palestinian and Arab peoples contradicts the witness Jews and Christians are called to hold against state power, and are a burden that both share and for which both will one day seek reconciliation with Palestinians.

Optimistic that history remains open and that learning can be a light against the tendency toward cynicism, Ellis cautions sadly, “If learning is a process, then the Jewish people have a learning curve, especially after the Holocaust, that is unparalleled in history.”⁶² He argues that Arab and Palestinian Christian theology has much to say in light of the shifting perspectives of Jewish identity and theology, which is now called to legitimate rather than confront the state theology of Zionism. He sees the uniqueness of the Palestinian Christian witness as that in which the Jewish people are confronted, for the first time in their history, by the testimony of suffering that has been caused by Jewish power and its “liturgy of destruction.”⁶³

Jerusalem-born Palestinian professor of third-world politics and women’s studies Ghada Talhami argues that, “To Palestinian observers, it is as though the wandering Jew has been replaced by the wandering Palestinian, and no one noticed the irony.”⁶⁴ From her perspective, the catastrophe of Israel’s creation in 1948 brought about the

62. See Marc H. Ellis, *Israel and Palestine: Out of the Ashes: The Search for Jewish Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 174.

63. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd ed.), 161-62.

64. Ghada Talhami, “Christian and Jewish Views of Israel: From Apologia to Realism,” *Beyond Occupation: American Jewish, Christian, and Palestinian Voices for Peace*, ed. by Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marc H. Ellis (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1990), 295-96.

destruction of the Palestinian community and an ensuing diaspora that “was just as alienating and as devastating as the Jewish diaspora.” Talhami argues that Americans have as much responsibility for the outcome of Jewish empowerment as they do for its anti-Semitic causes in the modern world. “[W]ithout the collusion and sympathy of Western governments, there would have been no Israel—and no exile and occupation of Palestinians.”⁶⁵ Frustrated with the results of oft-made connections between Jewish vulnerability and Western guilt, she says there are *American* and *Christian* dimensions to Palestinian disenfranchisement as well as a Jewish or Israeli one. “Only when a Christian guilt complex towards the Palestinians is added to the older guilt complex towards the Jews will we begin on the road to justice,” Talhami says.

Calling for a new theology of liberation among Christians whereby “worn-out concepts and time-honored foci on the European and Western experience” are replaced with recognition of the lived reality of Jewish nationalism for Palestinians, Talhami indicts liberal Christian theologians’ inability to get at the problem in so far as they allow Jews to remain the archetype of powerlessness and marginality, even after acknowledging the tremendous military, political, and economic empowerment of Jews through the Zionist project and Israeli nation-state. Talhami is reiterating the call of post-Holocaust Jewish theologian Marc Ellis and others, calling the Holocaust narrative itself into question in so far as it is pointed to as the end of the Jewish story or problem of power in the modern world.⁶⁶

Reflecting on the writings of Talhami and Ellis, as well as those of Ateek, Raheb, Wagner, Ruether, and others, it is clear that Palestinian Christianity calls into question the isolationism and apathy that some narrow interpretations of Christianity enable in the face of poverty, political violence, societal rejection, and so on—just as for a long time

65. Talhami, 296.

66. See Ellis’ indictment of liberal Christians’ propensity to dialogue on issues that not only disregard Palestinian history but that absolve Israel of its’ responsibility, “Between Jerusalem and Bethlehem: Reflections on the Western Ecumenical Dialogue,” in *Faith and the Intifada*, 135-139.

they obscured European Christians' social and theological reconciliation with Jews. One must ask whether Christians have indeed learned from the Holocaust and the silence toward the systematic killings of Jews, Poles, the mentally ill, homosexuals, dissenting intellectuals, and others by Catholics and Protestants of all stripes. It could be argued that just as Christian churches, leaders and individuals were largely silent on the political and social alienation of Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. If Christian silence enabled if not welcomed a political ideology that turned out to be tantamount to psychopathic nationalism, how can Christians be silent toward the historical narrative of Palestinians if Israeli identity is also based on ethnocentric, racist, and elitist categories?

Christian Palestinians call the attention of the world to the residual effect of the 1948 *nakba* (catastrophe) that displaced over a million people, made three-quarters of a million refugees, destroyed over 400 villages, and wrought an indelible psychological toll on the generations of young Palestinians. They also call attention to what happened in 1967, when another quarter million Palestinians were made refugees upon Israel's unilateral expansion of its borders and annexation of Palestinian-Jordanian, Palestinian-Lebanese, and Palestinian-Egyptian land by force. Ateek, Raheb, Ellis, and others show how the mobilization of the new "Judeo-Christian" solidarity that succeeded the naming of the Holocaust and Christian attempts to make amends for centuries of theological, social, and institutional rejection of the Jews, suggests that change is possible but that its potential remains in the hidden marrow of one's own ideology, worldview, opinion, and "prism of pain." Palestinian Christians thus tell as story before they argue their point, and invite others into their experiences as a way of conveying anecdotally what statistics, numbers, and legalese cannot not.⁶⁷

A contextual theology for Palestinians is therefore intimately tied to the theologies among Protestants, Catholics, and others in Europe and America. It is a difficult call, because to hear it necessitates self-examination and action. It asks that policies be held

67. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology*, 131-32.

accountable to lived realities, just as has been achieved to a certain degree toward the racism and sexism that the Western intellectual tradition bequeathed contemporary generations.

Is it possible for this kind of radical commitment to the Other to exist? Does ethical altruism exist? Many scholars have sought to show that it does, based on religious models and/or secular principles, but perhaps the existentialist and post-Holocaust philosophers are right. Maybe the problem is one of discipline, where the questions of ethics and ontology cannot reach the problems of society because ethicists remain epistemologically isolated from culture and its chaotic propensities.

Ateek's call for a specifically Christian response in America to the realities of Israeli-Jewish empowerment and Palestinian-Christian vulnerability is difficult because it goes against the grain of both individual and collective perceptions of Palestine among Americans. Yet he addresses marginality, violence, poverty, and injustice from the depth of Christianity itself and, therefore, cannot in good conscience be ignored. In doing so, Ateek's theological manifesto finds more than a justification for charity toward Palestinians. He, like others, finds a foundation for action that is anti-authoritarian, non-dominating in all aspects, and deeply committed to the prophetic role of Christ in confronting injustice and abuses of power wherever they may lie.

Palestinian Christian educator Jean Zaru describes this level of inclusiveness and justice as a goal that does not seek simply a transfer of power from men to women, or from Israelis to Palestinians. Rather, she says that this kind of radical inclusivity "is the transformation from militaristic coercion to peaceful cooperation; from exclusivity to a celebration of diversity; from a sexist discourse to the protection of human rights; from neutrality and [false] balance to compassion and ethically-based priorities; from an

exploitation of nature. . .to gentle cooperation with nature; from death to resurrection and life; and from a God above to the God within.⁶⁸

68. Jean Zaru, in a speech on peace and justice for Palestinians presented to the Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Washington, DC (14 May 2003).

CHAPTER FIVE

Post-Holocaust Jewish Identity: The Allure and Sin of “Holy History” after Auschwitz

The very fact of questioning one’s Jewish identity means that it is already lost. But by the same token, it is precisely through this kind of cross-examination that one still hangs on to it. Between *already* and *still* Western Judaism walks a tightrope.

~ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*

Jewish nationalism continues to have a detrimental affect on the human rights of Arab and non-Jewish Israelis. The primary cause for this is the exclusive, ideological, and patrimonial claim Right-leaning Jews in Israel and their supporters hold toward the land surrounding Jerusalem. It is a territorial claim that is complex to analyze, because it intersects the overlapping political, socio-political, denominational, and ethnic identities within Israel in different ways. However, Ellis has noted that “the struggle in Israel/Palestine is not between outsiders (Jewish Israelis) and indigenous people (Palestinians), but between settlers (Jews of European and North African background) and those who have been dislocated from the land in the twentieth century (mostly Palestinians defined within the cultural patterns of Middle Eastern Islam and Christianity. . .).”¹

Israel’s unilateral disengagement from Gaza, which was completed in early September 2005, brought to a head the ideological and religious divisions within Israel more than those between Israelis and Palestinians.² Whatever leverage the disengagement may provide Palestinian opposition groups to in their power struggle with the Palestinian Authority, the worst outcome of the disengagement, in terms of the possibilities for just peace between Palestinians and Israelis, may be the radicalization

1. Marc H. Ellis, *Israel and Palestine: Out of the Ashes: The Search for Jewish Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 76-77. The parenthetical remarks are his.

2. David Makovsky, “Post-Gaza Crises for Religious Zionism in Israel,” *PeaceWatch* no. 512 (1 September 2005): 1. *PeaceWatch* is a publication by the right-leaning Washington Institute for Near East Policy and is loosely affiliated with the pro-Israel American Jewish lobbying group, AIPAC.

of the Jewish Right and ideological settlers within the religious Zionist movement who have now shifted residence to the West Bank settlements and pose a renewed threat there. Their challenge to a pragmatic, political resolution of the conflict—though perhaps less graphic—is more insidious than that of Palestinian nationalists, given their closer relation with and deeper influence on the Israeli establishment. They cannot be silenced or disempowered the way Palestinians have been and can again be, should Israel resume its terrorizing policy of collective retaliation for suicide bombings.

Pragmatic attention to the effect ethno-religious nationalism has had on both the Palestinian and Israeli populations community leads one to conclude that the paradigms of belief that enabled the events of the twentieth century must be named and rejected. Three motifs common to Jewish discourse on Israel are the use of the Exodus narrative and the masculine symbolism of the “Sabra” to define Jewish liberation; the use of anti-Semitism and the Jewish Covenant to define social justice for Jews; and the use of post-Holocaust discussions of Judeo-Christian commonality to consolidate support for Israel against the Palestinians.

I. Liberation: The Exodus and Sabra Models

Jewish philosopher and theorist Michael Walzer argues that in the “it is possible to trace a continuous history from Exodus to the radical politics of our own time.”³ He believes that Jews’ search for historical redemption finds precedent in the story of the ancient Hebrews who fled Egypt four millennia ago. Walzer cites the Jewish writer Gershom Scholem to argue that Zionism redemptive in a historical sense only, not as a messianic or religious movement. He sees the Exodus model as a liberating narrative

3. Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (NY: Basic Books, 1986), quoted in Edward Said, “Michael Walzer’s Exodus and Revolution: A Canaanite Reading,” *An Edward Said Reader*, 167-68; 161. Walzer is a political theorist and professor of Jewish philosophy at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University. His book *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations*, 3rd ed. (NY: Basic Books, 2000) is required reading in ethics and international affairs studies; his *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (NY: Basic Books, 1983) discusses distributive justice, or the fair ordering of social goods and moral values (from education and love to wealth and power). Walzer cites Christian liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez four times in *Exodus and Revolution*.

that demonstrates Jews' special role in human history, which is at once a privilege and a burden.

Edward Said takes issue with Walzer's argument, if not worldview, in his "Canaanite" reading of Walzer's book *Exodus and Revolution*. Said believes that the Biblical book of Exodus holds a position in Walzer's view that is uncontested and monolithic. Rather than acknowledging the way that ideologies, especially religious discourse, can become agents of "closure, which blocks the road of inquiry," Walzer ignores the people and ideas which the ancient Jews were commanded to obliterate, according to the transcription of Exodus used in the modern era.⁴ Said challenges the mythology that this ahistorical and linear reading the Exodus story has created, in part because of the intellectual disingenuity displayed by critics too connected to their subject matter, as he sees Walzer in light of his uncritical support for the policies and political rise of modern Israel.⁵ More importantly, however, Said challenges Walzer's argument because of its effect on the indigenous people of the Exodus story, which belie Walzer's prolific writings on social justice and democratic pluralism.

Recalling images of the destruction of the pre-Columbian peoples and cultures that took place when Spain conquered Latin America, Said writes:

How can one exit Egypt for an already inhabited promised land, take that land over, exclude the natives from moral concern. . . , kill or drive them out, and call the whole thing 'liberation'? Is it true that Exodus is *the* great Western text of liberation, or that the ancient Hebrews in Egypt were a slave people who, alone in antiquity, fought for liberation?

Said's challenge to the Exodus motif as the basis for political activism and social renewal is difficult specifically because it makes one's intellectual and political ideas—the stuff of greatness—very personal. He does not hesitate to acknowledge

4. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 14.

5. Said writes, "What Walzer cannot see is that there is considerable moral difference between the connectedness of a critic with an oppressing society, and a critic whose connection is to an oppressed one." See "Appendix B: An exchange of letters between Michael Walzer and Edward Said," in *Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture*, ed. William D. Hart (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194.

that the very tradition within Jewish thought on which the prophetic call for justice is founded, has a distinctly unjust shadow when one reads it counter-intuitively, or from what Said calls the indigenous “Canaanite” perspective. His critique is not of Judaism or the event that is recounted in the Jewish scriptures—the Old Testament—but rather the mythical meanings which are derived from it. As Said’s philosophy is often wont to do, his counter-argument seems to preserve better space for justice, that “revolutionary” idea that draws on the imprint of the Divine in history, than Walzer. Said does not feign authenticity in his re-presentation of human society; instead he holds society accountable to the individuality of humanity, like the Latin America liberation theologians’ challenge of Catholic wealth and political alliances.

What is striking about Walzer’s motif is that it resitates and recasts the the “wandering Jew” motif, not unlike the early Labor movement in Mandate Palestine and the fledgling Israeli state did through celebration of the “Sabra hero.” The word “Sabra” has come to mean, in Hebrew, an Israeli Jew; however, before that it was the name given to the prickly pear of the desert cactus indigenous to the landscape of historic Palestine. The common motif has therefore come to mean, for Israelis, that which is “prickly on the surface but sweet on the inside.”

Despite the secular Israeli Left and “New Historian” movement’s exposure of the narrative of destruction that was inherent in Israel’s origins and the Sabra motif—wrought with militant and masculine connotations as it is, Said is suggesting that there is another side to the story if justice and liberation remain relative terms. Dissenters to religious Zionism—as Walzer is—do not go far enough if their biases remain unquestioned, particularly when they claim to be intellectuals. Said writes that “Walzer offers no detailed, explicit or principled resistance to the irreducibly sectarian premises of Exodus, still less to the notion of a God as sanguinary as *Yahweh* directly holding them in place.”⁶ It is the effect of this cosmic dualism—or, the exclusive and often oppressive

6. Said, “On Michael Walzer,” 167.

relation with one's neighbors based on one's view of God—within modern religious thought which Said's life work and personal story undercut, and from which Jewish dissenters to the Zionist narrative also challenge.⁷

II. The Ethics of Jewish Nationalism in Post-Holocaust Thought

Marc Ellis, whose writings push the discussion of Jewish identity beyond the Holocaust and Israel's empowerment, writes that "The sin of twentieth-century Jewish settlements is less the desire or need for space and some form of autonomy than it is the uprooting and domination of the Palestinians inhabiting the land."⁸ Like Said, Ellis argues that what really motivates Palestinian resistance to Israel is its political belligerence toward and social exclusion of the Palestinians. And like Said, Ellis affirms the Palestinian right to have their losses acknowledged.

Ellis's purpose is to remind Jews that the means are as important as the end when it comes to nationalism and nation-building within modernity. He argues that the Jewish Covenant and prophetic tradition within Jewish history calls Jews to a higher standard of behavior toward other governments and peoples, not the lowest common denominator. He asserts that for Jews, the question of Israeli security and peace should go beyond final status issues, and focus both on "the political, military and economic spheres of Jewish life while at the same time addressing the deepest theological presuppositions of post-Holocaust Jewry."⁹

This is where Ellis's challenge resonates deepest: in its call to reconsider the meaning of Jewish suffering given the actual reality Jews face today—not the total eradication of anti-Jewish sentiment but rather the empowerment and gross domination of Israel over the Palestinian people and land. For Ellis, recognition of the Palestinian

7. Said, *The World*, 18-19. See also *Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture* (ibid.), 10.

8. Marc H. Ellis, *Israel and Palestine: Out of the Ashes: The Search for Jewish Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 1-14; 53-93; 76-77.

9. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology*, 124.

narrative of suffering is the *sine qua non* for contemporary Jewish identity. To live “after” the Holocaust means to confront it directly. Yet few Jews or theologians—be the Christian or Jewish—agree. Four prominent contemporary Jewish thinkers (Emil Fackenheim, Irving Greenberg, Richard Rubenstein and Elie Wiesel) see Jewish empowerment as unfinished and a “necessity where belief in God was in doubt.”¹⁰ Ellis’s challenge to these theologians is in the way the Holocaust and the experience of suffering have become the essence of who Jews are today. In particular, he sees this phenomena as threatening the continuity of the Covenant and the authenticity of Jews’ witness to God *within* history.¹¹

Fundamental dilemmas ensue—to whom should loyalty apply? What are the meaning of time, history, and faith when they have so thoroughly been proven for naught?¹² Within the debates over how to define justice after the Holocaust and *al-Nakbah*, respectively, it is intriguing that Holocaust survivors are sometimes the most sensitive to Palestinian grief, even as their collective experience is used to justify Israel’s domination of the Palestinian people and homeland.¹³ Reaffirming Jews’ obligation to be faithful God, both past and present, Ellis writes that “fidelity to our own values and history is intimately connected to the struggles for liberation of others; the brokenness of our past is betrayed, our political empowerment made suspect, when others become

10. Ellis, *Revolutionary Forgiveness*, 269.

11. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (2nd ed.), 2.

12. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd ed.), 177. He draws on Hannah Arendt’s conclusion that the rise of totalitarianism proved the end of the Judeo-Christian and humanist traditions within Western civilization.

13. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (2nd ed.), 101; 3rd ed., 177-91. Ellis draws on the caution that the writings and lives of Holocaust survivors Martin Buber and Etty Hillesum, among others, suggested toward the question of Palestine in mid-twentieth century Jewish nationalism. Ateek also writes about this in his conclusion to *Justice and Only Justice*, where he draws on the observations in a turn-of-the-century travelogue that the actual survivors of the Boer War in South Africa were more likely to make peace with their previously-perceived enemies than their children and later generations were.

our victims.”¹⁴ He recalls Buber and Heschel, saying that because they called Jews from a place no longer accessible after the Holocaust, they were denounced and excluded by Holocaust theologians for whom the Rabbinic period was over. “The difficulty of belief is understandable, and to force belief is dishonest. Still, the path of trust and solidarity remains, and righteous activity may once again bring the center of Jewish life into focus,” Ellis writes.¹⁵

Ellis draws from the Jewish experience of suffering and incorporates the writings of Buber and Heschel specifically because they wrote before the Jewish “gates of *itijad*” or tradition of rabbinic thought was closed, so to speak. He finds in them insight into the tumultuous experience of being Jewish in the modern world that is valuable because it pre-dates the homogenization of Jewish identity, manipulation of Western Christian guilt, and co-optation of British and U.S. foreign policy. Where some critique Buber for his romantic deference of the Other, Ellis argues that many current Jewish commentators like Richard Rubenstein, Elie Wiesel and Cynthia Ozick have little or no compassion for the Other when it comes to non-Jewish Palestinians. Where Heschel was involved with the rituals and formula of the Rabbinic, so too are Rubenstein, Wiesel, and others involved intimately with the secular rituals of the Holocaust (museums, tours, lectures, books, and so on).

In Ellis’ *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, he draws on the possibilities and consequences for forgiveness that the Dutch Jew Etty Hillesum saw, having been trained in law and psychology, after being transported to Auschwitz with her parents and two brothers on 7 September 1943. Her diaries survived her, and Ellis draws on them extensively as an ethical standard for Jews today. Writing six months before her death at the last train stop before Auschwitz, Hillesum wrote that “I believe that I know and share the many sorrows and sad circumstances that a human being can experience, but

14. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (2nd ed.), 2.

15. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd ed.), 190-91.

I do not cling to them, I do not prolong such moments of agony. They pass through me, like life itself.”¹⁶ Questioning God yet resolute in her faith toward humankind, Hillesum continues, “If you do not clear a decent shelter for your sorrow, and instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge—from which new sorrows will be born for others—then sorrow will never cease in this world and will multiply. And if you have given sorrow the space its gentle origins demand, then you may truly say: life is beautiful and so rich. So beautiful and so rich that it makes you want to believe in God.”¹⁷

Like the an unanswerable moral dilemma that Ellis finds in Hilleson’s decision not to hate her oppressor and to place herself on the same moral landscape as her executioners,¹⁸ Holocaust survivor Hannah Arendt’s coverage of Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann’s trial in Israel angered the Jewish community in Europe and the United States because she did not follow the Jewish narrative of victimization.¹⁹ Describing Eichmann as a conformist, a “joiner,” a “clown,” and a “a leaf in the whirlwind of time,” Arendt addressed the court’s duty of defining and administering justice more than Eichmann’s responsibility for countless Jewish deaths. She found in him the essence of banality and a lack of ethical judgment, but she did not denounce the person; she studied the administration of justice he received instead. Similarly, her earlier study of the Jewish woman Rachel Varnagen did not tell the story as an “innocent” Jewish woman struggling “demonic anti-Semitism,” but rather as a woman in control of her own destiny who made the mistake of denying her history by attempting to assimilate into the society

16. Etty Hillesum, *Etty Hillesum: An Interrupted Life the Diaries, 1941-1943 and Letters from Westerbork*, with introduction by Eva Hoffman (NY: Henry Holt & Co., 1996), 99-101.

17. Ellis, 102, quoting from Hillesum, *ibid.* Hillesum’s dilemma recalls to mind that of the late Simon Wiesenthal in his book *The Sunflower*, where he describes a dying SS officer who cornered him and begged him for forgiveness on behalf of all the Jews the officer had killed during his service. Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, with a symposium edited by Harry James Cargas and Bonny V. Fetterman (NY: Schocken Books, 1998).

18. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (2nd ed.), 97.

19. Andrea Nye, *Philosophia: The Thought of Rosa Luxemburg, Simone Weil, and Hannah Arendt* (NY: Routledge, 1994), 153.

around her.²⁰ Arendt believed that the effects of oppression include not just the exclusion of the individual (the “oppressed”) from power, but also the moral isolation (“political unworldliness”) where one comes to submit to injustice despite the unstable self and unliveable life it brings.²¹ It is this phenomenon that Arendt’s career and life—like Hillesum’s—served to challenge.

III. Atonement for al-Nakbah: a 615th Jewish Commandment?

In 1970, Jewish philosopher Emil Fackenheim called for a new commandment to be added to the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) that the medieval physician and philosopher Moses Maimonides had outlined in his twelfth-century *Guide for the Perplexed*. Fackenheim argued that after the Holocaust, it must be added that “*Jews are forbidden to give Hitler posthumous victories.*”²² In his view, such meant Jews were commanded “to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish” and “to remember the victims of Auschwitz, lest their memory perish.” Moreover, Jews were forbidden “to despair of Man, lest they co-operate in delivering the world to the forces of Auschwitz,” or “to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish.”²³

In 2002, Fackenheim spoke at the Jerusalem-based Holocaust remembrance center Yad Vashem and reiterated the call he had made three decades earlier. He saw a new dimension of despair and need for “remembrance” of the ancient *Midrash* (or Jewish tradition based on Rabbinical exegesis of the Torah) in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular, he considered the “shadow” of Hitler—namely, anti-Semitism—to have been renewed and to now be directed at the state of Israel. “A *Midrash* has been heavy on

20. Nye, *ibid.*

21. Nye, 154.

22. Emil L. Fackenheim, *God’s Presence in History*, (Northvale: N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1999), 84. Speech published on the Holocaust Education Foundation website (posted in 2002) at <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/fackenheim.htm> (accessed 28 October 2003).

23. *Ibid.*

Diaspora Jewry, for two millennia; after Auschwitz disheartens us; inspires us in the age of a sovereign Jewish state,” said Fackenheim. This burden stemmed from his belief that God’s call (‘You are My witnesses, and I am God’) could be interpreted, “When You are My witnesses, I am God, and when you are not My witnesses, I am, as it were, not God.” Fackenheim suggested that in the tradition of Rabbinical Judaism, the Jewish Covenant was both a promise and a requirement—that in so far as Jews remained faithful, God would be with them, but if they were not then neither would God be faithful to them. “This *Midrash* once burdened Diaspora Jewry. . . [but was] a witness without which, “as it were, He is not God.”²⁴

Fackenheim’s dilemma mirrors that of Hillesum and Arendt in its recognition of Jewish agency, or moral capacity to act, however his conclusion is different. Where Arendt, for example, believed in a bi-national secular state based on a broad critique of the idea of Zion, Fackenheim seems to suggest that Arab Muslim resistance to Israel is gratuitous and anti-Semitic, while religious nationalism among Jews is necessary and ultimately innocent. Arendt’s belief, however, allows the story of Jews to continue in an intentional and morally responsible way that the essentializing of Jews, in Fackenheim and others’ writings, does not.

Ellis challenges Fackenheim’s argument and asks, like Hillesum, “What, in Auschwitz, is a God who ‘as it were, is not God’?” Ellis reiterates the question of who Jews are and are to become if they support Israel’s atrocities and Judaism’s “unholy alliance” with state power after their own experience at Auschwitz. Ellis contends that a new *mishna* or 615th Commandment should thus be added to Maimonides’ and

24. Ibid., quoting Psalms 123.

Fackenheim's readings of the Jewish tradition. It would read, "*Thou shalt not lessen the humanity of Palestinians.*"²⁵

Ellis stands as a bridge across what he calls "broken middle" where both the Jewish and Palestinian national vision has failed, and where memory has become a "liturgy of destruction" for Jews—and now, for Palestinians as well.²⁶ He draws on the writings of Jewish American historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and Rabbi Greenberg to describe Judaism's acquiescence to Israel, despite the atrocity inherent in its creation, as part of this "liturgy of destruction" that begins with the Israelites' exile in ancient Egypt. Indeed, Ellis echoes Said's denunciation of Walzer's revisionist reading of Exodus (that is, as an archetype for human rights and social justice today), by arguing that this full "liturgy of destruction" which comes full circle to include the effect on Palestinians, is the story of the Canaanites that was never told.²⁷ Ellis argues that the juxtaposition that Jewish writers and artists made during the mid-twentieth century, between "the ancient Jewish archetypes of Divine promise, election, the mission of Israel and its place among the nations" and the Holocaust imagery of difficulty, sorrow, and anger embedded in the modern-day pogroms and concentration camps of Eastern Europe, must be expanded to include the full liturgy "as Jews have known and inherited it."

"One wonders," Ellis writes, "if a third category of Jewish memory has been created. . . The injunction to remember God's acts in history and the peoples who have threatened Jewish existence is joined with the need to remember acts Jews have undertaken against others, in this case the Palestinians."²⁸ The post-WWII cooperation

25. Ellis, *Out of the Ashes*, 33-41.

26. Ellis, "The Future of Israel/Palestine: Embracing the Broken Middle," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 56-66.

27. Ellis, "Jewish Theology and the Palestinians," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 39-57. See also his chapter on an "inclusive liturgy of destruction" in *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd. ed.), 115-43.

28. *Ibid.*, 20.

between Jews and Christians must no longer submerge Palestinian moral and political agency and Holocaust theology—what he calls sometimes the “Holocaust industry”—has and yet must not continue to silence the broader ethical foundations and possibilities of spiritual renewal inherent in Judaism, as it has within much of Christianity and other faith traditions over time.

Ellis repeatedly asserts that Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians is precisely the point at which Jewish empowerment and spiritual renewal meet, and at which they fail to withstand scrutiny. “Empowerment is possible, but those who are empowered must bear in mind that solidarity with those suffering in the present is the only link to those suffering in the past, and that to ignore or cause suffering is to lose the *raison d’être* of empowerment.”²⁹ Ellis repeatedly comes back to this point, having at once found the dominant voices in contemporary Judaism out of touch with the reality he witnessed visiting Israel and coming to know first hand the Palestinian narrative of suffering at the hands of Jews after the Holocaust. He finds in them, and their struggle to emerge from the conflict with their faith in tact, inspiration for his own spiritual journey that attempts to make sense of a chaotic, unrecognizable world.

Like Buber, the Reform rabbi and American-born spiritual Zionist Judah Magnes, and the German Jewish political philosopher Hannah Arendt, Ellis underscores the prophetic warnings that existed during the formative period of Israeli existence, or between 1947 and 1967.³⁰ Buber’s understanding of dialogue and presence led him to a communitarian hope for a mutual homeland for Jews and Palestinians in the Holy Land,” writes Ellis.³¹ Just before Judah Magnes died, Magnes personally lobbied the U.S. Secretary of State and President to not recognize the recently declared state of Israel, but to recommend the presence of U.S. soldiers in Jerusalem so as to prevent the irreparable

29. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd. ed.), 180.

30. Ellis, *Out of the Ashes*, 138-39.

31. Ellis, *Revolutionary Forgiveness*, 260.

division of historic Palestine.³² Arendt, also a binationalist, was later vilified for her controversial depiction of the Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann, tried and hanged in 1961 for his conviction of war crimes against humanity.³³ Ellis suggests that Arendt's broad political and ideological critique of "Zion," along with the practical considerations of Buber and Magnes and their deference to the rights of Palestinians, provide the historical precedent one needs to envision Jewish reconciliation with the Palestinians, both in Israel and the United States.

Ellis reasserts the role of historians and intellectuals, by which dissenting Jews have an obligation to speak and to challenge the establishment, even when it is a Jewish one in Israel or the United States. The past has two possibilities—to legitimate or to critique unjust power—and like the Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin, Ellis seeks the "temporal index" by which one can stand strong against an eroded and beleaguered tradition no longer able to see outside itself.³⁴ With Hillesum, Ellis courageously places himself in the historical context which has allowed Israel to continue its atrocities despite such warnings, despite whatever "waning love affair with Israel" that historians have begun to note in U.S. Jewish political sympathies.³⁵ The progressive dissent which has grown in the past ten years since the first Palestinian *intifada* and the Oslo Peace Process, exemplified by the Peace Now movement in Israel and the U.S., has only pushed the Israeli hawks and fundamentalist militants ("Settler Judaism," in Ellis' terms) to find

32. Ellis, *Out of the Ashes*, 138.

33. See the article by Walter Laqueur, the preeminent historian of Zionism, "The Arendt Cult: Hannah Arendt as Political Commentator," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 4 (October 1998): 483-496.

34. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 179. See also Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1978), 255-57.

35. See Nimrod Novik, *The United States and Israel: Domestic Determinants of a Changing U.S. Commitment*, published in cooperation with Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies and Tel Aviv University (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986); and Steven Rosenthal, *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2001).

new ways of legitimating its alienation and dispossession of the Palestinians.³⁶ “It is important to understand that the Jewish progressive tradition as we know it can live with the expansion and expulsions of 1948 and 1967, as Martin Buber and Abba Eban did, and with the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, as Elie Wiesel did, with the policy of might and beatings, as David Hartman and Irving Greenberg did. Simply put: corrections, anguish over Israeli policies, or arguments for the Jewish soul, are not enough.”³⁷

Forever interrupted by the atrocities of 1948 and 1967—and replicated anew in the post-*intifada* era of “helicopter gunships” and D-9 bulldozers—Ellis is hopeful that the heart of Jewish history might yet come to incorporate this binational vision of communal coexistence between Jews and Palestinians.³⁸ Whatever the Jewish tradition is “as we have known and inherited it,” he pushes the envelope in its spiritual and political dimensions and demands a new, more honest dimension of memory.³⁹ “Will the covenant, so central to Jewish history and argued about in the last fifty years, be relevant to those who come after the Holocaust and Israel?”⁴⁰ Change is possible, yet so are backlashes from both “Constantinian Judaism” and “Constantinian Islam.” For

36. See also Mordechai Bar-On, *In Pursuit of Peace: A History of the Israeli Peace Movement* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1996).

37. Ellis, *The Renewal of Palestine*, 53.

38. See Ellis’s “Helicopter Gunships and the Golden Calf,” Media Monitors Network (posted 8 May 2001), at <http://www.mediamonitors.net/marcellis2.html> (accessed 17 August 2003), where he argues that, “Idolatry is action that belies belief. We are what we do. We worship what we are. . . . If we are what we do and worship what we value. . . [then] Israeli helicopter gunships are central to Jewish religiosity today. They represent who we have become as a people.”

39. For a discussion of Zionism’s pre-Israeli religious and cultural vision, see Martin Buber’s discussion on Ahad Ha’am, the late nineteenth century Russian activist, in *On Zion: The History of an Idea*, translated by Stanley Godman and with a foreword by Nahum N. Glatzer (London: Horowitz Publishing Co., 1973; Syracuse University Press, 1997), 143-147. Buber addresses the tension between Ha’am and Theodor Herzl. Ha’am’s vision of cultural Zion, coming from a ghettoized sub-culture of late nineteenth century Stalinist Russia that was expressly against the secularity and assimilation of German Jews, included the framework of a state and the ideal of safety only as means by which to achieve a renewed spiritual community capable of living righteously, fulfilling the commandments, and witnessing freely to the world the Jewish God. See also Steven Zipperstein, *Elusive prophet: Ahad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

40. Ellis, *Out of the Ashes*, 16.

the Covenant to remain relevant among those who would subvert justice in the name of nationalism, a reconsideration of Israeli citizenship, no less than Jewish identity itself, must be made so that neither ethnic nor religious identities can come to dominate people's lives. This plural secular framework would maintain a neutral public space within the framework of the State that would safeguard the equity of all of its members, including Palestinians, yet his motivation is a particularly rabbinical one focused on the continuity of the Jewish covenant and people. "The ideal of equality under the law and shared responsibilities to the public realm limits. . .the claims of both the settler and indigenous populations."⁴¹ Writing during the 1930s, Buber believed that Jewish immigration to Palestine could happen peacefully as long as it didn't disturb the "Arab peasant" communities, did not harm their political status, and continued to improve their economic condition.⁴² On potentially contested issues like the fate of Jerusalem, Buber asserted that "An internationally guaranteed agreement between the two communities is asked for, which defines the spheres of interest and activity common to the partners and those not in common with them, and guarantees mutual non-interference for those specific spheres."⁴³

While many Palestinians would agree in part with this vision, the factuality of the past fifty years and their memory of successive betrayals by every foreign government prevents them the innocence to agree wholesale. As one Palestinian retorted to the question of peace, "We have coexistence—it means occupation for us!" Ghada Karmi, the London-based Palestinian writer whose memoir *In Search of Fatima* provides an inside story to the events of 1947-1949 in Jerusalem, is also skeptical of the secular democratic state as outlined by the binationalist paradigm proves too problematic for

41. Ibid., 77.

42. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 104, quoting from Buber in "The Meaning of Zionism," in *A Land with Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr (NY: Oxford University Press, 1983), 181.

43. Ellis (ibid.), 105, quoting Buber (ibid.), 184.

both people to get much support. “It would effectively spell the end of Zionism and force Israelis to share equitably the land they view as exclusively Jewish with non-Jews. It is scarcely better for the Palestinians, for whom it means the end of the dream of a sovereign Palestinian state, which had become familiar and seemed until recently so attainable.”⁴⁴

Karmi points out that the decades of hatred and the current, ongoing anti-*intifada* repression by Israel presents a context in which that vision is not only untenable, but also cruel from the Palestinian side. At the same time, Karmi notes the dilemma facing a two-state solution that Ellis is also aware of. “In fragmenting the West Bank so effectively, [the Israelis] have ensured that no separate state can exist there and thus opened the door to the one-state alternative.”⁴⁵

IV. A “Constantinian” Judaism?

Denouncing the myth of Jewish innocence, Ellis argues that “settler Judaism is a militarized Judaism. A militarized Judaism is a militarized Jewish world on the religious, political and narrative levels.”⁴⁶ From the imagery of the Israeli soldier as a “sabro” to the role of and place where the ancient Macabees chose death over subjugation to the Roman empire, Ellis finds that Jewish narratives today are founded not only on myths about the origins of the state of Israel—that is, “that its events were legal and accurately reflected in Israeli history”—but also that the Holocaust legitimates Jewish triumphalism and silences resistance to the political and military actions of Israel.

It is against the belligerence of Israeli nationalists and the exclusive claims of Jewish settlers that a growing community of Jews in Israel and the U.S. have begun to express dissent and criticism over Israeli domestic policies and military practices. While

44. Ghada Karmi, “*A Secular Democratic State in Historic Palestine: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?*” Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (July 2002), at www.caabu.org/press/articles/secular-state.html (accessed 27 October 2003).

45. Karmi, *ibid.*

46. Ellis, *Out of the Ashes*, 69.

the foundation of such critiques and the cause for their immediate expression may extend back to the *Yishuv* when the policies of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Charles Orde Wingate inspired a generation of underground Jewish operatives,⁴⁷ Ellis addresses post-*intifada* Jewish dissent toward events like the 1994 Hebron massacre committed by Baruch Goldstein in honor of the biblical story of Esther and the holiday of Purim, and the April 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, a Talmudic law student. In the sentencing of Amir, the court wrote,

When thought was given to the possibility of an attempt being made on the life of an Israeli leader, we dismissed it as unlikely, since we innocently believed that in this area, we were not like other peoples. And suddenly, the illusion came to an end, and the picture of the late Prime Minister collapsing after the assassin's bullets had found him, has not ceased from before our eyes.⁴⁸

Fundamental to Ellis's critique of Jewish thought after 1948 is his conception of time and authenticity, as well as his comparison of the trajectory that Christianity took once aligned and in bed with the Roman state and the trajectory that Judaism is now taking in its alignment with the Israeli state against the Palestinians. "Is this not what has happened to Judaism in our time, the initiation of a Constantinian Judaism in service to the state and to power? Are not Jewish dissidents in the same position that Christian dissidents find themselves?"⁴⁹ He writes that Jews have unconsciously followed in the tradition of Constantinian Christianity, which throughout medieval and modern times betrayed the authentic meaning of Jesus' life that Christian ought to have followed, by aligning itself with empire and providing services to the state in exchange for protection,

47. Jabotinsky, who some consider the ideological predecessor to Benjamin Netanyahu, was a journalist and Zionist leader who opposed the policy of restraint, for example calling in 1936 for Jews to "fight terror with terror" vis-à-vis the Arab revolt. Wingate was a leader of the Haganah, who formed "night squads" in 1937—two years before being captured and deported by the British Mandate government—and advocated methods like the element of surprise and unconventional fighting tactics.

48. Judge Edmund A. Levy, "Excerpts of Yigal Amir Sentencing Decision," GPO News Department (27 March 1996), available at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH01p30> (accessed 27 October 2003).

49. Marc Ellis, "On the Jewish Civil War," *ibid.* See also his "On Globalization and Religion: A Jewish Perspective on Constantinian Religion and the Free Prophetic," a lecture for the International Movement for a Just World, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (25-27 November 2002).

privilege and status. Just as the Christian church used the subversive message of its early years as a ruse for a “theocratic orthodoxy” which would have scandalized the early followers of Jesus, so Ellis sees the Jewish establishment doing today toward the Jewish prophetic witness.

Constantinian Judaism, as expressed by the settler culture and more physically by the current “apartheid wall” being constructed around the borders of the West Bank, is so ingrained in Jewish life “that the injustice of our victory is hidden from view and the cries of the subjugated are only seen through the lens of intransigence and terrorism. What is also hidden from view is our own assimilation to the values of the state and the loss of our own history of suffering and struggle.”⁵⁰ Solidarity with Palestinians against the uncritical empowerment of Judaism is thus a way of redeeming the tradition so that it too, does not “lose its soul” like Christianity did.⁵¹

Most calls for an end to the violence witnessed now between the dominant settler and refugee cultures which have taken over Jewish Israeli and Palestinian Arab identity are insincere and untenable—either from their corollary of brute force or from the ignorance of the depth of sorrow and anger for which violence currently flourishes. Violence may be effective at expressing one’s anger, but to what end and for whose benefit? One sociologist argues that a cessation of fighting and normalization of Israeli-Palestinians relations would most affect non-European Jews and foreign labor immigrants, both of whose status is raised in so far as Palestinians has decreased.⁵² How does it bode for the future of Jews, Muslims and Christians—and Druze—that self-interest has replaced obligations to God, and that minorities are pitted against each other

50. Marc Ellis, “Sharing Jerusalem: A Progressive Jewish Perspective,” a lecture presented to the American Committee on Jerusalem (3 August 2000), courtesy of the Center for American-Jewish Studies at Baylor University.

51. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd. ed.), 178.

52. See Sammy Smoocha, “The implications of the transition to peace for Israeli society,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 555 (January 1998): 26-46.

in an ever debasing cycle of retaliation? What does it say in specific, Ellis pushes further, for helicopter gunships to be the essential expression of the Ark of the Covenant?

If authenticity and social harmony are to develop, the frameworks of reference that construct and maintain one's identity must expand to provide the intellectual resources needed in understanding others, contextualizing the self, exploring difference as *difference* (versus deficiency), questioning the bifurcation between self and other, and finding creative space in which to encourage the free agency of all persons. As Hillesum eluded, hatred like adoration are profoundly distorting emotions and are detrimental to the long-term stability and cooperation of people. Such must be addressed courageously, directly, in all of its subtlety—a process to which the writings of Marc Ellis are fundamental.

Jewish commentators approach the issues in ways different from their Christian and Muslim co-religionists. They seem to do so in a way that reflects the empowerment of the party with which they most identify. While Palestinian Christian responses seem to focus on a justice defined in legal, measurable, and pragmatic ways, Jewish dissenters to the dominant Zionist narrative in Israel—no less than non-Zionist Jews altogether—define justice on the basis of ethics and moral tradition, more than laws or Palestinian rights. Perhaps it is germane to note this difference is not absolute, for when Palestinian Christians turn to the issue of violence used by members of their own national community against Israelis, their language becomes pragmatic; where it retains a legalistic tone, it does so in the sense of defending Palestinians' right to resist.

Jewish discourse on Israel, whether it is for or against the occupation and Palestinians' right of return, is united by the act of solidarity that draws commentators toward their subject matter, and by the gravity that Jewish identity holds before the international community and other nations. While what is actually "Jewish" in its precedence remains contested, this reliance on an imagined collective morality is no less reflected in dissenting Jews. On the contrary, they especially reflect the subtle workings

privilege and social acceptance when compared to the lack of concern by and large given to non-Jews. One might say that unlike non-Jews, Jewish dissenters on the Israeli Left can afford to challenge the normative structure of society because it is unlikely they will themselves be held accountable.⁵³

53. I am referring here, for example, to the political activism of Israeli “*peaceniks*” like Amos Elon and others, who despite their liberal and inclusive rhetoric do not question Israel’s right to exist even when confronted with the havoc and atrocity its creation wrecked on Palestinians. See Jacqueline Rose’s *The Question of Zion* (ibid.).

CHAPTER SIX

Reform and Renewal within Islam: Modern Muslims Reformers, Post-colonial Authoritarianism, and the Crisis in Modern Islamic Thought

Like the conventional belief that Palestinian is coterminous with terrorist, Islam has become synonymous with violence in the Western gaze. Because extremist and politically motivated activism in the name of religion is not sustainable, Muslims have debated for centuries the question of how to balance religious and political authority. Rather than a duality between good and evil, contemporary Muslims in the West describe the relationship between religion and politics as interdependent.¹ The political arena is thus seen to need religion just as religion cannot exist within a political vacuum. From an Islamic perspective, the question is thus not why but how and for whom?

In reviewing religious responses to political conflict in the context of Israel and Palestine, it is necessary to discern whether religion is a factor in the socio-political dynamic, and if so, what resources it has provided for defining justice and organizing society justly. One can assume religion plays a role in determining Palestinians' conception of state power just as it did Egyptians' during the colonial era. The question is according to what definition of justice and toward what end.

The question of Islam in the context of Israel-Palestine is different from that asked of Judaism in light of Israel's alliance with the Jews. However, just as a comprehensive look at the trajectory of Jewish identity from the ancient to modern period leads one to ask, "Are Zionists the only or most authentic representative of Judaism?" one also must also ask within the political context of the modern Islamic reform movement, "Are Islamists the only or most authentic representatives of Islam?" The answer to

1. Tareq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 219.

both questions is elusive. As Marc Ellis and others have argued, the story of Israel and Judaism after the Holocaust has been an existential struggle with state power—yet it is a story that predates Israel and whose conclusion remains open.

The story of reformist Islam as it developed in Egypt during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries—that is, in the region most influencing modern Islamists in Palestine today—is one where the lines between traditional and modern, spiritual and political also remain in tension. Since its declaration of independence in 1988, the Palestinian Liberation Organization has set forth a secular and democratic vision of Palestine whatever its shortcomings in or obstacles to implementing that vision. Islam is not allied thus with either government at issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet over 90 percent of Palestinians in Gaza—the most overcrowded and politically radicalized area—support the Islamist agenda. What then should be said of Islam in its vision of social and political justice as it is brought to bear on the realities of Palestine and the Palestinians?

While all Palestinians are culturally affiliated with Islam, Muslims are not an empowered group in Palestine or Israel. Moreover, Christian Palestinians have not always paralleled the nationalistic trajectory of their Muslim compatriots. Debate over Palestinians' local and regional political identity, which dominated the scene after Israel and Lebanon's role in the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982 and the PLO's move from Beirut to Tunis, led to the popular rebellion known now as the first intifada. With international reaction during the peace process, the role of Christian Palestinians in mediating violence was revived both because of their religious and family connections in the West but also their support for a secular, democratic future of Palestine. Today, as President Abbas begins a new phase in Palestinians' national story and addresses the

needs of Palestinians in post-disengagement Gaza, the question is asked again about the legal and economic orientations of the future Palestinian state.

The Islamic struggle for self-reliance and honor is deeply rooted in the model of the Prophet Mohammed. This memory animates contemporary “Mosque-State” relations in the context of Israel-Palestine. Because Islam is a continuation of the Abrahamic story that God began with Jews and Christians, it shares in the divine Covenant and believes that Muslims too are obligated to the eternal God. Negotiation with the socio-political order is thus a question of ethics and over the nature of Muslim identity. However, because justice must be defined and implemented in real time, that effort has existential and political dimensions. As noted in previous chapters, support for Palestinian Islamist opposition groups, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, is not absolute. Instead, it corresponds inversely with the tangible results brought forth by the dominant PLO parties and personalities.

In her essay on “The Desire of Islam,” French journalist Martine Gozlan argues that Islam “proposes certainty” where the other monotheistic traditions “manage doubt.”² Her thesis suggests that Islam is a closed and monolithic enterprise that can be named and measured. Swiss Islamic scholar and Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan disagrees, asking in effect what Islam could say then, if that were true, to the fact that many of its strongest adherents live in non-Islamic societies and display little desire to “return” (often for the first time) to the so-called “Islamic” world. One might ask whether the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in actuality a microcosm of the struggle between Islam and the West that right-leaning hawkish Jews, Christians, and Muslims would suggest. What future does this view of Islam today herald for the Palestinians, who seem to face

2. Martine Gozlan, *Le désir d'Islam: Essai* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2005), 24.

a microcosm of the struggle between Islam and the West that is said to exist at a broader, global level?

This thesis has addressed some historical and cultural influences on Palestinian nationalism that go back to the 1870s and 1920s, and which ground the paradigm within which current Palestinian identity and political activity transpire. It has also noted that where religion is reference by opposition groups, it is done so to galvanize personal and political power, not because it reflects either the ethics of the tradition or the true views of the people. Islam is present in the minds of the people, however. As Palestinians and others observe these two polarities, is there consensus on how they—or even just Palestinian Muslims—define justice? Again, the authenticity of the current Islamists’ political vision and religious authority is in question, given the dual nature of Palestinian Islamists’ challenge to the PLO as much as Israeli intransigence.³

Questions abound, including how Palestinian Muslim perspectives of their non-Muslim fellow compatriots, the degree of their resentment toward Fatah for the failures of the peace process under Arafat, what price a privatization of traditional identity will pay given the Islamism of the opposition groups today, and whether non-Islamists (especially within the Arab world) can learn to tolerate current Islamic political groups given the tumultuous history they have shared with nationalists since the 1950s. It may seem moot for Palestinian Muslims in the diaspora to ask what principles exist within their tradition to guide Palestinians’ quest for liberation today given the struggle for political liberation that characterizes in a near-absolute way the lives of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Yet they too face a future that “remains open,” in Ellis’s words. An identity based on victim-hood may be a catalyst for nationalism, but it is not a healthy

3. Most Muslims reject the idea that the actions Islamic militants use to realize an Islamic state embody, or are acceptable according to, Islam. However, the social provisions that H.A.M.A.S. provides to Palestinians in the absence of a state apparatus, and its uncompromising challenge to Israeli occupation and defense of Palestinian refugees’ Right of Return, are important caveats to any denunciation of religiously-motivated political activism.

foundation for a stable or integrated future. Therefore even within the Palestinian Islamic movement, the questions of “Liberation from what? and for what?” remain.

II. Islamic Principles and Approaches to Socio-Political Order

Looking closer at the tradition of reform within Islam, Ramadan and others contend that because the story of Islam does not end with the medieval closing of the gates of “ijtihād” (that is, the disapproval of using one’s intellect to interpret rationally the Islamic tradition that developed because of the disorienting new circumstances of the Mongol invasions and, later, modernity), the reformers in Egypt, Iran, and elsewhere to provide a precedent that could be revived for a non-aggressive, intentionally religious Arab Muslim identity just as it was used to found the aggressive identity politics of the mid to late twentieth-century Middle East. While he does not see a singular “canon” or theology within Islam, he does find an ethical core that is amenable to change and that has a precedent for defining justice in pragmatic, modern ways.⁴ Like al-Afghani and al-Banna in Egypt, Ramadan argues that Muslims today can find moral guidance by returning to the original vision put forth by the Prophet Mohammed in the Qur’an and the Sunna (the “Tradition”). This is controversial, however, because his argument eclipses the authority of current traditionalists who rely on medieval jurisprudence for their own power and identity.

Religious historian Karen Armstrong, like various others, has written on the ideological and political struggles Islam has undergone since the eighteenth century, which resulted on the one hand with a rejection of the modern reality and a stubborn reliance on literal interpretations of Muslims’ fundamental beliefs and structure for righteous behavior; on the other, there was an accommodation of modernity through a revision of Muslims’ self perception and the narrative purpose of Islam. Scholars of Islam such as Tariq Ramadan, Farid Esack, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Yvonne Haddad, as

4. Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 11.

well as non-Muslim scholars of Islam like Armstrong and John Esposito, each argue and together exemplify the facts that contemporary Islam is both a dynamic and plural set of traditions, and that it is compatible with democracy, pluralism, and economic reform. In their own bodies of work, each contribute and become a part of the historical narrative of Islam as much as the medieval jurists because of the textual and ritualistic orientation of Islam, like Judaism.

Central to Muslims' struggle with modernity is the debate over religious and secular conceptions of the state, questions regarding the nature of God, the definition of Islam, and the distinction between the sacred and profane realms of being. Political organization within this context demonstrates the difficulty in establishing stable governments which are neither sectarian nor atheistic; this is the case in Egypt and Palestine no less than in Israel, the United States, Europe, Latin America and elsewhere. However, in the Arab world, the difficulty is compounded by the influence of residually colonial paradigms of thought and unable economic structures. From their research on the rise of "fundamentalism," the scholars noted above argue that societies facing political and economic change bolster the role of religion through the production of memory and a conservative identity.⁵ Indeed, even in the politically liberal and procedurally secular societies of the West, the primacy of the religious in communitarian definitions

5. Armstrong, 217-32. Like Armstrong, I find of interest the way religion and language about God remain present even in the atheism of postmodern and continentalist philosophy, such as that of Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray. See *The Religious*, ed. John Caputo, Blackwell Readings in Continental Philosophy (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002), 6.

of the public good, like the contribution that religious ethics makes to public morality, is underestimated.⁶

Arab Muslims, like many others in the world, are sensitive to the individualism that secular definitions of identity entail. In pluralistic, non-Islamic societies, they seek definitions of citizenship based on a religious consensus that takes into consideration the transcendental dimension of their faith as a balance to the agnosticism of modern commercial production.⁷ However, in so-called Islamic societies, Muslims are intimately familiar with the brutal means of control that politics in the Arab world have entailed, whether under the secular, socialist nationalism of Egypt, Iraq and Syria; the imperial religiosity in Jordan and Saudia Arabia which were installed in the 1920s by Europe and survived the Arab nationalist rise of the 1950s; or the revolutionary religiosity of Iran after the Shah's demise in 1979. Arab Muslims have had to turn inward to find space for the spiritual dimension of faith, in part through the Sufi movement that developed within Shi'ism and spread from Saudia Arabia to Lebanon to Morocco. In many of the nation-states within the former Ottoman regime, some say that "two countries" have come to exist between a wealthy, secularized urban elite and a poor, traditionally religious peasantry.⁸ Thus, given the socio-economic tensions of their own countries, support for the Palestinian cause has been mainly within the nationalist struggle against the imperial

6. For a comparison of Western approaches to political organization, see James P. Sterba's *Justice: Alternative Political Perspectives*, fourth ed. (NY: Thomason Wadsworth, 2003). For examples on the value of the religious in establishing public morality, see John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972; 1994); Azizah al-Hibri's "Islamic Constitutionalism and the Concept of Democracy," *Journal of International Law* 24, no. 1 (1992); and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

7. George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 96-97.

8. Armstrong, 54, 227.

powers of Britain, France, America, and now Israel which has been thin and mostly limited to the rhetoric and power of the ruling elite.⁹

While the fervor of secular nationalism that replaced the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonialism of Britain and France failed in its attempt at ordering society fairly, let alone justly, one cannot say that it did so simply because it separated religion from the public sphere. However, in its repression of religious belief and dominating reliance on new, foreign concepts of meaning, it did alienate a majority of its citizenry. Princeton University professor of foreign affairs Carl Brown explains that while there is no equivalent within Islam to the church or its hierarchy of religious authority within Christianity, “throughout the ages Muslim religious spokesmen have confronted Muslim rulers—ever so circumspectly at times, but occasionally in thundering condemnation. The *ulama* have often led or been intimately involved in movements toppling rulers from power.”¹⁰

Thus, the belief that Islam does not distinguish between religion and politics is wrong both historically and “theologically.” One can indeed draw a social and political dimension of justice from Islamic jurisprudence. In contrast to the common belief of Islam that, “unlike Christianity, there is no tradition of a separation of church and state [or] of religious organization as contrasted with political organization,”¹¹ Brown argues that, “in Islam, just as in Judaism, there is the potential for tension between of the *ulama* and the *sufis*, the religion of the head and the heart, the religion of law and

9. Hamdi, 141. For anecdotal accounts of the tension between the Egyptian poor and governmental support for the Palestinian cause, see Arab-Anglo novels like Ahdaf Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun* (NY: Anchor Books, 1992), 32.

10. Brown, 32.

11. L. Carl Brown, *Religion and the State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), 31.

of illumination.”¹² Indeed, that tension is a continual one that provides a backdrop to modern Islamic identity at its essence.

In order to critique the injustice and oppression that Muslims have experienced, Ramadan argues that they can and have relied on certain universal principles about the nature of God and the pathway that the Prophet provided toward God which are found within the Qur'an, the Sunna, and the state of the world.¹³ He notes that “the Sharia,” or tangible pathway back the “intangible Source of Belief,” is a human construction which is meant to evolve according to the new social, political, and scientific environments in which Muslims live, in light of the Prophetic tradition that says “God sends to this community, every hundred years, someone to renew its religion,” just as human thought evolves and just as some aspects of the Quran and the Sunna were revealed over time.¹⁴

While foreign domination and internal corruption have lead Muslim political leaders to lose their spiritual compass, fueled by what Armstrong and Ramadan describe as a reliance on the isolated, closed and fallible instruction of Medieval jurisprudence, they continue to claim to act in the name of the faithful. As others have noted, this is because the language of religion conveys a sense of authority and divine legitimacy that political leaders need. Also, the language of religion is a cohesive factor that Muslim leaders from Morocco to Afghanistan and beyond have sought to use for political ends. Thus the reformers' challenge the political leaderships' use of Islam and practical

12. Brown, 43-51, 77-86. See also Mohammed Arkoun's chapters on “A Critical Introduction to Qur'anic Studies” and “The Rule of Law and Civil Society in Muslim Contexts: Beyond Dualist Thinking,” in his book, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (NY: St. Martin's Press/Saqi Books, 2002), 37-65, 298-334.

13. Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 37.

14. Ibid., 38.

implementation of its spiritual obligations under God have, not surprisingly, been largely unwelcome.

Approaching modernity in different ways, reformers since the eighteenth century have sought to realign the socio-political identity of Muslims according to the universal, prophetic principles they draw from the Qur'an and the Sunna, cast as it were according to each respective historical context. By challenging power on the grounds of religion even where the political establishment claims religious authority, they have put religion into tension with itself and not just secularity. Ramadan argues that there are three tools that believers can use—indeed, that are required—for eliciting the universal principles on which Shari'a is based and for seeing forward a pathway toward God. These include the notions of *maslaha*, or the common good; *ijtihad*, or the intellectual effort and critique of legal formulations needed to draw relevant meaning out of the texts; and *fatwa*, or the carefully structured legal opinions that apply the “comprehensive nature of the message of Islam” to specific circumstances.¹⁵

III. Failure and Reform within Modern Project of “Dar al-Islam”

Contemporary Muslim critiques of power and of the relationship between Islam and modernity parallel the critiques found within Christianity as early as the Protestant Reformation,¹⁶ as well as those within the twentieth century movement among Catholic Latin American liberation theologians.¹⁷ In charting the progression of ideas that enabled Muslims to make sense of chaos and uncertainty during the medieval era, Karen Armstrong found that like the Protestant reformers, Sunni Muslim intellectuals increasingly criticized the injustice resulting from their society's modernization. She

15. Ibid., 62.

16. Armstrong, 40 and 64. She compares the Muslim reformers from 1492-1799 (such as Ibn Tamiyyah) to Protestant reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli who all returned “*ad fontes*, to the wellsprings of the Christian tradition.”

17. Alain Gresh notes that Ramadan's research is comparable to that of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonard Boff. See his preface to Ramadan's *Aux Sources du Renouveau Musulman*, 17.

tells of Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah, who in fourteenth-century Damascus refused to accept the belief that, after the Mongol invasions, the Islamic study of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) no longer allowed accommodation with new circumstances. “Where Ibn Taymiyyah had rejected medieval theology and *fiqh* in order to return to the pure Islam of the Koran and the Sunnah,” writes Armstrong, “Luther likewise attacked the medieval scholastic theologians and sought to return to the pure Christianity of the Bible and the Fathers of the Church.”¹⁸

Armstrong found that colonial rule, increased trade with non-Islamic societies, and new social paradigms wrought an alienation on the psychology of Muslims that was of particular concern to early modern Muslim intellectuals. While the rituals and disciplines of Sunni spirituality helped Sunni Muslims accept life as it was and to conform to archetypal norms, Armstrong writes that Shiites developed a discontent that they expressed through mysticism and an apolitical rejection of the dominant social order, as exemplified in their eschatology of the Hidden Imam.¹⁹ Rather than accommodate all forms of government since all were viewed equally illegitimate, as the Shi’a did through the myth of the Occultation of the Hidden Imam, Armstrong and others write that a movement of reformers grew within Sunni Islam that openly challenged the reigning political establishment on the basis of their moral legitimacy or lack thereof.

These reformists’ critique of Western colonial hegemony was based on the Prophet Muhammad’s accusation that the pre-Islamic Hebrew and Christian leaders had not adequately fulfilled their religious authority during the pre-Islamic period, as well as his challenge to the decadence and corruption of human power that he found in the

18. Armstrong, 64. She notes that in an attempt to conserve a tradition that had almost been destroyed by the Mongol invasions, the Sunni Muslim dynasties of the Ottomans and the Safavids decided that there was no need for further independent thought and organized their fledgling societies along established legal manuals (35).

19. Ibid., 50, 51.

Byzantium and Persian empires and the nomadic tribes of seventh century Arabia.²⁰

When the Shiite Iranian thinker Jamal al-Din (known as “al-Afghani”) arrived in Cairo in 1871, he took on both a Sunni Afghani persona in order to attract a wider audience, Armstrong writes. “He was determined to teach the Muslim world to unite under the banner of Islam and to use religion to counter the threat of Western imperialism.”²¹ However, the purity of origin that al-Afghani sought was not amenable to the modern world, if such ever existed. In his desperation over the West’s perception that the Arabic language and cultural production of the Semitic world were “backward,” al-Afghani violated his own interests by urging a follower to assassinate Nasir al-Din Shah in 1896.

The violent overtones that this tension between Islam and the state are similar in some ways to the critiques that Catholic liberation theology has borne in light of the Marxism and political anarchy of some of its sympathizers.²² Like Christian theologies of liberation, Islamic liberationists are not shy to argue that power exists and has often been used against the good of its’ own people. South African Muslim liberationist Farid Esack writes that the Qur’an distinguishes between Self and Other not necessarily as a way of welcoming or incorporating the Other into the Self, but rather as a way of separating that which must be “relentless opposed” through either gentle discourse or other means.²³

This willingness to reject that which is seen as foreign and/or spiritually threatening led to, among other things, a separation between the historical narratives of Christianity and Islam. In a Muslim world that later outgrew the conservative categories of its heritage, modern Muslims scholars living outside and/or dissenting from the so-called closed societies of states in which Islam is empowered must find a new foundation

20. Esposito, 2.

21. Armstrong, 156.

22. See for example, “The Theology of Liberation: A Latin American Jewish Exploration,” *American Jewish Archives* 35 (1983): 27-39; cited in Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology* (3rd ed.), 163 (fn. 19).

23. Farid Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interrreligious solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 201.

for their Muslim identity that is in keeping with new realities, just as dissenting Jews must after the Holocaust and the “catastrophic” consequences of Israel’s statehood. Ramadan, thus, contends that accurate histories contemporary Islamic political thought must address both the reformist tradition of thinkers going back to al-Afghani, the nineteenth-century Muslim jurist, as well as the political economy of the nineteenth century in which the European powers administered the affairs of the Near East according to their own traditions and economic interests. He argues that chronologies of the Middle East that begin with the establishment of Israel—like histories of contemporary Islam that begin with the 1979 Iranian revolution and address only the violent segments of “Islamist mobilization”—give a partial and misleading image of the dynamics and stakes involved in Islamic thought.²⁴

Like Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Afghani’s return to the origins of Islam as a foundation for a way forward, Ramadan argues that his grandfather, Hasan al-Banna, founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1920s Egypt as a way to renew the spiritual depth of Muslims’ engagement with power through the structure of the State. While the immediate context of the Muslim Brotherhood’s activity was British colonialism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their dissent from the elitist Egyptian monarchy of King Farouk has contemporary implications. Most notably, it is the radicalization that happened among the followers of these reformers, who both watched and shared in the repression of their spiritual leaders at the hands of the nationalists threatened by their opposition.

The Muslim Brotherhood in its Egyptian foundation has neither been dissolved nor remains inactive, yet Ramadan argues that it has changed significantly in its contemporary orientation through a reliance on violence as a necessary corollary of its social vision. In particular, the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood by the political

24. Tariq Ramadan, *Aux Sources de Renouveau Muslemans* [*To the Sources of Muslim Renewal*], 56 and 455, drawing on Charles Rizk, *Entre l’Islam and l’Arabisme: Les Arabes Jusqu’en 1945* [Between Islam and Arabism: Arabs Before 1945] (Paris: Albin Michel, 1983), 144-55 (esp. 147-48).

leadership in Egypt after Nasser's 1952 military coup is the foundation from which the writings Sayyid Qutb (al-Banna's successor as leader of the Muslim Brotherhood) came to be celebrated by radicalized political activists who commit suicide and kill in the name of Islam today.²⁵ As John Esposito, founding director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University writes, "Qutb himself moved from an early phase which spoke of an Islamic alternative to Western systems to a latter stage in which an Islamic alternative became *the* Islamic imperative which all Muslims were obligated to implement, for which the true believers should be willing to live and die."²⁶

Ramadan argues that the militant transformation of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose rise to power was a religious critique of Western colonial hegemony as well as the secular elitist Muslim nationalists' "hijacking" of Islam, does not constitute a "failure" of political Islam. Rather, he believes it is an important challenge to the conventional account of Islamic civilization, which asserts that its demise began in the mid-19th century and culminated in the downfall of the Ottoman Empire in the twentieth century. Contrary to the dominant image of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots as a "political Islam," or the insurgent and "unprecedented irruption" of Islam into "the secular domain of politics,"²⁷ Ramadan refers to the 1920s and the era of intentional and constructive Muslim engagement with the socio-political order as an opening of a new Islamic renaissance.

IV. Trends of Approach Among Modern Muslim Reformers

Ramadan notes that in their struggle to remain faithful to the model of the Prophet, there are at least six trends that can be found in the modern reformers' reliance on the sacred texts of Islam. "Islam is one and presents a body of opinion whose essential

25. Armstrong, 244.

26. John Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, rev. 2nd ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 134.

27. Charles Hirschkind, *Middle East Report* 27, no. 4 (October-December 1997): 12.

axes are identifiable and accepted by the various trends or schools of thought, in spite of their great diversity,” says Ramadan. However, he notes that its textual references allow plural readings even if each reading must respect certain normative criteria to be recognized by all Muslims.²⁸ As Brown notes, “Islam in all its varieties looks back to its earliest years for its political model.”²⁹ Thus Sunnis and Shi’a alike attribute singular importance to the early Muslim era and the model provided by the lives of the Prophet and early Muslims. The term *salaf* is given to the Companions of the Prophet and pious Muslims of the first three generations of Islam, including the “four rightly guided caliphs” who led Muslims after the Prophet’s death (and before the division between the Sunni and Shi’a).³⁰

These six major “tendencies” that Ramadan outlines include scholastic traditionalism, a *Salafi* literalism, *Salafi* reformism, political literalist *Salafism*, “liberal” or “rationalist” reformism, and *Sufism*. To begin, “Scholastic traditionalism” refers to the homogeneity of interpretation found within the major Islamic schools of jurisprudence, including the Hanafi, Malaki, Shafii, Hanbali, Zaydi, Jafari, and others.³¹ It insists on essential aspects of worship, dress codes, and rules for applying Islam which are based on scholarly opinions codified between the eighth and eleventh centuries, where no room is provided for *ijtihad* or modern reinterpretations in Ramadan’s view. Ramadan notes that while “scholastic traditionalists” are present in the United States and Great Britain among Indo-Pakistani groups and in Germany among the Turks, “their reading of the

28. Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 23-24.

29. Brown, 48.

30. Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 25.

31. Ibid., 24.

texts and the priority they give to the protection of strict traditional practice makes them uninterested in and [rejectionary toward] the Western social milieu.”³²

Ramadan describes “*Salafi* Literalism” as equally traditional, in its insistence on reference to the Texts and its forbiddance of interpretation; however, this approach rejects the mediation of the juridical schools and their scholars, following instead the example of the *salaf*, or early pious generations. In contrast to the scholastic traditionalists, Muslims who rely literally on the *salafi* tradition refuse any kind of involvement in non-Islamic spaces and are characterized primarily by isolation from Western cultural influences, still categorizing the world by the realms of war and peace, *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*.³³

“*Salafi* Reformism,” in Ramadan’s view, refers back to the first generation of Islam, like the literalists above, however reformists adopt a reading based on “the purposes and intentions of the law and jurisprudence (*fiqh*)” and believe that the practice of *ijtihad* is “an objective, necessary, and constant factor in the application of *fiqh* in every time and place.”³⁴ Ramadan says that most modern Islamic reformers fall into this category despite their divergent ideas and the degrees of reform they prescribed, because of their constant desire to use reason in the treatment of the Texts. He adds that the arrival of *salafi* reformists in the West was due to the repressive measures that either followed the nationalist regimes in Egypt and Syria during the 1960s or that rejected the later Islamic reform movements in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. We will return below to who these reformers were.

Out of this political repression and generation of reformers grew a “Politically Literalist *Salafism*” among Muslim scholars and intellectuals still based in the Arab world who became radicalized by their collective experiences of torture, exile, political intimidation, and worse under the secular nationalist regimes supported by the West, as

32. Ibid., 25.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 26.

well as by Israel's expansion and capture of the holy city of Jerusalem from the Jordanian Hashemites, who, like the Palestinian *mufti* in control of Jerusalem before them, are descendants of the Prophet. Ramadan explains that the salaf-based politically literalism of these reformers "is about opposing the ruling powers, even in the West, and struggling for the institution of the Islamic state" in the form of a caliphate.³⁵

The last two approaches in Islamic thought are less relevant in our discussion of modern political trends in Islamic thought, from which we will consider the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "Liberal" or "Rationalist" reformism was born out of the colonial period, defending the secularization of Turkey under Ataturk and advocating a complete separation of religion from the ordering of public and political life.³⁶ Ramadan seems to resist this approach to what he calls the "Sources of Islamic belief" because it advocates a complete integration and assimilation of Muslims into Western society, for example, that reduces the communal and comprehensive practice of religion to either a private, spiritual dimension of it or simply a cultural affiliation. *Sufism*, in contrast to the liberal reformists but like the scholastic traditionalists, follows a Qur'anic pathway. Its goal, however, is not an integration into the surrounding society, be it Islamic or secular, Western or Arab, but rather a mystical experience of the spiritual life, an inner life of meditation on the deeper meaning of the Texts, and an internal ordering of support and solidarity that enables Sufi circles to be present but separate from broader society.³⁷

V. Toward a Palestinian Muslim Theology of Liberation?

Like Palestinian Christians, Palestinian Muslims seek a religious paradigm that liberates Palestinians from oppression, re-inspires their self-worth, and guides their

35. Ibid., 27. Wordnet defines a caliphate as an Islamic polity organized around the leadership of a male *caliph*, or successor of the prophet Muhammad. Wordnet notes that the last Caliphate was held by Ottoman Turkish sultans until being abolished by Kemal Atatürk in 1924. Wordnet (Princeton University, 2003), online at www.dictionary.reference.com.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 28.

struggle against occupation and poverty—evidences of the sinfulness of the socio-political order around them. Like Catholic liberationist Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, a Muslim theology of liberation draws from the political dimension of religious belief and scriptural interpretation.³⁸ Because the prevailing political and ideological order has disenfranchised and alienated Muslims from power as much as their own imagined histories, they seek to reform society in a more just way. However, their concern for “justice” is not based on self-interest necessarily. The Qur’an tells the story of the Israelite exile from Egypt in a way that—whatever negative implications it may have as a model for liberation from a Palestinian perspective—its theme of divine justice is unquestionable.

Like the Bible, the Qur’an recounts the story of Moses and Pharaoh in several chapters, showing the consequences of the Israelite’s “rebelliousness and *kufr*” (defined as ‘ingratitude’ or ‘unbelief’) and the resilience of God’s faithfulness to them. Esack writes that Moses did not offer his people a balm to heal the wounds of oppression, but rather acted in solidarity with them to secure their liberation. Moreover, solidarity with the Israelites meant taking sides against Pharaoh and his supporters, and acting on behalf of the oppressed and marginalized. He notes that in particular, this involved challenging those whom the Qur’an describes as ostentatious and arrogant, but that doing so would not mitigate the “all-embracing grace of God or the universality of His prophets’ mission.”³⁹

Just as Christian leaders struggle to find a biblical precedent for the reality their parishioners face daily, so reformist Muslims hold orthodoxy and traditional interpretations of the Qur’an in tension with the unprecedented changes Muslims have experienced through colonialism and rapid modernization as much as the more recent challenges of the technological boom, a globalized economy, and the postmodern cultural

38. Esack, 109 and 199.

39. Esack, 197.

identity of the West. The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood is a crucial historical backdrop against which the project of liberation has evolved, undulating between colonialism, authoritarianism, reform, and neo-conservative nationalism. From the history of Arab reactions to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the repression of challenges to secular pan-Arabism during the 1950s and 60s, to the Arab defeatism after the 1967 and 1973 losses that provoked renewed insurgency among Palestinian nationalists during the late 1970s and 80s, the socio-political order in which Palestinians and others in the Levant have endured is one in which Esack sees the God of Muslims as a faithful God, despite the non-belief of the leaders and/or masses from time to time.⁴⁰

Palestinian life is culturally Islamic, such that even Christian Arabs are accustomed to the normative Islamic tradition, yet political scientist Mark Tessler finds that Palestinian Muslim attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict do not differ significantly between those who are highly religious versus those who are more secular.⁴¹ However, Palestinian sociologist Mahmoud Mi'ari of Birzeit University finds that among Palestinian Muslims, the more religiously active and oriented those polled were, the less likely it was that respondents supported normalization with Israel and the more likely they were to be prejudiced against Jews in comparison to non-religious respondents.⁴²

Religious orientation does not always determine political behavior. Palestinians such as Samia Khoury, Mitri Raheb, and others point out that both Muslim and Christian Palestinians experience occupation equally. They say that any claimed difference is a subversive one aimed at bolstering Israel's ability to control both groups. However,

40. Tariq Ramadan, *Aux Sources du Renouveau Musulman: D'alAfghani à Hassan al-Banna, Un Siècle de Réformisme Islamique* [To the Sources of Muslim Renewal: From al-Afghani to Hussan al-Banna, A Century of Islamic Reform] (Paris: Bayard Editions/Centurion, 1998), 28.

41. Mi'Ari, Mahmoud, "Attitudes of Palestinians toward Normalization with Israel," *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 3 (May 1999): 339-348. The author notes that "Despite the fact that Israel still occupies the Palestinian territories, a major part of Palestinian students support normalizing cultural relations between Palestinians and Israelis . . . [which] is significantly associated with social class or father's occupation" [339].

42. Mi'Ari, *ibid.*, 346-47.

Tessler has found that statistically, one's religious orientation and degree of personal observance is more influential than one's cultural or associational relationships on one's political behavior.⁴³ Tellingly, he also found that the more Muslims in Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Kuwait support religious political movements, do not criticize Islamic militants, and favor a prominent role for religion in political and public affairs, the less likely they are to support diplomatic negotiations or normalized relations with Israel.⁴⁴

Tessler's findings would support the belief that there is more commonality between Muslim and Jewish fundamentalists, both prepared ideologically to use armed struggle in defense of their convictions, than there is between *salafi* traditionalists, literalists and reformists, to use Ramadan's categories for the various trends of Muslim religious reflection and action.

The latter trend, reformist Islam, is contextual theology and a search for a more just, God-like social order. An illuminating parallel can thus be found in the critique made of the use of power within Catholic thought and social structure in the Latin American context known today as *liberation theology*, or the theology that emphasizes a (the) liberating narrative within the Bible and that argues for a biblical hermeneutic where God is intentionally on the side of the poor and oppressed. While the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonard Boff may no longer be seen with the apprehension it once was—both because of its time-tested relevance and because of the plethora identity-based movements that it subsequently inspired, like feminist theology, black theology, “mujerista” theology in Mexico, “minjung” theology in Korea, and so on—it

43. Mark Tessler and Jodi Nachtwey, “Islam and Attitudes toward International Conflict: Evidence from Survey Research in the Arab World,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 5 (Oct 1998): 625.

44. Tessler, 630-31.

is incontrovertible that it has provided a language and a model for phenomenal changes within Judaism and Islam, as well as Catholicism and Protestantism around the world.

Progressive Muslim intellectuals face a doubly difficult project, argues Ebrahim Moosa, a South African professor of Islamic theology now teaching at Duke University. The gap between the vision of intellectuals and the historical results of mass political action can be found in any ideological enterprise. It is by no means unique to Islam or the Islamic world, and may be a phenomenon common to any enterprise attempting to implement an idealistic belief system, religious or otherwise, by human hands and within the structures of human society. Indeed, such a gap marks the historical trajectory of post-Enlightenment thinkers from Martin Luther to Karl Marx, Mahatma Gandhi to Martin Luther King, Jr.

The point of departure for future scholars reviewing anti-oppression movements must always be toward a more complete understanding of the context in which political resistance and social revolution occur and the reasons why the transformation was not realized, so as to better remove the negative sources of their inspiration and/or transform the power structures by which such persons were initially disenfranchised. The increase of Palestinian political action under the banner of Islam has been poorly understood in the United States and abroad, because of both a limited scope of intellectual discourse and an *a priori* bias against Arabs.⁴⁵ The use of violence on behalf of Palestine has become part of a stereotype or narrative *about* Palestinians in which Palestinians have little direct say. While the use of armed struggle by Palestinian “Islamists” may confirm such views among outsiders who think the political and religious realms of Palestinian identity are synonymous, essentially violent, and equally “anti-Semitic,” this is a problem of perspective and ignorance, not a relevant concern for Palestinians as they assess and gauge their own future. The question remains for Palestinian Muslims what they envision after occupation given the facts that cannot be changed—such as the psychological effects

45. Said, 179-180. See also Christison, *ibid.*

of over five decades of political alienation and victimization—as well as the devastation that Israeli occupation has wrought on the Palestinian economy and civil infrastructure.

What unites Muslim, Christian, and Jewish approaches to power during the twentieth century was the bifurcation that resulted within their own communities between religious and secular observance of the tradition. For Muslims, power in historic Palestine during the eighteenth through early twentieth centuries was understood in the context of foreign domination, be it Ottoman or British. The Qur’anic injunction against being dependent on a foreign entities was of immediate relevance to Arab nationalism. According to Armstrong, the tension—between a conservative agrarian society on the one hand and an efficient, increasingly exclusive, technologically-inclined one on the other—resulted in a bifurcated society unable to withstand invasion or develop its resources on its own.⁴⁶ Historians note, however, a sullied side of Islamic reform movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in 1920s Egypt and the Renaissance Movement (Harakat al-Nahda) in 1970s Tunisia. Both had secret military/terrorist wings that were involved in presidential coups and political assassinations, for which the members of the military branches as well as the leaders of the broader organizations were jailed, exiled, and/or killed.⁴⁷

The continuation and defense of violence by militant groups, often made in the name of religion, has made many who are sympathetic to the militants’ cause very uncomfortable, whether it is Jews acknowledging the racist bigotry of Gush Emunim or Palestinians faced personally with the families and/or images of the human suffering caused by suicide bombings in Israel. The belief that Islam was established *within* the Abrahamic tradition and never against the “people of the Book” is of little comfort in

46. Armstrong, 157. While Armstrong is speaking to the malaise of late nineteenth century Cairo, the extension socio-economic structure of Jerusalem and Ottoman Palestine was not incomparable. See also Beshara B. Doumani, “Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 9.

47. Mohammed Elihachmi Hamdi, *The Politicization of Islam: A Case Study of Tunisia, Essays on Democratic Governance* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 171. See also Armstrong, 223.

light of the fratricidal and communal warring that has developed within modern-day Palestine.

Palestinian Muslims remain confined by Israel in many tangible ways even after the Gaza withdrawal, in terms of their sovereignty, control over land and sea ports, access to natural resources, and so on. Yet after the passing of Yasser Arafat, Palestinian Muslims face a new leadership and new opportunities to define themselves and unify in solidarity against Israel. Islam forms an important backbone of Palestinians' social and cultural identity, in large part because 98.5 percent of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are Muslim—that is, essentially all Palestinians from the Gaza Strip as well as most from the West Bank. Jerusalem is considered one of the most symbolic cities of Islam, and Islam is as historically integral to the region as Christianity and Judaism. The claim that Islam justifies a *jihad* against “infidel” Jews or Palestinian “collaborators” Palestinians poses a particular challenge to the Palestinian leadership as they attempt to maintain a democratic, unified, and plural state structure.

The long-standing tradition of reform within Islam seeks an authentic foundation for Muslim observance as a way to challenge the injustices of imperial power and fulfill the obligations of faith for each believer, not unlike the project of religious reform called for by Palestinian Christian theologians in the late twentieth century. There is hope that because of the relevance of Islam to daily Palestinian life—it being a common motif in Palestinian narratives—that pragmatic necessities will continue to force the question of exactly how Muslims can enact justice within a modern political economy without rejecting either themselves or their tradition.

In Amira Hass's eloquent documentary *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land Under Siege*, a Muslim man from Gaza tells her that he cannot remember how long he has known that there is a God, or that Paradise and Hell exist:

This is a natural part of our society.”⁴⁸ Another woman interviewed, whom Hass identified as formerly atheist, says that being religious revives her ability to deal with the chaos around her. She says, “During the *intifada*, I began to believe in God. I started to talk to Him. And during the uprising, it made it easier for us to go out on the streets and face the soldiers, to see one of us get killed. We had faith that it was not death; that the dead were going to Paradise.”⁴⁹

The destitute belief that only death will provide justice, which one finds in some camps and among some groups of young Palestinians deprived of the stability, critical capacities, and creative pursuits afforded to the human mind through education and the humanities, reaffirms the need for a pragmatic foundation for justice within the world today that adequately answers the problem of oppression for Palestinians. The subject of oppression and liberation are certainly germane within Islamic thought, in the tradition of the modern Islamic reformers, however the twentieth century was a period wrought with reactionism and tyranny against the very ideal toward which the Prophet Mohammed worked. Lacking evidence to the contrary, one can only hope that Palestinian Muslims will stand in solidarity with Palestinian Christians and dissenting Jews and demand a just peace especially where it challenges the armed religious opposition groups who would sell the soul of Islam for their own empowerment.

48. Amira Hass, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land Under Siege*, trans. Elana Wesley and Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta (NY: Henry Holt & Co., 1996), 105.

49. *Ibid.*, 106.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Contextual Faith: Is Religiously Motivated Political Activism Pragmatic given the Fragmentation of Religious Nationalism?

Because both Jews and Palestinians are Semites, the task is to oppose all anti-Semitism and find a prohumanity position that will affirm both peoples.

~ Don Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon*

As shown above, religion and politics exist on a continuum with varying costs. The dominance of one over the other has consequences for the safety of people, whichever domain has the power. If religion is empowered absolutely, it is abused in the legitimization it gives to violence. If politics is empowered absolutely, the sacred space of human history is denied the ability to flourish and sustain human communities. Yet the tension between the two facets of human society is not one where either willfully can walk away from the temptation of power, whether the opportunity to control is absolute or not.

Hannah Arendt brilliantly chronicled in her study of totalitarianism the way that political regimes who define and control the existence of their subjects in absolute utilitarian ways come to circumvent the capacity of those subjects to critique state power, as well as the means by which they can then meaningfully name what that power is. Similarly, Marc Ellis's writing on the remnants of the prophetic Jewish tradition after the events of 1948 and 1967 show that, like Christians have learned, there is something wrong with a religious tradition that comes to see itself through the eyes of the state. He suggests that in this lesson, Jews need to atone for the sins committed against Palestinians in the name of Judaism and the Zionist vision of a "secure" homeland, just as Christians

have had to atone for the sins committed against Jews in the name of the Trinitarian God and ontological assumptions about the desirability of a “pure” or “efficient” culture.

In this analysis, there are similarities between Arabs’ and Jews’ national aspirations and the facility of a narrow definition of political identity in the enterprise of building a national culture. Neither form of nationalism has seen fit to include reconciliation or voluntarism toward the enemy (the ethno-cultural “Other”), as such is not expedient to the goals of nation-building. The questions that liberation theology poses for persons of good-will thus have a broader scope, which has been shown to be a historically significant boundary at which a religion is called to reconsider its purposes as much as a government is called to reconsider its treatment of its members. This two-fold critique that grows out of a theological study of one’s socio-political context, and the injustices therein, lead one to ask “liberation from what?” and “change for whom?” Here the gaze of the Other is turned back on the Self in the interests of human society as well as the continuity of religious belief in the fragmented world of today.

While sociologists may find that imagined communities are strengthened by “in group” versus “out group” identities, the question of value is the sustainability of those communities—be they “strong” or “weak” according to statistical matrices. One need not dispute the fact that a strong sense of belief and behavior are part of what create the sense of certainty which leads many around the world to convert to Islam, however few who know the diversity of views and tradition of contested authority within Islam since its seventh-century founding would consider it proof that truth is found in institutional strength alone.

To understand the conflict in Israel-Palestine, it has been therefore necessary to take a multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary approach that allows the identities at play to themselves be questioned, as much as ideology and historical narrative they convey. Weak structures and political propaganda can have residual effects, and both Israeli and Palestinian societies demonstrate that popular support for an idea (e.g., “peace”) does not

ensure its realization or protect its advocates in the complex geopolitical landscape of the twenty-first century.

In today's context, it is often from one's own that one is exiled, as intellectuals and theologians reject traditions whose categories are incompatible with the fragmented and complex world in which they live, or who seek a "good" more broad than self-interest would allow. Dissenting Jews "risk" hospitality toward Palestinians and each other as they strive to fit together the pieces of the rabbinical tradition that still make sense, just as Palestinian leaders and scholars "risk" hospitality toward each other just by seeing past the limitations of family and town, religion and political affiliation, national citizenship and economic status. There are many boundaries which can divide people, yet the overlapping identities of both Jews and Palestinians is not a semantic or superficial consideration. In negotiating religion and politics within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is clear that only authenticity provides a foundation for sustainable alternatives even if that means being exiled from one's own.

This ethical means of defining "liberation" may appear naïve to some, who say that whatever Palestinians may say, what they mean is revolution and an end to the Israeli state. Such people would silence Arab Israelis and much as the worldwide leadership of the Palestinian National Council, suggesting that the Palestinian establishment does not reflect the reality of who Palestine is today. Such hawkish critics point to the actions of the armed opposition groups, especially those whose religious context suggests an easy antithesis to Jewish security. Palestinian identity is thus codified in the Western gaze, and flattened to a singular and singularly undependable factor around which transnational, economic, and military negotiations must be made. In short, it is a thorn in the side of the civilized world.

It is silenced at diplomatic levels despite its dependence on the Arab and international communities to support its desire for self-determination and a better future. For example, U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 do not deal with the Palestinians as a nation,

but only the burden Palestinian refugees place on their Arab hosts.¹ Their analysis is, moreover, derided by its critics as too pro-Palestinian.² Edward Said sets up an understanding of human relations where the problem is one of representation, and as such it plagues intellectuals of all stripes with a creative if irresolvable tension between theory and action.

What remains politically is for government to act only in so far as it enables a fair foundation in which a just peace might grow organically, or from within, and with a courageous commitment to the democratic capacity of its members. In the intellectual climate of the twenty-first century, this puts a responsibility—not just a right—on citizens to maintain an idealistic pragmatism—both radically hopeful and skeptically wise vis-à-vis the context and nature of power. This is a complex task which Hannah Arendt argues involves at its heart, the capacity to reason and judge fairly between self and other. As she argued in her essay, “The Crisis in Culture,”

The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others, and the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement. And this enlarged way of thinking, which as judgment knows how to transcend its individual limitations, cannot function in strict isolation or solitude; it needs the presence of others “in whose place” it must think, whose

1. Hanan Ashrawi, “The Palestinian Reality,” in *Faith and the Intifada: Palestinian Christian Voices*, ed. Naim S. Ateek, Marc H. Ellis, and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 13.

2. See for example Roane Carey and Jonathan Shainin, eds., *The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent*, foreword by Tom Segev and intro by Anthony Lewis (NY: The New Press, 2002), 123-150; Marc H. Ellis, *Israel and Palestine: Out of the Ashes, The Search for Jewish Identity in the Twenty-first Century* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002); Marwan Bashara, *Palestine/Israel: Peace or Apartheid?: Prospects for Resolving the Conflict* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Rachel Corrie, “Rachel’s War,” *The Guardian* (18 March 2003), at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,916299,00.html> (accessed 23 March 2003).

perspective it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all.³

Lévinas reminds one of a broader, “universal” dimension of human relations toward the problem of power that does not take lightly the excuses of historical context, yet he—like Wiesel, Walzer, Ozick, and others—falls short of demanding the same universal treatment toward Palestinians on which Jews have founded their post-Holocaust identity, when the two clash. British professor of cultural history Howard Caygill put his finger on the tension that Lévinas could satisfy: “The difficulty arises when political logic would tend towards greater peace and justice, while considerations of holy history would encourage attitudes and behaviour that provoke war.”⁴

While Lévinas draws the reader back to the Greco-Roman foundations of Western society in a way similar to Hannah Arendt and other multi-disciplinary philosophers,⁵ arguing that religion provides for humanity a sense of universality and its gravity within history, Caygill’s close analysis of his political thought reveals a incongruent dissonance between his ethics, founded on a universal call for justice, and his politics, founded on the Jews’ “holy” obligation to survive at any cost. One is confronted by the fact that, nevertheless, and contrary to the belief (rhetorical or not) that God is dead and history met its end after the Holocaust, intellectual life has continued into the twenty-first century.

Disabused of her presumptions, the intellectual must today put herself squarely within the realm of the non-intellectual—the “organic” intellectual in Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci’s terms—and imagine a new life of the Mind and Heart that is relevant in this fractured, post-structural world in which one is at once aware of the past and

3. Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 220-21.

4. Howard Caygill, *Lévinas and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2002), 161.

5. Arendt, 3. Arendt begins her series of exercises in critical thought, above, with a quote from French poet and historian René Char (translated): “Our inheritance was left to us by no testament.” She suggests that like the crisis that faced the former members of *la résistance* after the French Revolution, modern Western society was equally without precedent in addressing adequately and intentionally the crises of its day.

future. Jewish writings on the prophetic tradition demonstrate that Western intellectual thought has evolved through time yet remains focused on its origins and foundations. However, they also show the difficulty in seeing outside oneself, juxtaposed as they are against the bitter realities that arise when one does not. In doing so, they underscore the need for community and a sense of solidarity beyond the coincidence of geography and the privilege of identity.

In the space between prophesy, conjecture and disinterest, how might justice be done and for whom ought judgment to exist, as Arendt defined it above? Consideration of others' suffering is for many the essence of Judaism, yet there is an increasing consensus that Israeli policies are an exception to that rule—and thus are more than just blind-spot in contemporary Jewish commentary or Western intellectual thought, but rather are its very downfall. If belief in God is difficult after Auschwitz, the writings of Ellis and Ateek show that belief in the authenticity of the rabbinical and prophetic traditions within Judaism—no less than the authenticity of the contemporary Christian witness—is impossible if they are unable to search their own depths and answer for the injustice they have sought, committed, and ignored.⁶ Whatever the justification of self-sufficiency and suspicion or the basis for the exclusion of non-Jews, the lived reality of Palestinians forces one to reconsider his or her role in establishing a just peace in today's political economy.

Are these are foolhardy concerns? They address the matrix of factors which contribute to differentiate identity and justify violence. They challenge the imbalance of power and the expectation that one people's nationalism is better or more worthy than another's within the modern era. Separate from the bankrupt and stymied pattern of diplomatic resolutions and theoretical projections, a future is conceivable for Jews,

6. Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Eight Questions People Ask About Judaism* (Whitestone, NY: Tze Ulmad Press, 1975), 207pp. See Shaul Magid, "What is 'Troubling' About Troubling Texts," at www.bu.edu/mzank/STR/tr-archive/tr8/shaul.html, where he discusses the topic of presentation to a lecture at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which later developed into a session at the Academy of American Religion. He discusses the first section of R. Shneur Zalman of Laidy's *Sefer ha-Tanya*, "which argues that only Jews have a 'divine soul,' while Gentiles have an 'animal soul' and are perhaps by implication not included in the category of those created 'in the image of God.'"

Muslims, and Christians in Israel and Palestine that would serve as a foundation for renewal and learning, reconciliation and self-examination.

The brilliance of liberal democracy, as it has emerged in the American enterprise through the malleable but constitutionally distinct view of statehood and all things religious, is due in large part to its safeguarding of religious vitality and personal voluntarism. Although Christianity continues to pervade American culture, it is not procedurally protected or privileged by law. Judaism, however, faces a much different arrangement with the state of Israel, a self-professed “Jewish,” “democratic” state. Political theorists have had to turn circles to find a definition of democracy that defies both the norm and the practice of European liberalism, and that allows the privileging of one ethnic and religious group over others to neither undo itself or the entire project of statehood.

Israeli sociologist Moshe Zuckerman makes an intriguing claim about the effect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that seems to have implications for American social stratification too.⁷ Zuckerman describes the direction of Israeli political culture as dependent on a “false consciousness” whereby Israeli selfhood has been based on a manipulation of guilt and anxiety toward others—namely, Holocaust survivors, indigenous Palestinians and ultra-Orthodox Jews, or the three largest “out-groups” of Israeli society. From a secular, sociological perspective, he, like Ellis, claims that the only way to overcome the marginalization of these out-groups is a radical de-Zionization of Israeli policy and political procedure. His vision not only collapses the fractures within Israeli society and the Jewish community worldwide, so that non-observant, non-Ashkenazi, and/or non-American Jews are accepted fully within a new image of Israel. It also enables a foundation for non-Jews—whatever their specific ethnic or religious

7. See “Towards a Critical Analysis of Israeli Political Culture,” in *Psychoanalysis, Identity and Ideology: Critical Essays on the Israel/Palestine Case*, ed. John Bunzl and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 59-70.

origins—to participate in the flourishing of the state of Israel as equals and non-outsiders. This begs the question, *why would a non-Jew want to live in Israel and be Israeli?*

This is the project of a democracy—to provide equal opportunity to all citizens. It is the natural, if contradictory, end-product of a national struggle. Yet when Israelis talk of peace they still mean the cessation of open violence and the security of their own people—Jews—from outside attacks by non-Jews. When Palestinians talk of peace, they mean procedural justice, food security, security from midnight raids, cessation of helicopter reprisals, and an end to occupation—in other words, the cessation of open violence and the “security” of *their* people from outside attacks by non-Palestinians. Israelis demand peace before Palestinians can have the political recognition they crave, yet Palestinians are expected to achieve democracy before they have freedom and national sovereignty.⁸ Yet both people’s talk of “peace” is limited to the outsider. At a point in the not-so-distant future, if and when occupation ends and Palestinian national aspirations achieve viable statehood, the conversation must turn inward toward internal social cohesion and reconciliation with the “alien within thy gates.”⁹

On the American side, it must be asked at what price the prevalent Christian paradigm continues in America even outside of *de jure* procedures and who it is that actually suffers its consequences. Evangelical and fundamentalist concerns over the secularization and anti-Christian bias of American society are dubious in so far as the pro-Israeli bias of American foreign policy makers and the growing anti-Muslim bias of the general American public is fostered by Christian writers and theologians. It is most easily argued that American Christians have an obligation to widen their purview

8. This point was made by Rafiq al-Husseini, chief of staff to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, in untitled remarks given at The Palestine Center, Washington, DC (5 October 2005). A transcript is available at http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/images/Husseini_Transcript.pdf.

9. Eugene Borowitz has an interesting discussion of the idea of exile in his chapter on “Judaism and the Secular State,” *Exploring Jewish Ethics: Papers on Covenant Responsibility* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 129. Within the anti-Zionist tradition of early-twentieth century Jewish *heredim* who challenged the creation of the modern state of Israel, Borowitz argues that the exiles of today are those who do not satisfy their impatient spiritual longings against *galut* (exile) by supporting Israel.

to include the plight of Eastern, Palestinian Christians in their cannon of suffering and persecution—however, as demonstrated above with the twentieth century trajectory of Judaism in Europe, America and the Middle East, such would only further evade the true dimension of change needed. Is the problem in the application of Christianity rather than its presence, or must American culture go through a radical and total de-Christianization process before justice can be sought for Muslims and non-American Jews and Christians alike?

The project of moral judgment has no boundaries, neither territorial nor historical, and must logically begin with one's self, before another. That is to say that "liberation," as we have used it, is a concept relative to its opposite, that which is "oppressive." Globalization has only furthered the boundaries of these terms and the stakes for which the debate continues. Have the people and aspirations of Israel and Palestine fallen through the cracks of modern liberalism, or is their experience, like that of the Balkans, the hidden story of liberalism? The subjective experience of Jews, like Christians, must never be allowed silence moral judgment—nor for Muslims, as clerical orders for suicide bombings among radical factions indeed do. However, many Israelis—particularly the observant, religious community—do not see Israel as oppressive at all, but rather as a state that fulfills Jews' covenantal obligation "to live as a community whose life was structured by God's Torah."¹⁰ It is little wonder that dissenting Jews shift the burden of justice from the people to the tradition. Is the Covenant, as it has been handed down from ancient times, amenable to the knowledge gained from life in exile, as outsiders? Does the story of righteousness—of the Jewish Covenant—rightfully end with Jews? As Ellis asks, do today's "Jews"—the Palestinians—matter to the Jewish Covenant let alone the American constitution?

Relationships are imbued with unpredictability and concealment, because of the internal dynamics and diversity of human behavior as much as the only partial external

10. Borowitz, 128.

access one has to the experiences of others, even those with whom one is intimate. Christian groups respond in diverse doctrinal and social ways to the problem of political power and the use of violence, as they do to the call for pacifism, or an active resistance to the impulse of war. In the context of Israel and Palestine, the most interesting and bifurcation is within each community, rather than between them. Palestinian Christians stand at a unique crossroads—perhaps better termed a precipice—in witnesses both of *Palestine* and *Christianity*. The struggle they face is not how to name the problem but how to respond to the “immediate evil” they and their parishioners face daily while neither inflaming the political tensions with Israel nor neglecting the spiritual needs of the people and their material duties as church administrators.

Legal ethicist Martha Nussbaum has written a poignant reflection on this topic, titled “The Window: Knowledge of Other Minds in Virginia Woolfe’s *To the Lighthouse*.”¹¹ She finds in Woolfe’s portrait of the Ramsay family a thought-provoking insight into broader society and world events. In particular, it is through the free-verse of the character’s inner thoughts that the reader finds a foothold for compassion and can imagine change—that is, it is the characters’ self-perception and memory as much as others’ superficial opinions of their characters which allows the reader to understand and accommodate the details of each other’s lives and of their environment and imagine a way for their paths to harmonize and for forgiveness to prevail.¹² From the beginning, each encounter is filled with possibilities which blossom and fade through dialogue, inaction, and distraction, and as the observant reader, we can see signals of future events

11. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 355-373.

12. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, with foreword by Eudora Welty (NY: Harcourt, Inc., 1927; 1981), ix.

even before they do, even though such are often unheaded or misread by the characters themselves.

Such a narrative exposition on the human mind and its ability to understand beyond itself directly exemplifies the enterprise I see necessary for sustainable and wise change in Israel-Palestine—that is, *a future worth fighting for*. Even “people of goodwill,” as Nussbaum says, could easily disengage or throw up their hands in frustration, lamenting the status quo and clinging to their resentment of the hornet’s nest that they suspect in the other’s mind, so to speak. Moral judgment, however, cannot stop so short. It is only with conscientious attention to the people and environment around us, and a determinedly broad perspective on social justice, which will enable Jews, Christians, and Muslims to develop and implement the prophetic spirituality needed to critique society and to move forward. Divorce is not an option for the people of Israel and Palestine, for even once an independent Palestinian state is established there will always be some degree of overlap, from labor resources to airspace rights to religious sites and theological commentary.

As each national and religious group comes to see the contradictions of its own identity it is more able to acknowledge the good within its supposed enemy—be that secular versus religious Jews, Muslim versus Christian Palestinians, or Palestinians versus Israelis. Moreover, each group must recognize the way that—for others—the extreme views within its group often come to represent something essential about its identity. This is why those best poised to challenge the ideology and interests behind atrocity are “the better angels” within that group—not outside voices. Can America put pressure on Israel to change its policies of extrajudicial assassination, military incursions, closure, and so on? Can pressure come from the electorate and the public, so that those policies are not to be reinstated elsewhere?

Two months after the United States declared war in Iraq in March 2003—long before the fall-out of its miscalculations and abuses against political prisoners became

common discourse in America—American social historian and public intellectual Cornel West stood before a packed hotel ballroom in downtown Washington, DC and challenged the United States’ rationale for its “preemptive” mobilization. He argued that the government’s reasoning was short-sighted and ill-conceived, and that its effect was, in part, cover and legitimization for Israel’s claims of “preemptive” security through unprovoked house demolitions and illegal incursions into Palestinian territory. West argued that the means by which the U.S. sought to eradicate terrorism were precisely those which would inhibit democracy from growing internally, or naturally, and that this would thereby engender the very instability that it attempted to circumvent.

West’s critique of this preemptive foreign policy—which is not so new if one considers Israel’s methodology of containing Palestinian resentment since the first *intifada* almost two decades ago—outlined three forms of courage necessary to ground any project of social transformation: 1) the Socratic courage to ask painful questions about oneself, one’s society, and the surrounding world; 2) the prophetic courage to exercise compassion and to listen to suffering *as truth*; and 3) the democratic courage in which dogma and ideology are held accountable to real life and lived experiences.¹³

The audience to whom West addressed his critique was a gathering of Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and others who identified themselves as both “pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian.”¹⁴ They too saw the American war as headed in the direction of the entrenched violence and power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians; similarly,

13. Cornel West, “Not a Minute to Hate,” in “Beyond the Road Map: A Report from Tikkun’s Teach-In to Congress,” *Tikkun* 18, no. 4 (July/Aug 2003): 11-12 (his italics). See also Martha Nussbaum’s discussion of three similar themes that must be considered to produce “world citizens” through public action and education, in her *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9-10.

14. West’s speech was made during a teach-in to Congress organized by Tikkun, a nation-wide and trans-religious organization that aims to “repair the world” through spiritual renewal and political engagement. Tikkun produces a bi-monthly magazine, coordinates activist events and a national network of student groups, is affiliated with an inter-denominational Reform synagogue in Berkeley, CA, and positions itself as a counterbalance to both the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and Hillel, an increasingly pro-Israel Jewish student group.

they too found the aggression and political rhetoric of both conflicts the result of a deeper spiritual malaise.¹⁵ West's challenge to this group was to begin to "repair the world"—the meaning of the Jewish mitzvah, *tikkun olam*¹⁶—by starting with themselves and using political conflict as the opening to social transformation.

West spoke from within the same prophetic tradition grounding the theologies of liberation that we have reviewed in this thesis, including the writings of Naim Ateek, Marc Ellis, Gustavo Gutierrez, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and others. Like these writers' call to reconceive the Scriptures on behalf of the poor and the marginalized, West's three-fold challenge attempts to reconceive—that is, to re-sensitize and depolarize—political negotiation in situations of conflict, one person at a time. He argues this can be done through critical thought, inclusive compassion, and a democratic spirit.

The conflict in Israel-Palestine obviously relates to the American body politic in so far as America supports Israel financially. It seems that globalized economies mean simply an extension of economic dependency—from the Palestinians on Israel's economy to Israel's on the American economy, even to America's dependency on Saudi Arabia's economy in terms of our disproportionate oil production and consumption patterns. If the conflict's core is indeed political and economic, rather than religious or ethnic, what alternative paradigm for change might America bring to the table and/or impose upon the parties just as Britain did the idea of partition in 1948?

It is not enough to assert that genuine reconciliation between the political/social groups will arise only when it is mutually implemented, as is the premise of the Bush Administration's "Road Map" (which translates into Hebrew in the plural—a "map with

15. See Michael Lerner, *Healing Israel/Palestine: A Path to Peace and Reconciliation* (San Francisco, CA: Tikkun Books, 2003).

16. George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs and Rituals* (NY: Pocket Books, 2002), 243. For the medieval kabbalist origins of the concept of "tikkun olam" and its eschatological implications, see also Paul Mendes-Flohr's speech, "Apocalyptic and Prophetic Eschatology—a Jewish Homage to St. John of Patmos," presented to Religion, Science & the Environment Symposium I (September 1995), at http://www.rsesymposia.org/symposium_i/PDFs/Eschatology.pdf (accessed 31 October 2003).

roads”¹⁷). We have addressed how structural parity through statehood and its corollary, citizenship, is only one dimension of the project toward a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The ideology and entrenched interests that legitimate atrocity must be challenged if change is to occur—this is true for the extreme wings of both Palestinian and Israeli society. The manipulation of the public good through ideology, language, and symbolic artifacts—including holiday rituals, national myths, architecture, even geography itself—is an alienating and ultimately bad policy for unity within a national group, let alone peace with its neighbors. Such manipulation—for example using religious language to augment political legitimacy, as Sharon, Arafat, and many others have been known to do—is unsustainable unless the values embodied in that language are put into practice. The inclusive vision of the Israeli Declaration of Independence does not remove the reality of racism from Israeli society—instead it belies the authenticity of democracy in Israel. Poverty, ignorance, and moral differentiation between ethnic or religious groups must be attacked if rhetoric and the status quo are to give way to transparency and authentic reconciliation.

17. Azmi Bishara, in a speech to the St. Alban’s Episcopal Church community, Washington, DC (May 2003).

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