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message of reconciliation and harmony wrought in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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# Mission, the Bible and Israel-Palestine

Andrew M. Lord

**Key words:** Israel, Palestine, hermeneutics, mission, holistic, Zionism, discrimination, justice, reconciliation, prophecy;

Israel-Palestine<sup>1</sup> is known for its political tensions and fighting. It is also a region with a deep biblical history focused on the Jewish nation. This biblical history has motivated Christians for mission amongst Jews, and yet has also led to the oppression of Palestinians living in the Israeli Occupied Territories. This article aims to listen to some of the voices of Christians living in Israel-Palestine, to reflect upon their concept of mission and use of the Bible. In particular I will be considering how divisions in the land are reflected in the mission hermeneutics of Christians there. For me these issues have been given life by visits to Israel-Palestine, feeling the contrast between spending time at the Palestinian led Bethlehem Bible College and the Church's Ministry amongst Jewish People (CMJ) Hostel at Christ Church, Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

Israel-Palestine is a land steeped in history and we need to begin by outlining very briefly the recent history in order to understand the context for mission. In 1918 Arabs formed over 90 per cent of the population, and yet within fifty years they have become a minority in the land, without political power or authority. Palestinians lived under Ottoman rule until 1917 when the land fell under British control during the First World War. Due to anti-Semitic pogroms in Europe, Jews began arriving in the land from the 1880s with a desire to regenerate their culture and thus Zionism was born. This was encouraged by the British Government, particularly as a result of the 'Balfour Declaration' which stated that 'His Majesty's Government view will favour the establishment in

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<sup>1</sup> 1. With Naim Ateek I have chosen to call the land 'Israel-Palestine' rather than 'Israel' which does not acknowledge the Palestinian presence, or the 'Holy Land' which conjures up images of the past rather than the present. See Naim S. Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis, 1989), pp. 4–5.

<sup>2</sup> 2. The Church's Ministry amongst Jewish People is an evangelical Anglican missionary agency founded in 1809.

Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object'.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the Protestant Bible-reading ethic in reaching the Balfour Declaration is widely acknowledged. From different viewpoints this is argued by both McDowall and Pileggi.<sup>4</sup> Crombie argues that the English supporters in the development of Zionism during the nineteenth century were mainly missionaries or people associated with CMJ<sup>5</sup> CMJ emphasized the physical restoration of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, tracing this theme of restoration back to the Puritans and their interpretation of Romans chaps. 9–11.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the Second World War the British asked the United Nations to resolve the question of Palestine.<sup>7</sup> In 1947 the UN proposed a partition plan establishing both Jewish and Arab states, with 54% of the land being given for a Jewish state. This was unacceptable to the Arabs, although acceptable to the Jews if the vast majority of Arabs were removed from the Jewish state.<sup>8</sup> Gradually the conflict of views turned into war which eventually the Jews won and declared a State in 1948. Fighting has continued in different forms ever since. Since 1948 an estimated 2,797,179 Arabs have become refugees,<sup>9</sup> while at the same time any Jew has an automatic right to settle in Israel.<sup>10</sup> The Arabs who were able to remain in Israel faced legal discrimination and military control. Most of the Arab land was transferred to Jewish ownership, with over 40% of the land lost because the owners were absent, being refugees refused permission to return.<sup>11</sup> Arabs faced exclusion from land, work, government aid, housing, health and education.<sup>12</sup>

This experience has gradually led to the growth of a nationalist movement and the definition of a Palestinian identity, rather than a simply Arab identity. After the defeat of the Arab states at Israeli hands in the 1967 war there was increased feeling that only Palestinians would recover Palestine, not Arab nations generally.<sup>13</sup> Resistance to the Israeli government grew and in 1987 the *intifada* began with resistance through stone-throwing and socio-economic actions. During the 1990s, the Gulf war highlighted Arab disunity and weakened the PLO<sup>14</sup> which identified with Iraq. This helped to encourage a

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<sup>3</sup> 3. David McDowall, *The Palestinians: The Road to Nationhood* (London: Minority Rights Groups, 1994), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 4. Ibid., 14; David Pileggi, 'The Best Kept Secret', *Shalom Magazine*, CMJ (1997).

<sup>5</sup> 5. Kelvin Crombie is the historian and manager of the CMJ Guest House in Jerusalem. Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion: Christian Witness and the Restoration of Israel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> 6. Crombie, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> 7. McDowall, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> 8. Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> 9. Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> 10. Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> 11. Ibid., pp. 43–46.

<sup>12</sup> 12. Ibid., pp. 51–56.

<sup>13</sup> 13. McDowall, op. cit., pp. 68–69.

<sup>14</sup> 14. The Palestine Liberation Organisation under Yasir Arafat has grown to represent Palestinians in Israel-Palestine.

peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, but with the Palestinians in a weak negotiating position. Israel continues to build settlements on Palestinian land and those in Hebron have become a focus for continued conflict. It is not clear if the future holds peace or violence.

Christians form a minority of all Palestinians, about 6.7 per cent or 400,000. Of these only 50,000 live in the Occupied Territories and they represent only 2.9 per cent of the population there. Since 1967 about 40 per cent of the Christians have left the country and McDowall attributes this to the economic and political repression of Israeli rule and their better mastery of European languages.<sup>15</sup> Unemployment of 50 per cent amongst Christian graduates forces this issue, but leaves an ever smaller Christian population in the Occupied Territories.

## VOICES FROM THE LAND

Many voices speak from Israel-Palestine. Out of the many varied voices I've chosen to focus on three which offer different reflections on how the Bible speaks into the situation. Faced with oppression and struggle there are Palestinian voices speaking out for liberation, for an end to injustice and the creation of a Palestinian State. Reflecting on all the Bible has to say about Israel there are others who voice the need for evangelism amongst the Jewish people and the importance of the whole land belonging to Israel. Between these two views there are those who speak for reconciliation and peace-making.

Naim Ateek, an Anglican Palestinian priest, is the main spokesperson for a Palestinian theology of liberation. He suggests that the major problem in hermeneutics for Palestinians has been the creation of the State of Israel which has particularly affected the reading of the Old Testament. He comments, 'Since the creation of the State, some Jewish and Christian interpreters have read the Old Testament largely as a Zionist text to such an extent that it has become almost repugnant to Palestinian Christians.' This has led, in some quarters, to a lack of use of the Old Testament. The search for a hermeneutic is focused on how to interpret texts that Jewish Zionists and Christian fundamentalists cite to substantiate a Jewish claim to the land.<sup>16</sup>

The hermeneutic that Ateek suggests is Jesus Christ himself. When confronted with a difficult passage one needs to ask, 'Does this fit the picture of God that Jesus has revealed to me? ... If it does, then that passage is valid and authoritative. If not, then I cannot accept its validity or authority.'<sup>17</sup> By itself this hermeneutic is not very new and it is only in its application to the situation of oppressed Palestinians and to the biblical passages referring to Israel and the land that it becomes a liberating hermeneutic. It becomes liberating in that it allows Old Testament stories to become sources of hope in the struggle for justice, and Ateek puts forward three Old Testament passages as being central for Palestinians, particularly the story of Naboth's vineyard.<sup>18</sup> Here the king wanted to expand his land and offered money for Naboth's vineyard, which Naboth refused because it was his family's inheritance. The king arranged to have Naboth killed and the vineyard taken from the family. God spoke words of judgment on the king through the prophet Elijah and hence speaks judgment on Israel today.

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<sup>15</sup> 15. McDowall, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>16</sup> 16. Ateek, op. cit., pp. 77–79.

<sup>17</sup> 17. Ibid., p 82.

<sup>18</sup> 18. Ateek, op. cit., pp. 86–89, following [1 Kings 21](#).

Ateek's vision leads him to hope for a land shared by both Palestinians and Jews, in which there is a Palestinian state and where new attitudes of peacemaking would characterize both Jews and Palestinians.<sup>19</sup> Any solution to the problems must pass the test of Jesus' commands: 'whatever you wish men would do to you, do so to them' ([Mt. 7:12](#)) and 'love your neighbour as yourself' ([Mk. 12:31](#)). To sustain action towards a solution Ateek draws on the Christ-story: 'The Church lives in the power of the cross. Its strength comes from its crucified and living Lord. It is enlivened by the Holy Spirit. This power enables the Church to overcome its physical and psychological weakness as a minority and transcend any bitterness or hostility resulting from the political conflict, in order to assume the role of servant and, for Christ's sake, to become the agent and instrument of both peace and reconciliation.'<sup>20</sup>

For a contrasting view we turn to CMJ which has been involved in Israel-Palestine for nearly 200 years. They aim at evangelism amongst Jewish people, the encouragement of Jewish believers and teaching Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith. They 'see the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel as a sign of God's faithfulness as revealed in the Scriptures'.<sup>21</sup> Further insight into their approach can be seen in their advice to people wanting to work as volunteers:<sup>22</sup> 'Our aims as a society are based on what Scripture has to say on the place of the Jewish people in God's plan not only in the past but still today' and suggests reflection on [Jer. 31:1-33](#), [Ez. 36:22-37:14](#) and [Romans 9-11](#). Clearly an understanding of the Bible as it relates to present day Israel fires their missionary work.

In the 1997 issues of CMJ's magazine, *Shalom*, there were articles on the Jewish faith, testimonies of Jewish believers in Christ, reflections on Jesus' Jewish roots, stories of Jewish Christians (or 'Messianic Jews' as they prefer to be called) around the world, and details of CMJ's work and projects. The only article on the political situation came in Issue 3 where Pileggi reflects on how the Christian convictions of British leaders played an important role in the establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>23</sup> There is no mention of Palestinians or issues of justice, and only mention of Jewish politics when it reflects on evangelistic work, such as the recent bill against 'inducement for religious conversion'. The mission of CMJ appears limited to evangelism and nurture and it is an open question how much this is determined by its biblical hermeneutic. However, given the very definite hermeneutic regarding interpretation of biblical promises to Israel which is at the heart of CMJ, this must have strong links with the resulting expression of mission today.

One book recommended by CMJ gives an outlook and biblical interpretation which is still popular if somewhat dated. Lance Lambert, in *Battle for Israel*, presents Israel as a victim of Arab aggression and cannot understand why Arabs need Israeli land when they have so much of their own.<sup>24</sup> Thus the main question is 'Will Israel survive?' Lambert takes particular comfort in [Zechariah 12:2-9](#), 'I will bewilder the armies drawn up against [Jerusalem] and make fools of them, for I will watch over the people of Judah but blind all

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<sup>19</sup> 19. Ateek, op. cit., pp. 163-75.

<sup>20</sup> 20. Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>21</sup> 21. CMJ, 'Aims of the Society', unpublished paper (1990).

<sup>22</sup> 22. CMJ, 'Volunteer Work in Israel', unpublished paper (1990).

<sup>23</sup> 23. Pileggi, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> 24. Lance Lambert, *Battle for Israel* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1976), p. 56.

her enemies.’ Lambert concludes that ‘Israel will not only survive but she will also triumph’ and eventually ‘all Israel will be saved’.<sup>25</sup>

Not all texts recommended by CMJ rule out a Palestinian state. One of the key introductory texts to the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, *Our Father Abraham* by Marvin Wilson, reviews in detail the biblical texts and concludes that ‘ “real-estate” theology is, at best, precarious theology’.<sup>26</sup> He proposes that issues of justice, morality and history demand the existence of the State of Israel and that Christian support for Israel ‘can only be interpreted as a giant step forward in seeking to right an ugly historical wrong’. Sadly, Wilson does not apply the same criteria to the existence of the Palestinian people, but he does conclude that Christian responsibility is ‘to pray, to encourage, and to work for a permanent and fair sharing of the land between two peoples, Arabs and Jews, with a maximum of justice and a minimum of injustice’.<sup>27</sup>

The final voice from the land comes from Palestinians who, while still in favour of a Palestinian State, do not focus on that aim in their writing and biblical reflection. They tend to focus on reconciliation rather than liberation. Two such Palestinians, from different traditions, are Elias Chacour and Salim Munayer. Elias Chacour is an ordained priest in the Melkite Church and has worked for many years in the Galilee region struggling for peace and involved in developing community projects. Chacour’s ministry is fired by Jesus’ prophetic ministry expressed in the Beatitudes ([Mt. 5:3–10](#)). He hungers for justice and righteousness<sup>28</sup> and sees the first step in reconciling Jew and Palestinian as the restoration of human dignity. Hence the emphasis on work to unite communities and develop projects that restore human dignity. Chacour emphasizes the need to reunite Palestinians, divided through hatred fuelled by the Israeli oppression. From this came work to unite Palestinians with Jews in fighting for justice.<sup>29</sup> Being a peacemaker involves ‘deep forgiveness, risking the friendship of your enemies, begging for peace on your knees and in the streets’.<sup>30</sup>

Salim Munayer is dean of the evangelical Bethlehem Bible College and runs the ‘Musalaha’ reconciliation ministry. Reconciliation starts between people and God and then is worked out in society with reconciliation between different people. Reconciliation has a salvational and a personal aspect.<sup>31</sup> Inspiration for this is taken from [2 Corinthians 5:14–20](#) (we are ambassadors of reconciliation), [Ephesians 2:14–16](#) (the barriers between people have been broken down by Christ) and particularly the story of Jacob and Esau in [Genesis 32](#) and [33](#) (reconciliation of enemies). Munayer starts with justice but notes that ‘God alone is the judge and the sovereign Lord’ and so we should not take the role of judge into our hands. He then stresses prayer and non-retaliation as being vital. Munayer started with his and others feelings of injustice and his prior theological framework regarding prophecies of the Land. From this he moved to further Bible study

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<sup>25</sup> 25. Lambert, op. cit., 54, 31, 69, 116, with the last reference quoting [Romans 11:26](#).

<sup>26</sup> 26. Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 268.

<sup>27</sup> 27. Ibid., pp. 269, 275.

<sup>28</sup> 28. Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers: A Palestinian’s Struggle for Reconciliation in the Middle East* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1985), p. 146, cf. [Mt. 5:6](#).

<sup>29</sup> 29. Chacour, op. cit., pp. 168, 188–192.

<sup>30</sup> 30. Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>31</sup> 31. Salim J. Munayer, ed., *In the Footsteps of Our Father Abraham* (Jerusalem: Musalaha, 1993), p. 4.

to gain understanding of God's will.<sup>32</sup> Munayer identifies the key issue as nationalism and sees the challenge to Christians as putting obedience to God above desires for our nation. He concludes that we need 'to speak about God's holiness, justice and righteousness, to be peacemakers to call for reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. It is our role to confront our people when they are in the wrong, and more than anything else, to intercede for our people that God will have mercy on us'.<sup>33</sup>

Musalaha also includes Jewish Christian voices. They stress the Christian responsibility as peacemakers, based on Jesus' challenge in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God' ([Mt. 5:9](#)). They see the chief enemy as being hate, and the key need being to promote love, loving even our enemies.<sup>34</sup> In this they are like Chacour, but reflect on different biblical stories. Joseph Shulam reflects on how Esau, who had been robbed of his birthright by Jacob, rejects Jacob's offer of gifts in recompense as being no longer necessary ([Gen. 33:9](#)). He compares this with how Palestinians, robbed of the land, should refuse compensation (such as a Palestinian state) because the land is Israel's 'by decree of the Creator of the Universe'.<sup>35</sup> Shulam does not go on to reflect on the remainder of the story where Jacob insists on giving gifts and Esau gives in and accepts ([Gen. 33:10-11](#)), which suggests that a desire for recompense should be pursued by those who have inflicted harm. David Millar suggests that the oppressed Palestinians follow Jesus' command to those under Roman occupation, 'If any man requires you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two'. Millar stresses the 'freedom of [the] heart'<sup>36</sup> and contrasts the Christian obligation to preach the gospel with a nationalistic, political substitute.

## MISSION, THE BIBLE AND ISRAEL-PALESTINE

Having heard some of the voices coming out of Israel-Palestine we now come to reflect on them in terms of mission and hermeneutics. The Israeli-Palestinian situation is one of division—division between Israel and the Occupied Territories, between Jew and Palestinian, between those in power and the powerless. In such a divided country there appears a tendency to have a divided mission. Different Christian groups focus on different aims in mission: evangelism to the Jews, unity amongst Palestinians, restoration of the human dignity of communities or liberation for the Palestinians. There tends to be a focus on mission within one particular community or addressing one particular issue. The overlap between groups involved in mission can seem slim, despite the physical overlap.

Many argue the need for mission to be holistic in terms of combining both evangelism and social action.<sup>37</sup> However, mission also needs to be holistic in terms of the people involved and the people worked amongst. In Israel-Palestine evangelism and social action

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<sup>32</sup> 32. Chacour, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> 33. Munayer, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> 34. Ibid., pp. 19–20.

<sup>35</sup> 35. Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> 36. Ibid., pp. 22–23.

<sup>37</sup> 37. This argument is made by evangelicals such as John Stott *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), pp. 337ff and Ronald Sider *Evangelism and Social Action* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), and can be seen in David Bosch's outline of an ecumenical missionary paradigm, David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991), pp. 368–510.

take place amongst Jews and amongst Arabs and yet this is not enough because suffering and injustice still exist. The problem is that here different (if holistic) forms of mission operate independently, but there needs to be an overlap between the mission undertaken by different groups. The early church faced this problem with different people involved in mission amongst Jews and amongst Gentiles. These were brought together at the Jerusalem Council,<sup>38</sup> although some tensions continued. Mission in Israel-Palestine still reflects an Enlightenment focus on independence and needs to work towards interdependence.<sup>39</sup>

Some overlaps do occur between the missions of different groups. The emphasis on reconciliation by Chacour and Munayer brings Jewish and Palestinian Christians together, providing opportunities for an exchange of mission understanding. And yet a mission focus on such overlaps can be dangerous. A focus on unity and reconciliation seems to favour the current political *status quo*. This comes across most forcibly from the people involved in Musalaha with Jewish Christians arguing for Palestinian submission to Israeli authorities. In our mission we cannot strive for unity for the sake of unity; instead we need to strive for unity for the sake of justice. Thus Chacour brings together Jews and Palestinians to march for justice before the Israeli Parliament. Mission must bring us together in order to further the just rule of God on earth.

Christian mission in Israel-Palestine arises out of the situations of different Christian groups living in the land. This mission draws much of its inspiration from the Bible. In fact the situation demands an examination of issues related to biblical exegesis. The early Zionists, though largely secular, were 'inspired by the Bible which gave historical and mystical authentication to their aims'.<sup>40</sup> For Palestinians the injustice they face is seen as being aided by such biblical exegesis, and hence Christians promoting justice must explain biblical passages which seem to support Israel's position.

In the same way as there is a divided mission in Israel-Palestine, there is also a divided use of the Bible—different groups select different passages to inspire and authenticate their mission. This raises questions about biblical authority. In the writings we have examined there has been a focus on Old Testament prophecy, the Beatitudes, the story of Jacob/Esau, some of Jesus' commands, and some Old Testament narratives. Even when there is an attempt to overcome such selectiveness, it still remains. Ateek, for example, is concerned to recover the use of the Old Testament amongst Palestinians, and suggests a hermeneutic which does allow some texts to speak into the mission situation. However, it also allows him to deselect other texts, particularly those which do not speak positively to Palestinians.

Two hermeneutical issues are of particular importance in the Israeli-Palestinian situation: the interpretation of prophecy, and the nature of peacemakers. Prophecy has been interpreted in a literal way to support the claims of Jews to the land, and yet this has led to the oppression of Palestinians. Some hermeneutical guidelines are needed to help Christians interpret prophecy. Kenneth Cragg suggests four such principles. Firstly, we must not interpret the prophets in a way that leads to injustice, exploitation, or insensitivity, when they were concerned to promote justice, fairness and sensitivity to others.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, interpretation of prophecy requires careful consideration of frames of

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<sup>38</sup> 38. [Acts 15](#).

<sup>39</sup> 39. Bosch, op. cit., p. 362.

<sup>40</sup> 40. McDowall, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> 41. Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (London: Mowbray, 1992), p. 239.

reference and interpretation, with particular consideration of the present rather than future relevance of the prophecy. Thirdly, given that readers bring many intentions to their reading of Scripture, we need a compassionate honesty in relating to the people of the land. Finally, we are to subject any biblical readings to the ultimate themes of the Bible.<sup>42</sup> These guidelines are useful because they promote a broader hermeneutic, one that is taken up in limited ways by Wilson<sup>43</sup> and Chacour<sup>44</sup> who bring the themes of justice, compassion and holiness to a consideration of prophecy.

All sides of the debate stress the text 'Blessed are the peacemakers' ([Mt. 5:9](#)) and yet interpret it in different ways. For some, peace is linked with reconciliation and this can favour a political *status quo*. A more healthy link is between peace and justice as seen in Chacour.<sup>45</sup> The link with justice takes into account more of the context of Jesus' saying, which also includes 'hungering and thirsting for righteousness' and the biblical understanding of peace.<sup>46</sup> For Jews peace can mean security, because that is the felt need, and yet this can lead to Palestinian oppression. For Palestinians peace can mean freedom from oppression through the establishment of a Palestinian state. Yet it must be questioned whether this is a peace which does not involve the breaking down of barriers such as we see in [Ephesians 2](#). A hermeneutic overly reliant on a particular social context and outlook can lead to mission that is limited. This is a problem of over-contextualisation<sup>47</sup>; it is also a danger in the contemporary trend towards a wide plurality of equally valid socio-pragmatic readings of the biblical texts. Thiselton argues that there needs also to be a socio-critical reading in order to rank the different readings, otherwise one reading will just support a particular interest and not evaluate it.<sup>48</sup> He argues that any one socio-pragmatic model must not dominate the hermeneutical process.<sup>49</sup>

We also need a hermeneutic that is fed by the views of many and not just the few. People outside the Israeli-Palestinian situation and yet working alongside it also have valuable insights not seen in voices coming from the land. Colin Chapman worked for many years in the Middle East before returning to England. He comments that there is a need to consider 'law' as well as 'prophecy' and that the themes of repentance, non-selective judgment and the suffering of injustice are important biblical themes.<sup>50</sup> Further consideration of these themes would enrich the missionary hermeneutics in Israel-Palestine. John Goldingay notes the tendency for us to develop an inner canon, a 'canon within the canon'.<sup>51</sup> This positively identifies key texts and themes which enable the

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<sup>42</sup> 42. Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>43</sup> 43. Wilson, op. cit., pp. 269–70.

<sup>44</sup> 44. Chacour, op. cit., pp. 131–46.

<sup>45</sup> 45. The same may be said of the World Council of Churches conference on Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation.

<sup>46</sup> 46. Ateek, op. cit., pp. 144–50.

<sup>47</sup> 47. This is my term for the dangers pointed out by Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 427–28 regarding relativism and absolutism of contextualism.

<sup>48</sup> 48. Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 602.

<sup>49</sup> 49. Ibid., pp. 549.

<sup>50</sup> 50. Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?* (Oxford: Lion, 1989), pp. 156–211.

<sup>51</sup> 51. John Goldingay, *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), p. 105.

interpretation of the whole of Scripture, but which can over time blind us to the needs of others. He argues that we need a catholicity of interpretation within which we particularly welcome criticism from perspectives with which we sharply disagree.<sup>52</sup>

This catholicity of interpretation forces judgment on western interpreters of the Israeli-Palestinian situation. As we have noted earlier, there is a link between the establishment of the Jewish State and western Protestant missionary movement, and thus a link between such movements and the Palestinian oppression that has come out of establishing Israel as a state. McDowall comments on how a Protestant focus on the 'Holy Land' gives a view of the country as one 'in which time stood still, the inhabitants a passive but colourful backdrop to those in search of biblical truth'.<sup>53</sup> In contrast the inhabitants have much to say about Protestant involvement in mission, their use of the Bible and their approach to politics. Inasmuch as we in the West begin to reflect on and judge the Palestinian situation, so we will find ourselves being judged.

## CONCLUSION

The Israeli-Palestinian situation has been outlined historically and in regard to key Christian voices. Reflecting on these voices suggests that in a divided land, mission and hermeneutics also appear divided. There need to be overlaps between the mission activities of different groups in order to reduce the injustices encouraged by division. However, it is possible to focus on such overlaps to the exclusion of justice issues, and so unity and justice need to be kept together in mission. Divisions in hermeneutics appear to arise out of over-contextualisation by different groups. This needs to be overcome through a greater catholicity of biblical interpretation. There is much to learn from and be challenged by in the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

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# Minority Christians in the Church History Curriculum

John Roxborough

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<sup>52</sup> 52. Ibid., pp. 243, 247.

<sup>53</sup> 53. McDowall, op. cit., p. 6.