

2008

# A Critical Review of Three Books Over Israel and Palestine

Stephanie Olson

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/ma\\_theses](http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/ma_theses)

 Part of the [Islamic World and Near East History Commons](#), and the [Political History Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Olson, Stephanie, "A Critical Review of Three Books Over Israel and Palestine" (2008). *MA Theses*. Paper 18.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses at Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in MA Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. For more information, please contact [akeck001@luthersem.edu](mailto:akeck001@luthersem.edu).

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THREE BOOKS OVER ISRAEL  
AND PALESTINE

by

Stephanie Olson

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

The Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis Advisor: Frieder Ludwig

St. Paul, Minnesota

2008

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my parents for their support throughout my studies and the writing of this thesis. The time spent asking questions and proof reading is greatly appreciated. To my sister for encouraging me to pursue my interests in school and beyond.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Frieder Ludwig, and my second reader, Dr. Charles Amjad-Ali. Thank you both for agreeing to work with me on this thesis. You are both very busy, and your time is precious, but you both always make time for your students, thank you.

Thank you to the many people who emailed me thoughts regarding questions, Pastor Fredrick Hill and Pastor David Langseth. Thank you to Dr. Kahlid Sami for meeting with me and answering my questions. Thank you also to Dr. Gary Simpson for leading the study tour in Israel. Without the study tour I would not have been able to meet the organizations mentioned within the thesis.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	page i
<b>Introduction</b> .....	page 1
<b>Chapter 1</b> ..... Review of <i>A Peace to End All Peace</i> .....	page 11
<b>Chapter 2</b> ..... Review of <i>Blaming the Victims</i> .....	page 20
<b>Chapter 3</b> ..... Review of <i>Witnessing for Peace</i> .....	page 33
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	page 46
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	page 51

## INTRODUCTION

In January of 2008, I was a member of a study group from Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkley, California. The group was comprised of twenty-two students, one professor, a tour guide and bus driver; both the tour guide and bus driver are Palestinian. We spent two weeks traveling around areas in Palestine and Jerusalem in Israel. We visited a variety of Christian religious sites and were also able to tour the Mosque of Umar. We met with a variety of organizations that have been established in the area and heard what the goals of these organizations are. The organizations will be discussed in greater detail later, but they all work with the various religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, promoting both dialogue and possible ideas for reconciliation between Israel and Palestine.

The purpose of the study group was to travel to the Holy Land to see the land and meet the people. With this purpose in mind we stayed in three towns but visited many areas throughout the trip. The cities in which we stayed are Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem. In a way we were following the life of Jesus from where he is believed to have been born to where he is believed to have died.

We stayed in Bethlehem for five nights. On our second day there we learned about the unity that exists within the Palestinian population. An attack in Gaza had occurred the night we arrived. The former Palestinian Prime Minister's son was one of the people killed. As a sign of mourning all shops were to close for three days. At first

not all the store owners were aware of this order, but as soon as soldiers informed them of the order the owners closed their stores. I remember myself and fellow group members emailing our family to let them know we had arrived safely. We also wanted to let them know that if they heard about the attack that we were fine and not close to where it had happened. However, we found out from people at home that this attack was not covered in the news within the United States. Obviously not every occurrence in the world can be covered, but usually when a political leader, present or former, loses a family member the news covers the event. For whatever reason this particular attack did not receive major media coverage within the United States.

In preparation for the study trip meetings were held with the professor and members of the group. This was so we could all learn who we would be traveling with for two weeks. During this meeting there was discussion of where we would be traveling, what we would be seeing and who would be rooming with one another. There was also mention of where we would not be traveling. We were told that if anyone was worried about our travel to let them know that we would not be anywhere near the Gaza Strip. For one thing, it would not be safe enough and secondly the US government as well as the Israeli military would not let us in the area. We also learned a little about the man who would be our guide for the time we were in Israel and the Palestinian territory. I do not know his last name, but his first name is Naim. He has been a tour guide for a number of years and was the guide for Pope John Paul II when he traveled to the Holy Land in the 1960s. With this credential one can see that he is well respected and must know the area and people very well.

With Naim as our tour guide we were able to learn a lot about Israel and Palestine. We learned of the history and saw many ruins such as Capernaum; we were able to learn about not only when Jesus was alive but before and after. This seems very important because there is much more than this period of time to the country. When we were in Jerusalem the primary focus was on the time of Jesus, especially right before his death. We actually walked the Via Dolorosa, the path that is believed to have been walked by Jesus as he carried his cross. This was something special, but was a little odd at the same time. Some of the stations were placed in between stores in a busy market place. There is no way that this could be avoided, and is actually similar to what Jerusalem would have been like at the time Jesus was walking through. It can be amazing to walk down a street and imagine all the people throughout the centuries who have walked down the same street.

As an assignment for the study tour each person was assigned a topic on which to give a presentation to the group. The topics ranged throughout the history of Palestine and the state of Israel. One topic covered the beginning of the Crusades; another was about the mandates that lead to the formation of the state of Israel. My topic was on a current topic, the separation barrier that has been under construction for the past six years and the ELCA stance on the barrier. There are various problems and controversies seen with the barrier. One of these is that there are various names for what the object actually is, Israel has one name, Palestine has another name for it, and the United Nations has another name for the structure. The barrier is one of the ways in which Israel is seen as being oppressive to Palestine. One of the ways in which the barrier is seen as oppressive to Palestinians is the fact that the structure is cutting off water supply to the Palestinian

people. Because of this Palestinians have to recycle their water. Our hotels asked us to not put toilet paper in the toilet when we flushed so that the water could be cleaned to be reused. Another form of oppression is that the structure is being built on Palestinian land. Because of this the United Nations has declared the structure illegal. If it were on Israeli land it would not be illegal because a country has the right to protect itself. Israel has given self-defense as the reason for building the structure in the first place, but there is something ironic about this in that attacks have actually increased since construction began.

The barrier, wall, or which ever name a person gives the structure is not specifically mentioned in any of the three books that are discussed in this paper. However, it is related in certain ways especially in the last book because there is discussion of Palestinian Christian witness to terrorists. People who look from the outside at those who bomb areas will always see a terrorist. If people have an understanding of the desperation people are feeling they may feel they have no other choice. Sometimes people feel there is no other way to be noticed than to do something that will make the world see the people. Unfortunately most of the actions involve a violent act. Because of this people think that all the people in the population are similar to the ones who do these acts, so all Palestinians are seen as terrorists. Anyone who has met one or more Palestinians knows that this is far from the truth and is an unfortunate stereotype fed by what is shown by the media.

All the people that I and other members of the study tour met were very friendly. Everyone was so happy we were there and were in Palestine. Many travelers who come to the Holy Land go to Israel but do not travel into Palestine. Even though Bethlehem and

many other cities that are important to Christianity lie in the Palestinian territory for some reason people do not travel to Palestine. Because of this the people are not able to receive the support that is needed. This was a part of the tour that really affected my fellow tour members.

During the course of the study tour we were able to meet with various groups and individuals that Naim has connections with. The organizations visited with were Wi'am- Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center, Sabeel- Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Ecumenical Accompaniers, and Women in Black. We also met with individuals such as Professor Dr. Abdul Ruhman Abbad and Dr. Bernard Sabella. Each of these organizations or individuals is located within the Palestinian territory except for Sabeel and the Women in Black.

Let us take a look at the organizations and what they are working towards. The first organization listed is Wi'am<sup>1</sup>, so let us start there. As is said from the title, it is a Center for conflict resolution. The center is located in Bethlehem. The founder and director is Mr. Zoughbi Zoughbi. He is a Palestinian Christian who is also a member of the Bethlehem city council. Mr. Zoughbi founded the center to be a place where people who are Christian, Jewish and Muslim can come together and be able to speak with one another. With the ability to come and speak, he hopes that people will learn from each other as well. That is, misconceptions a person may have regarding another religion can be dispelled. This, of course, is a long process. A person, who has been taught certain ideas and thoughts about another religion, or group of people, cannot be changed in one day.

---

<sup>1</sup> Arabic for cordial relationships

Wi'am works to give respect to people on both sides of a conflict. They promote healthy relationships and dialogues. The practice used by Wi'am for this is a combination of traditional Palestinian methods, Sulha, and Western mediation. There are also on going exchanges with youth and school children, to other countries so they can learn about the culture and break the stereotypes held by people. Two of the exchange countries include Germany and Italy. I asked Mr. Zoughbi if there had been much resistance by the people in the area when the organization first started. Many people are uncomfortable with change and do not like when a person, or organization, comes in and says what should happen. He told me that there was no conflict he was aware of, the people were happy to work with Wi'am and to be able to speak with one another.

The next organization to be discussed is Sabeel. One can have an idea of what the organization is about from the extension of the name. That is, they are a center that helps to teach students, in particular, about the liberation theology of the Palestinians. The offices of the organization are located in Jerusalem, but the people within the organization are Palestinian. This allowed for those of us from the United States to understand a little more clearly what it means to be a Palestinian living within Jerusalem. That is, they are either an Israeli citizen because they are from Jerusalem but have a Palestinian ethnicity, or they hold a card which states that they are from Jerusalem but are not Israeli citizens. It is difficult for a person from outside of this particular situation to understand the differences. However, if someone knows someone who is either a part of the situation or very aware of the situation it is very helpful because they can give a well thought out explanation. This is a concept that needs to be understood to understand some

of the political happenings within the area. This, however, is not a focus within the thesis, therefore, we must move on.

The Ecumenical Accompaniers are composed of people from around the world as well as various religions. They were established to observe the human rights of people within Israel and Palestine. They are a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) which means they do not receive financial support from any country government. They also do not report to a particular country government. They do, however, report to the UN. This is because the UN contracts with them as a means to monitor what happens throughout the land. If any accompanier witnesses abuses they are to report the case to the UN. The organization is interesting in that it brings people of different religions together by working on something all religions stand for, human rights. However, they are also not seen as favorable by certain governments because they look for information that could cause potential problems for the government.

The Women in Black is a unique organization. The people, as one can see in the name, are all women. They come together at a street corner in Jerusalem every Friday and wear black. The women are all Jewish Israeli citizens who come together to protest the occupation their government has imposed. The organization has been in existence since the occupation started in 1967. The women stand on the corner in silence holding signs written in either Hebrew or English. If a by-passer wishes to speak with one of the women they will engage in conversation with the individual. Today there are a few police and soldiers who stand with the women, not because they agree with or support the women, they actually think the women are crazy, but because they have orders to. There have been women attacked because of the signs they hold. As was said, they stand in

silence and keep their dignity. They will speak with people, but if someone shouts at them they will not shout back.

One of the women present at the vigil the day my group came had been coming every Friday since the organization started, she is now 99 years old. One of the other women present shared her story with me as to why she is a part of the Women in Black. The woman with whom I spoke has come to the vigils for the past ten years, she has missed some Fridays but comes as regularly as possible. She first came to Israel with her family for what was planned to be one year, it turned into two years. Her children said they could no longer live there so they moved back to Canada. Now the woman spends six months in Canada and six months in Israel. She is Jewish, and she participates in the vigils because she is Jewish. She feels that the situation between Israel and Palestine is partly her fault because of her religion. She said that Israel was founded as a country where Jews could move to and be safe after centuries of being bullied by other religions or governments. However, now she feels that Jews have turned into the bullies. Since she, and many others, view Israel as a Jewish state she feels her religion is the reason for the pain of others since it is the Israeli government causing the pain people endure in Palestine today. She wants to help with a change; it is seen as unfair or unjust that people of one faith take over the area and resources of people from another faith.

Professor Dr. Abdul Ruhman Abbad met with the group while we were in Bethlehem. Dr. Abbad is the Secretary General for the Muslim Scholars and Olama' in Palestine. He is a Muslim who spoke with us about what it means to be a Muslim in the world today. He talked to the group about how Muslims view those who are Christian or Jewish. The view is that these faiths are called people of the book.

Dr. Abbad has known the people in charge of the Luther Seminary/PLTS study tour for many years. He agrees to meet with people because it is important for the religions to have dialogue with one another. In order for this to happen the people need to have an understanding of the beliefs and teachings of the other religions. There is a strong presence of Islam in the Palestinian territory; they were the rulers of the area throughout the reign of the Ottoman Turks. This does not mean that there has always been an understanding between the people, but it is a part of the area and has become a part of the culture of the area. The towers where the calls to prayer are made are in Nativity Square as well as other places throughout the country. The Dome of the Rock is a prominent fixture to the landscape of Jerusalem which is known to people from around the world. The different religions represented there cannot be hidden, and they are not hidden. There may not always be agreements among the people. This does not mean there are problems all the time either.

Dr. Bernard Sebella spoke to the study group as well. He came and spoke with us about what the political situation is for Palestine and those living in Palestine. Dr. Sebella is a Christian, but from a lesser represented group there, Roman Catholic. He was a member of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The PNA is the governing body of Palestine. It is not recognized as a national government though because Palestine is not a nation state; the territory of Palestine is under the control of Israel. Dr. Sebella told us of his thoughts about present day Israel and the Palestinian territory. He feels that there is no hope for peace in the area until the subject of religion is talked about. Religion is a large part of what makes the people who they are, they cannot be truly themselves. He feels

that a person does not have the right to ask someone else of their religion though until one asks themselves of their own religion.

What is presented in this section is a look at what was done over the course of the study tour in Israel and Palestine. There were twenty-two students, one professor, one tour guide and one bus driver. Together we were able to explore the Holy Land, the people and the prayers; this was the name of the course and the intent was for us to hear the story of those often ignored by the greater world. In the following chapters there will be critical reviews given on three separate books about Israel and Palestine. Within the reviews are also examples of experiences from the study tour and how it relates the various books.

CHAPTER ONE  
REVIEW OF A PEACE TO END ALL PEACE

The author of *A Peace to End All Peace: the Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* is David Fromkin. He is currently a professor of International Relations, History and Law at Boston University and is also the Director of Pardee Center. In 1989 he wrote *A Peace to End All Peace* which became a national best seller and was named one of the best ten books of the year by the editors of the New York Times Book Review. One of his specializations is Middle Eastern Politics.<sup>1</sup> This is important for this particular book; we are given a background on modern Middle Eastern politics by a person who knows the history. The formation of the countries represented in the Middle East today and their politics are very complex. As is seen in *A Peace to End All Peace*, many countries were involved in the formation of the State of Israel.

When people look at the Middle East today and what is happening, they often wonder how things escalated to this point. In order to understand the world today, one must understand what happened in the past. There have been many events that have happened in this area. There have been many groups of people who have been in charge, or ruled, over this area. With all the differences that come with varying groups, there are bound to be difficulties that rise as well.

---

<sup>1</sup> Boston University. Available at <http://www.bu.edu/ir/faculty/fromkin.html>. 2008. Boston, US accessed 2. May, 2008.

Fromkin's book does a nice job of going through different parts of history of the Middle East, but focuses on two particular areas, historic Palestine and the State of Israel. The history is not a vast expanse; it is focused on the lead up to the First World War and the time just after the war, 1914-1922. There is discussion of Europe before the war and what the thoughts of leaders were in this area. From a North American perspective, it does not appear that there was much discussion or thought of the area of Palestine before, but the First World War brought it to more people's attention. This is possibly due to the Ottoman Empire fighting in the war and people in governments wanting their own empires to expand to this part of the world. The area composed of the Ottoman Empire was a focus of this book. The other area was within this empire, and that is the formation of the State of Israel.

At the beginning of the book the reader finds himself in the time when the whole world was in the process of changing. The time referenced is 1912, before the First World War. It is said that this was the end of old Europe. There had been many wars previous to this one, but not as many countries were involved. Countries themselves were changing; for example, previously there was not a German national state, as it was made up of different kingdoms. It was said in the book that Europeans assumed one day they would take over control of the area of the Middle East; specifically what later became Israel, but at that time it was not seen as a necessity. Occasionally news from the area of the Middle East would make it to Europe about Armenians being massacred, but it was not seen as anything noteworthy.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, (New York: Avon Books, 1989), 25

In the years leading up to the First World War, Great Britain took an interest in the area of the Middle East. This was, however, not because it wanted to rule. Rather, Great Britain wished to assure that no other country would rule the area. However, this did not stop countries from trying to control the area that was under rule of the Ottoman Turks. One main country that wanted to challenge this rule was Russia.<sup>3</sup> It turns out that what was not intended in the beginning came to be reality. That is, Great Britain came to have a mandate over what is present day Israel and Palestinian territory. The mandate lasted for a number of years, 1922-1947. The British Mandate came into effect through the League of Nations, a forerunner of the United Nations (UN), in 1922 with the Balfour Declaration. This declaration was from the British government stating its support of the creation of the State of Israel. In 1947, Great Britain appealed to the UN to take over the area, which was under the mandate. Israel declared itself an independent state in 1947 and took control of over seventy percent of the land which had been Palestine. At this time there was a large population of Palestinians who either had to or chose to flee their homes.<sup>4</sup>

Great Britain had influence and used its influence with World War I in the area of the Middle East. Talks took place between the Prime Minister and the Turkish leader. These talks were secretive, but they had an impact on what would happen to the lands that had been under Ottoman rule. It is reported as being said that African colonies Germany had ruled would not be returned to them, and it was not the intention to return

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 27

<sup>4</sup> United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition. 2003. RNIS 43. Geneva, CH: UN. On-line. Available at <http://www.unsystem.org/scn/archives/rnis43/middleeast.htm>, accessed 10 March 2008.

former lands to Turkey. As one could guess, this did not help relations or the situations within those areas.

In some cases, when one country came in and took power, it caused problems for a period of time, but after the power is again handed off things have a way of stabilizing to some extent. However, this was not the case for the particular area in question. While the handing off of power may not have made things worse in the area, it certainly did not make things any better.

Within the area of the Middle East, there are the people who have lived there for multiple centuries, and then there are the newcomers. Here “newcomer” is a relative term used by people who can trace their family history back to the same place for many generations. Ethnic Palestinians fall into this category; they would consider the Jewish population newcomers even though Jews were present in the area of Palestine for many generations as well. However, Jews came to the area of Palestine from other areas of the Middle East. The Jews say they have a right to be there because the Torah mandates this. The Jewish population intensified with a movement known as Zionism. This is a movement that encouraged the idea of an all Jewish state. Lloyd George was one of the people in favor of there being a state for the Zionists. When he would meet with others, they would know the names of places where European wars had taken place, but he would know the names of places in the Bible. The first agreement did not seem fair to George. That is, France and international territory were to be larger than what was offered for the Jewish state. Lloyd George felt that this offer did not show proper respect, because Palestine should not be separated. One of the reasons given by people for a Jewish Palestine was that it would strengthen the Ottomans by giving support to them. It

is interesting to read how the original thought was to not want to split Palestine. It was thought that this would not be favorable in the eyes of the Lord. This is interesting, especially when one looks at what makes up Palestine today, and Palestine is not even considered a country by most other countries. Palestine is a territory where many places are occupied by another country, Israel.

One may ask; if it was not seen as proper before to separate Palestine, then how is it done today? To give an answer, one would need to be aware of what the argument is today. The argument is based on the Torah which says that Jews were promised the land of Canaan and so they are entitled to this land. According to the beginning of *A Peace to End All Peace*, the first proposal to England was for the state of Israel to be where modern day Iraq is.<sup>5</sup> With what is going on there now it is hard to imagine what the situation would be if the two situations were combined. However, we will never know what the outcome would have been if this were the case. Perhaps the situation in these areas would be different and not as strenuous as they are today. This of course, is only speculation, and we must work with what the reality is.

The argument presented for what is happening today in the areas of Israel and Palestine is said to be partially over claim of land. Palestinians say their families have lived there for centuries and were there before the Jews came to the Promised Land. Jews say they have a right to the land because there was a promise of the land to them which is recorded in the Torah and Bible. Therefore, it is believed that Jews have a right to the land even if other people have been there for generations with their family. Their people, the Jews, were pushed out of their area by the Roman Empire in the second century. They

---

<sup>5</sup>Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 42

fled to other countries and continued to face persecution from the countries to which they moved, such as Germany in WWII and Spain with the Reconquista. However, they held onto their religion and each year would say, “next year in Jerusalem.”<sup>6</sup>

The idea that Jews have a right to create and return to Israel is known as the “right of return.” The early discussion of what should happen within the Middle East was said to be handled between Britain and the Jewish population. There was talk of wanting to have Russia as the guardian power within Israel and Palestine, but those discussing this idea felt there was a high dislike of Russia by Jews.<sup>7</sup> The road which was taken in order to have a Jewish state was full of war and death for many people. Violence happened in parts of the world, such as Gaza, which have not stopped seeing violence to this day.

It is interesting to note how Jewish immigrants to the United States differed from Jewish immigrants to other countries. It is said, that the immigrants to the United States were fairly new, but that they wanted to assert they were in the United States. That is, they worked to learn English and did not want to have an accent. This happened to be the same with some children of immigrants who were not Jewish, but did not tend to happen with the immigrants themselves. The Jewish immigrants also did not want to embrace Zionism. This is because they were afraid if they did it would be seen as jeopardizing their allegiance to the United States. This last part was also true for Jews born in the United States. It was because of these feelings that a man named Louis Brandeis felt Jewish immigrants lacked something, a national homeland. He encouraged Jews in the United States that Zionism was not bad. The idea of a Jewish homeland was in fact a goal

---

<sup>6</sup> Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 271

<sup>7</sup> Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 284, 286-287

of the allied powers. With this encouragement, the membership of Zionism within the United States grew largely.<sup>8</sup>

In 1922, there was an agreement which stated that Jews would have the right to move into the land west of the Jordan River and non-Jews were promised full protection of their rights.<sup>9</sup> While European powers were taking over the power within the Middle East they could not really expect their role to have any affect until after at least one generation had passed. That is because of the traditions which were so prevalent in the area. When a person from today looks at the Middle East and what is going on, they may not know where to start. It is important to look at the history, but the person still needs to choose a time period to start from. It may be of use to choose one or two countries to focus on in the beginning as well. This will make the process less confusing for the person looking into the past and present, and also for when discussing the topic with others.

The ideas that lead to formation of the State of Israel were not bad ideas. It was one which would give a people a place they could claim as home. Israel was also intended as a safe place for the Jewish population who have been persecuted and forced out of areas since the time of the Roman Empire. Not everyone for whom the country was made would want to go there, but not everyone agrees on something at the same time no matter what is being discussed. Some of the ways in which the foundation of Israel was made were not done in the best way. There could have possibly been less violence and people could have possibly not have been made to leave where they lived.

---

<sup>8</sup> 299-300

<sup>9</sup> Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 560

It was interesting to be able to visit a portion of the area discussed within the book. To read about the history and then to know, see and experience what is there today. To know what was going on in the background helps to put into perspective some of what is present today and what has helped to shape what the area is and is about. However, it is also saddening to learn about the violence that has been plaguing areas for ninety-four years, if not longer. Unfortunately some things do not change. Is the violence from today fueled from what happened during the time this book covers, or does it have to do with another time? Will there ever be a period where people feel they do not need to fight one another? The title, as said at the beginning, is *A Peace to End All Peace*. Someone within the group in Israel, when seeing the copy of my book, said, "What good does that do? If all peace is ended what is left?" They were just joking around, but it does make a person wonder if there will ever be a peace that will come and will put all other peace to rest. Fromkin's book gives a look at the history that is factual, and is not meant to favor any of the groups of people living in the area of Israel and Palestine. We must also bear in mind that there is a certain interpretation along with the history. A historian is to be unbiased, but one can never truly remove their bias completely. However, people from each of the groups have their own understanding of the history of the area.

While much of the history covered in this book happened ninety-four years ago, it is prevalent today, both to the country and to the people. Israel is among the youngest countries of the world. There may be people alive still today that were alive when the country was being formed. Other people may remember the stories of parents or grandparents telling of what happened at this time. The various cultures in the Middle East have a tradition of passing down history through stories. Every culture had this

tradition at one time in its history. However, this is not prevalent in certain cultures today. A culture's history and country's history help to form who a people are, but not every culture embraces their history as much as other cultures. The history of Israel and Palestine impacts not only the people but also the borders of the area. David Fromkin pointed out in his book the amount of debate that happened centered on the foundation of Israel. When an area for the State of Israel was decided on there was further debate on what would happen to the people in the area. The debates regarding the area of Israel are further discussed in a book by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens. Their book is discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF *BLAMING THE VICTIMS: SPURIOUS SCHOLARSHIP AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION*

*Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* has two editors, Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens. Edward Said was an English professor at Columbia University in New York City. He was also an outspoken activist in the United States for Palestinians; an example was his outspokenness regarding Israelis human rights violations against Palestinians. Not surprisingly, he was unpopular among pro-Israel groups in New York. While he disapproved of the tactics taken by Israel, he did not claim Israel had no right of existence, however, he also said this should not give the right for Israel to oppress Palestinians. Because of the slight Zionist view Said was seen by Palestinians as sacrificing their rights. Said was an early advocate for the two-state solution, meaning there would be the state of Israel and Palestine each as recognized countries sharing one capital Jerusalem. Edward Said was a Palestinian who was born in Jerusalem, but received most of his education in the United States. This led some of his critics to say that his status of a Palestinian refugee was not true, that he made this up so

as to have more in common with the Palestinian population. He passed away in 2003 after a battle with cancer.<sup>1</sup>

Christopher Hitchens is an Englishman who now resides in the United States. Hitchens has been a visiting professor at a number of Universities: University of California, Berkley, the University of Pittsburgh and the New School of Social Research. Hitchens has been an author for Slate and the Daily Mirror as well as contributing editor for The Atlantic Monthly and Vanity Fair. Currently he is a columnist and contributing editor for Vanity Fair.<sup>2</sup>

Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens co-edited *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, which looks at the history of Israel and Palestine from the perspective of the Palestinians. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens were also contributing authors along with nine other individuals; Norman G. Finkelstein, Peretz Kidron, Noam Chomsky, G. W. Bowersock, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Rashid Khalidi, Janet L. Abu-Laughod, Muhammad Hallaj and Elia Zureik. Not only is there a look at the history, but propaganda from the formation of Israel is also presented. We must remember when reading this information that it is not the view or opinion of either Edward Said or Christopher Hitchens but the argument presented by the supporters of the formation of Israel. The purpose for this book is to bring light to the violations that have been plaguing the Palestinian people since 1948. It was in 1948 that Palestinians were first forced to leave their land. Since then there have been many attempts to deny the

---

<sup>1</sup>Guardian. Manchester, UK: Malise Ruthven. On-line. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,1049931,00.html> accessed 4 May, 2008.

<sup>2</sup>The Atlantic Monthly Group. Boston, USA: The Atlantic Online. On-line. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/about/people/chbio.htm> accessed 4 May, 2008.

Palestinian claim of their homeland. This book was first published in 1988, so some figures represented are outdated, I will attempt to provide accurate current figures. It should also be noted that some political representatives are no longer in power. For instance, the Palestine territories at this time were under the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with the person in authority being Yasser Arafat. Today the party in power in the Palestinian territories is Hamas with the person in charge being Mahmoud Abbas. One thing these two organizations share in common is that much of the outside world either viewed or views them as terrorist organizations. When Abbas came to power he was not in favor of the bombings that were currently happening against Israel. Today it is said that any rocket attacks are retaliations against Israeli violations.

Arguments regarding the claim of Palestinians homeland claims being false are discussed within the first part of the book. The two chapters in this part deal with the author Joan Peters. In 1984 Harper and Row published a book Peters wrote entitled *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*. Within the book Peters attempts to give the location from where the Palestinians truly originate, according to Peters the claim to Palestine as their homeland is fabricated.

There are examples given of the reviews for *From Time Immemorial*. Many of the reviewers of the book from the United States praised Peters and her findings. This was not the case when people reviewed the book in England and Israel though, most all of the reviews were negative. Edward Said gives an example of many errors found within the book by a graduate student, Norman Finkelstein. These errors occur in the numbers Peters cite for the Arab population within Palestine for which four different amounts are given. Some of the critics in England went through the book and cited the inconsistencies

or falsifications throughout the book in their reviews.<sup>3</sup> Even though there have been a number of people who have found problems within the evidence of *From Time Immemorial* it has been held up as one of the best works for the position of Israel. It is against works such as this one that Edward Said, Christopher Hitchens and others deal with for having the Palestinian story come to the greater world.

We learn that Israel has received more foreign aid from the United States than any other country. The figures have more than likely changed since the publication of this book, in 1984, but at the time the figures presented are noteworthy.<sup>4</sup> Because of the amount of aid Israel receives, it is said that the function of the state is dependent on the United States.<sup>5</sup> As the country of Israel was being formed myths about who the Arabs, the majority population of Palestine and the other Arab nations, really were and what was being done to the Jewish population came about. The world was told of an empty territory but people in the general area opposed a Jewish land even after the Holocaust happened. The time referenced here is during the years of the formation of Israel, beginning in 1949. Some of the propaganda presented to the world is seen in the following quote.

Thereafter, the myths proliferated and formed a system which, in the West at least, became inordinately difficult to deny. The 'Arabs' left Palestine because their leaders told them to. The Arabs were out to

---

<sup>3</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 23-28.

<sup>4</sup> The amount of military aid from the United States to Israel in 2007 was \$137.9 million; aid to migrants for 2007 was \$40 million. Congregational Research Service Report for Congress. January 2, 2008. U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel. Washington D. C., USA: Jeremy M. Sharp. On-line. Available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf> accessed 28 March 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens ed. *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, (New York: Verso, 1984), 2

destroy the Jewish state, and since they were already in league with Hitler, their opposition to Israel was essentially racist and fascist. Israel was a democracy whose “right” to existence was religious, was morally correct (since no one had suffered more than the Jews), was historically inevitable (since the whole world had promised empty Palestine to these enlightened Jewish liberals from Europe), was, above all, politically attractive (since it seemed to embody every conceivable cliché about pioneers, ingenious scientists, intrepid humanitarians and noble fighters). Israel was the target of terrorist attacks which far exceeded in number and savagery anything it afflicted on its enemies both before and since 1948, and Israel has stood for progress and peace whereas its Arab enemies are medieval Muslim fanatics, irrational murders, and contemptible hypocrites.<sup>6</sup>

There is also mention of how there was frequently an unfair portrayal of Islamic zealots shown on television, films and in the media. With all of the myths, the West sided with the Jews and did not seem to take much notice to what happened to the people already living there. As a result, there has been an entire generation of Palestinians and Israelis who know only military occupation or stateless refugees.<sup>7</sup>

Further in the book, what happened to the Palestinians as Israel was created is discussed. As was stated earlier, Palestinians needed to leave when Jews started to move into the territory. At first people were told, and believed, that an Arab leader told the

---

<sup>6</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 4

<sup>7</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 9

Palestinians to leave. However, the part about the leader was not true. People were forced to leave their homes. They either left out of fear, or they left thinking they would be able to return within a few days. While there may have been a small number of Palestinians who chose to leave, there was a much larger number who were forced by the Israeli military to leave.

One may wonder, why did Palestinians leave, or what lead to their departure from their land? There are some different reasons given for answers to these questions. One of the answers has to do with what is known as the broadcasts. There have been many arguments made that broadcasts were aired urging Palestinians to flee. There were also arguments that the Greek Orthodox Archbishop urged people to leave. However, the archbishop denied calling such orders. There was additional research done to see if there was ever such an order given using this particular individual's name, there had been cases before of the archbishops name being forged. The findings were no such orders were given. People fled out of fear for their safety.<sup>8</sup>

There was a journalist who helped contribute to this book; his name is not given in the book. He offered a story from a time when he followed a man who had been in the Canadian armed forces, he recorded the stories this man would share for the making of his memoirs. One story in particular stood out to the journalist, but the man he was writing for did not want the story included within the memoirs. The journalist at first could not believe what he had been told with the story, however, something that happened later reminded him of the particular story. The man who was telling the stories

---

<sup>8</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 73, 76

is named Ben Dunkleman. The story referenced here is one he told that took place in Nazareth.

Dunkleman was in the Canadian expeditionary force and later volunteered with the Israeli army. One day Dunkleman recounted a story of one of his experiences as a brigade commander whose task was to dislodge the Arab forces. Dunkleman decided that his forces should go after Nazareth; it was at the time one of the largest Arab towns within Galilee. The Israeli forces were successful and documentation was made and signed that said the civilian population would not be harmed. Two days after this truce was made, a command came to Dunkleman to evacuate the population of Nazareth. He was shocked at this and refused saying they had agreed that no harm would come to the population. Besides the agreement, it would be harmful to the Israeli forces if they did something that would be seen as going back on their word. A few hours after this happened, Moshe Carmel, he was a fellow officer in the Army, came and said his battalion was taking over for Dunkleman's brigade. Dunkleman agreed to go only after a promise was made that no harm would befall the population of Nazareth. As far as Dunkleman knew, when this was recorded, the Arab population has lived there ever since. The journalist put this in the draft he presented to Dunkleman, but Dunkleman had doubts about whether he wanted this included and so it was not in the memoirs.<sup>9</sup>

Sometime later there was another account that brought back the memory of Dunkleman's account. The second account was very similar and happened within days of Dunkleman's story. The second account, which received an OK from the military censor but needed to clear another censor, had to do with the evacuation of a town. The forces

---

<sup>9</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 85-87.

under Rabin were with Operation Larlar and came in and took over the area. Those in charge of the forces met to discuss what should be done with the people who were a violent threat to Israel. They decided it would be best to move the population to where the legions were and they could take care of the people. The people did not want to leave, but then said they would as long as the exodus was done with vehicles. There is slightly more to the story, but the similarities of the two were proof to the journalist that Dunkleman's story was true and actually happened as was told.<sup>10</sup>

When the study group was in Nazareth, it was a little surreal to be in an area that could have been very different if things had not gone the way they did. Some people in the group were commenting one night about how it was amazing how many Christians there were in the town and the fact that it was in Israel. I told some of the people about this man and what I had read of his account and the journalist's account of remembering this and the other account. There are many events in history that change things for many people. However, it is not often heard of one person doing something that affected so many people in a positive way. Being able to share this part of Israel's history with members of the group was something special, they were also amazed that this man was able to have the impact he had.

As one can see from the different information brought out from the book, there is a vast difference in opinion of what has happened to the people who are of Arabic ethnicity. Many of them were forced from their homes because others felt they had a right to the area. It did not matter that some people's family had been there since before the Roman Empire came to the area. There is an understandable frustration in that those who

---

<sup>10</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 91-96.

had been a victim at different times continually say they are victims, but those who are now being made the victim are not seen or recognized. In some cases people may say or think that events are not really as bad as people make them seem. In other cases people are simply not aware of the situation because they are not told of what has happened and is happening.

The area of Palestine has had a variety of groups in power. They include the Ottomans, British and now Israel. With the change in power there has also been a change in who makes up the population of the area. Today there is a large Jewish population in the religious identity. However, in ethnic identity the majority is Arab.<sup>11</sup> More recent demographics, from 2004, state that the majority of population in Israel is Jewish while a significant population is non-Jewish.<sup>12</sup> In the Palestinian territory there is a Jewish population in the West Bank, but Palestinian Arab is the majority. This book is somewhat dated in that it was first copyrighted in 1984, and mentions Israel still occupying the areas of the Gaza strip. It is said that it is not known if or when the occupation will end. Israel claims that its occupation ended in 2000 when the troops were pulled out of Gaza, however, most countries do not recognize the occupation as ended. Many people make the argument though that Gaza is still essentially under occupation since it is Israel who decides who and what is allowed in and out. An example of this happened when I was in Israel with the study group. The people within Gaza had done some action that Israel did not appreciate or approved of, so they reacted against the Palestinians who live in Gaza. The power was turned off and food was not allowed into the area. The time this lasted

---

<sup>11</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 193, this is according to the book, today's demographics may differ.

<sup>12</sup> Religions represented are Judaism, Islam, Christians, Druze and unspecified.

was roughly a week; the news reported that thirty newborns or more died because of there being no power. There was also sewage that ran down the streets since there was no way to process the garbage. The people in Gaza finally decided they were not going to put up with the conditions anymore and they broke down the barrier between them and Egypt, the neighboring country. Thousands of people crossed the boarder and bought goods such as food and crossed the boarder again to be with their families. Israel called for Egypt to take action against the people who were crossing the boarder. Egypt did send troops to guard the boarder, but they took time (about four days) to do this and even then there did not appear to be physical action against the individuals. This is just one example of violations to human rights that are occurring unfortunately there is not always a response from the rest of the world to the violations.

The area known as Palestine has a vast history. It is home to the oldest known, continually inhabited city in the world, Jericho. During the time that people have lived there, multiple groups have been in power depending on who was in power within Palestine. However, as people began to seek self-determination, Palestine disappeared from most maps. It was known throughout the Islamic kingdom though.<sup>13</sup> The countries focusing on self determination were more concerned about their own country, however, Palestine was in the area where Islam was the strongest and so it was still important to the Empire. There had always been an Arab majority in Palestine until 1948. The population was divided in religions between Christianity, Druze and Islam, both Shi'ite and Sunni. Even though there were different religions they all considered themselves to be Arab.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 235

<sup>14</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 236

There is so much information that goes into looking at what makes up a country. Every country has a long history, but some information is more accessible than other information. It is no different for Palestine, which has been known to have been populated for many generations. It is unfortunate though that more people are not aware of what has happened in the recent past and what is happening now. However, there seems to be limited media coverage, at least within the United States. It is reported at times when there are mass casualties due to violence, but many people do not understand the background related to the violence. It is a detailed background and complicated, so not something a person would necessarily comprehend in one afternoon. Books such as this one do help to give a scope of the background and the time period up to the mid to late 1980s and so has slightly changed, from the view of Palestinians.

When the formation of the State of Israel first started Palestinians outnumbered Jews. While one would think this would mean Palestine would have more power than Israel they would be mistaken. Palestine did not have much power with the negotiations.

It seems especially important to be made aware of the history from a Palestinian perspective. Within the United States we are made aware by politicians that our country is an ally of Israel. Because of this we hear news or stories from an Israeli perspective, however, we rarely hear from Palestinians. With this being the case people are often shocked and saddened when they hear stories from Palestinians.

In the conclusion of *Blaming the Victims*, it is said that Palestine has everything that by definition would make it a country. There is a common history shared by the people, common language, traditions, a culture and a governing body. However, with all of these aspects Palestine is not a nation state; it is not a recognized country by various

countries throughout the world. The Palestinian people today have taken all the negative events they have encountered and are working towards good in the future. The authors of the conclusion tell about Palestinians holding a common goal of having a Palestinian state on their native land. People today cannot take this right away from the Palestinians.<sup>15</sup>

There seems to have been progress made throughout the time *Blaming the Victims* covers. People such as the contributing authors and the co-editors of this book are speaking out for a population that has been all but completely ignored for many years. Yassir Arafat was asked to meet with different American Presidents along with the Israeli Prime Minister to discuss possible peace accords. In April 2008, former President Jimmy Carter traveled to Palestine with the intent to meet with Hamas. While Carter received criticism for this meeting he did not let that deter him. Carter mentioned that he was no longer tied down by political propaganda since he no longer holds a political office. He can speak and work towards what is important to him and people at large.

When a person talks to someone who is Palestinian, just like any other person, there is a sense of national pride held by the people. My fellow group members and I could sense this from the individuals we met in Palestine. This is also discussed in the conclusion of *Blaming the Victims*. There is still a long road that needs to be traveled for Palestinians to be seen and respected as having their own country. Books such as *Blaming the Victims* and the work done by people involved with this book, and many others, have helped a great deal so far and will continue to help give a voice to a population which struggles to be heard.

---

<sup>15</sup> Said, *Blaming the Victims*, 291-292.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF *WITNESSING FOR PEACE: IN JERUSALEM AND THE WORLD*

Bishop Munib Younan is the author of *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*. Bishop Younan was born in Palestine and was educated in both Palestine and Finland. Munib Younan is the third bishop of the Evangelical Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ECJHL), he was ordained January 5, 1998 at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Bishop Younan is also the president of the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches, president of the Board of Managers of the International Christian Committee and Vice President of the Lutheran World Federation. One last note about Bishop Younan is that he was the first person to translate the Augsburg Confession into Arabic.

Bishop Younan is a Palestinian Christian, and so would consider himself Arab. Throughout his book he presents the view from this perspective. This does not make this view the “right” or only understanding, but is what he knows. It appears important to understand this perspective as well, because it is not always as well known as the perspective from the Israelis. *Witnessing for Peace* opens the first chapter with questions which are often asked of him. They include “How long have you been a Christian?” and

---

<sup>1</sup> My study tour attended a church service at this church while we were in Jerusalem.

“When did your family first hear the gospel?”<sup>2</sup> He says that most of his answers seem to surprise those asking the questions. The answer usually is that his family was most likely Christian before the questioners own country heard the gospel. Those who ask these tend to be American or European, they also seem to either forget that Christianity had its start there or have the idea that once the apostles left on their journeys that the congregation in Jerusalem also left.

Bishop Younan brings up an interesting point with the thinking of the congregation in Jerusalem no longer existing after the apostles left. In a way one can see where this misperception arose. The leaders from the church were all leaving and spreading out to the ends of the earth. Who is to run the church? James, the brother of Jesus, was there and is referenced different times by Paul in his letters. However, overall we do not hear much about him or the congregation in general. Unless one makes themselves consciously aware of the fact that James was there and that Paul was collecting funds for the congregation in Jerusalem, a person could forget with all the other material presented.<sup>3</sup>

There is also an explanation given relative to the people of the area. We are to understand that the people of Palestine are Arabs; one cannot separate them. Both are a part of their ethnicity. There has been evidence found by archeologists that at the time of Jesus Palestine was a multicultural area, just like today. There were of course Jews, but there were also Roman soldiers, Greeks, Samaritans, and Idumeans, descendents of Edom who was also known as Esau. Unlike today, there were some non-Jews who had a Jewish

---

<sup>2</sup> Munib Younan, *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 3

<sup>3</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 4

identity and some Jews who had a non-Jewish identity. While there were Jews around, and Jesus was a Jew, he did not interact solely with Jews. There are different accounts of interaction with others which are recorded in the Bible. Some people wonder if perhaps their family helped to keep the records alive. The way that Palestinians have an Arab identity is that they adopted the Arabic language as the Arab tribes did.<sup>4</sup>

Two periods of a large amount of change within Palestine were when Islam first started coming to the area and the Crusader period. When Islam first came there was peace and respect between the different groups. Islam is a faith that has a strong concept of peace. Islam views Christians and Jews as people who should be protected, they are known as people of the Book. People are all said to have decency within them, therefore, Muslims treat all people with decency. One example of this comes from when Umar came to Jerusalem after the city was conquered. Sophronius wanted Umar to come and accept the city himself. It is told by Muslims that when Umar came to Jerusalem there was one man on a camel and one man leading the camel, Sophronius thought Umar was the man on the camel and so addressed him; however, Umar was the man leading the camel. Umar and his servant had made an agreement that they would both take turns riding the camel since they had a large distance to travel; this is the reason for Umar being the person leading the camel. One of the times of prayer came, and Umar wanted to pray, Sophronius offered the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for him to use for prayer. Umar did not want to because he knew this was an important place for Christians, and if he prayed inside it would then be viewed as a mosque. In Jerusalem today there is a mosque in Jerusalem remembered for Umar, Umar's Mosque which is located across

---

<sup>4</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 5-6

from the church of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>5</sup> There also came a time when there was conflict; for instance, there was a time when the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was destroyed. However, it is thought that the Caliph at this time suffered from dementia which means it could have been related to the dementia and not conflicts between the two religious groups. There was another time when the Church of the Resurrection was destroyed and the Muslim community encouraged the Christian community to collect funds for its reconstruction.<sup>6</sup> This history shows some of the early interaction of Islam and Christianity, while there is sometimes conflict this was not the intent.

The Crusader period is seen very differently from the perspective of a person from the area of the Holy Land than from an outsider. Those of us from the United States, in particular, are told and taught that the Crusaders went to the Holy Land in a quest to reclaim the land, so that it would once again be in Christian hands. However, anyone from there who is Christian can tell people that the Christians never left. They also say that the Crusaders had a different purpose for being there. Crusaders killed people that spoke a different language and looked Middle Eastern regardless of their religion. An entire Christian city was destroyed by Crusaders. Because of these actions it can be understood why Christians would take up arms against the Crusaders. It is seen by those who are from Jerusalem or Palestine in general that the Crusaders came in with the purpose of destroying the Eastern Church. They did not give Orthodox Christians rights and made the Latin form of Christianity the only accepted Christian religion.<sup>7</sup> It is

---

<sup>5</sup> This information was learned from discussion with Dr. Khalid Sami, an Islamic leader in Schaumburg, IL.

<sup>6</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 8-9

<sup>7</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 10-11

interesting to note that there still is a Roman Catholic presence in the Holy Land, but the prominent form of Christianity represented is Greek Orthodox.<sup>8</sup>

Salah al-Din was the leader that helped to push the Crusaders out of Jerusalem. However, he gave an order to protect the Latin Christians. Latin Christians were to leave the area but al-Din's order to his forces was that those captured should not be sold as slaves. Al-Din was also the one to first welcome Jews into the city of Jerusalem since the Roman Empire banned them in 135 C.E. Al-Din also gave Greek Orthodox Christians special protection and their churches were restored. Al-Din said that, with such actions, the Christians would always remember what was done for them.<sup>9</sup> Reading this history makes me wonder if this is true today. Do Christians, both in the Middle East and around the world remember, or know, what was done for them? This also helps explain why there is such a presence of Greek Orthodox Christians in the area known as the Holy Land. Many of the sites pilgrims visit when in Jerusalem, and some in Palestine, are churches where Greek Orthodox Christians hold services. For instance, in the Church of the Nativity there are three churches represented. The Greek Orthodox Church has its altar in the center of the church and are seen as the caretakers of the church. There are also Roman Catholic and Armenian congregations in the church as well, they each have their own altar. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre there are multiple church bodies represented, but it is the Greek Orthodox Church that is in charge of the number of people and time people are allowed into the tomb believed to be where Jesus was buried.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lutheranism is also represented in the Holy Land as seen by Bishop Munib Younan. There is also a Franciscan presence within the different historic churches and the Mormon church has a seminary in Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 11-12

When those of us who are from a Western perspective learn about the crusades, we are taught that the European Crusaders were going to regain the area of the Holy Land from the Muslims who did not have a right to them and did not follow the “true faith”. These were “holy wars” that were initiated by the Pope; the first Crusade was called for by Pope Urban II. During the Crusades many lives were lost, but many discoveries also took place. Europeans went into the Middle East with the goal of winning the Holy Lands back for the Catholic faith. The Crusades lasted many years, without a clear victor. However, those who went into the Middle East came back with many spices and fabrics that had previously been unknown to the Europeans. At least it can be said that something positive came for people out of the long war years.

When a person looks at what has happened in history from the time of the Crusades they will have a different understanding if they are from the Holy Land or if they are from a different area. There has been discussion by various individuals and scholars that a number of actions throughout history have been seen as a continuation of the Crusades. Colonialism, for instance, was seen as a continuation of the unsuccessful Crusades. In certain aspects globalization today is seen as a continuation of the unsuccessful Crusades because there is a push for a society that is not what is common in the Holy Land and Middle East in general. These are connections that a person outside of the area would most likely not draw on their own.

Bishop Younan goes on to discuss peace and why there has been no successful peace negotiation. It is not for lack of trying. There have been an estimated fifty different proposals made by various political leaders. However, while they all seek peace, none of them have enclosed justice. Some of the proposals offered have been called “peace for

land”, that is, Israel would offer land and Palestine would guarantee there would be peace. However, according to Bishop Younan, this did not work and there is a main reason as to why: the land Israel offered was not theirs to give, not religiously and not politically. There has also been the hindrance of Israel seeing itself as privileged people. Younan however cites a biblical passage, Amos 9:7, which points out there are no privileged people; all are to be on equal footing.<sup>10</sup>

Anyone who has heard news clips on the events within the Middle East knows that there is violence in the Middle East, there is violence specifically in Israel and Palestine. However, it may not be known the different forms of violence present. There is violence from bombs and shootings, this is what is most often reported, but those are not the only violent happenings. There is also the violence of stripping a man or woman of their human dignity, such as happens at check points by Israeli soldiers. There are also people being forced to live in poverty because they are not allowed to harvest their crops or prosper from their land, as well as people who are denied basic rights such as water and health care. The terror the sound of a helicopter brings to children, when they hear it they fear there will be another bombing. There are also children who are afraid to fall asleep because they do not know if they will wake up again.<sup>11</sup> All this would be more than some people could handle. However, this is what people within the Middle East deal with, what Palestinians deal with. While some would think that with all that is happening the people would want to fight back, they do fight back, but the way most want to fight back is through means of non-violence. What would and will happen to children if all

---

<sup>10</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 67-68

<sup>11</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 77-78

they see is the violence and do not know that there are ways to rise up without the use of force? This is something that is in the minds and fears of Bishop Younan and others, which is why they feel it is so important to be non-violent.

With the violence present in the Holy Land the people are reminded of a word that other Christians know, but may not understand the meaning of the word. The word is martyr. It is said that the translation from Greek means witness, but many people do not associate that meaning to the word. Most people seem to associate dying while protecting one's faith when they are called a martyr. However, there are many people in the Holy Land who lose their life end up doing this in an act of witnessing to their neighbors. An example of such a person is Harold Fischer. Fischer is a medical doctor who moved to Jerusalem to offer his services to the Palestinian people. He ended up marrying a woman from the area and they had children together. In 2000 there was the al-Aqsa Intifada which made people run for cover and seek help for those injured from the shooting that happened. Fisher was in his home with his family and people came to their door seeking help. He could not turn the people away, so Fischer went out and did not think of his own safety. He was killed by an Israeli helicopter gunship.<sup>12</sup> It is because of instances like this one that the people of the Holy Land know much better than the rest of us what it means to be a martyr and what makes a martyr. The understanding may differ from those who do not live in Israel and Palestine, but seems very fitting for the everyday life the people lead.

Bishop Younan spends a chapter discussing interaction with terrorist. He makes an interesting point with the statement, "As it has often been said, one man's terrorist is

---

<sup>12</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 41

another's freedom fighter. It depends on whose side one is on."<sup>13</sup> There are various examples of people who are either Israeli or Palestinian being seen as a terrorist and then also being in power within one of the countries. Examples of such individuals are Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir and Yasser Arafat, both Begin and Arafat later won the Nobel Peace Prize. These are all examples of how perspectives of whom or what make a terrorist can change.

In the chapter over talking with terrorists there is a story of one particular person recounted. The person whose story in the chapter is shared is Suheila Andrawes. As a child Suheila and her parents moved to Lebanon because of the conflict during 1948. When Suheila was a little older she decided to become active in seeking liberation for Palestine and became the equivalent of a soldier. There was one assignment that was given to Suheila and three other soldiers that ended up receiving a large amount of world attention. The assignment was for the four young adults to hijack a plane headed to Frankfurt, Germany. The reason they were given for this action was not to do harm to the passengers on the plane but to use them as leverage for seeking the release of political prisoners. The high-jacking did not go as was planned though. The people were held for the equivalence of four days. After this time forces were able to take over the plane and four people were dead, the pilot and three of the high-jackers. Suheila was arrested but was moved to a hospital due to her injuries.<sup>14</sup>

Suheila Andrawes was made a free person quicker than her prison sentence ordered. It was decided that because of Suheila's attitude and behavior it was proper to

---

<sup>13</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 110

<sup>14</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 111-112

set her free. After a short time Suheila met a man who later became her husband and they later moved to Norway. It is because of Norway that Suheila has a connection to Bishop Younan, Suheila's church in Norway began an exchange program with the church Bishop Younan belonged to and his wife participated in the exchange program. The life of Suheila and her family changed sometime after the exchange program started, Germany wished to have her extradited to Germany for trial, this was seen as controversial though because it had been close to twenty years since the high-jacking and she was already tried once for the crime. After various court actions she was sent to Germany where she was in a prison in Hamburg.<sup>15</sup>

During the court proceedings between the Norwegian and German governments Suheila and Bishop Younan met in person for the first time. Bishop Younan was in Norway for meetings and Suheila had asked to speak with him. During Bishop Younan's and Suheila's conversation she confessed what she had done with the high-jacking. At this point Bishop Younan wrote that Suheila was no longer a terrorist but a freedom fighter. She did not want to use weapons anymore but would instead use her words to fight injustices. There was a long and stressful time felt by Suheila and her husband during the time of the trials. She ended up being sent to prison again, during this time she reached a depth of depression so deep that she did not want to see anyone and attempted suicide her husband also became very depressed. Suheila's Norwegian pastor and Bishop Younan were both available to Suheila and she was able to get through the difficult times. A few years after Suheila's release from prison Bishop Younan was able to visit Suheila and her family. He recounts how much Suheila had changed. She truly repented of what

---

<sup>15</sup> Younan, *Witnessing for Peace*, 113-115

she had done in the past and was able to live her life and move forward. The story of Suheila Andrawes is an extreme case, but shows how Bishop Younan and others witness to people who had been previously viewed as a terrorist. They are everyday people who perhaps made a bad decision when they were younger. This does not mean that people should cut this person out of their life or society. It is by no means an easy feat, especially if the person in question did harm to people known by the person witnessing to them. Palestinians appear to be ahead of the rest of the world with truly being able to forgive a person and help them to move on with their life. Perhaps this is related to the close connection between everyday life and religion for the Palestinian people or perhaps it is simply a part of who they are.

Within Palestine there are two religions represented, Christianity and Islam. The number of religions changes though, depending on if a person views Jerusalem as united or if Jerusalem is divided between Israel and Palestine. According to Israel Jerusalem is a united city and is in Israeli territory. However, the people who live in Jerusalem say that it is not united. The majority of the world also does not recognize Jerusalem as being united, because of this Israel has its official capital in Tel Aviv. If East Jerusalem is part of the Palestinian territory then there are at least three religions represented, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. These are the three main, largest, monotheistic religions of the world. With that comes the need and opportunity to have dialogue. That is, dialogue within the three religions. This is important so that people can understand one another, and also with the effort towards reaching a peace agreement. Dialogue happens when people of different faiths talk to one another about their faiths. It is not a chance to try and convert a person to the particular religion, but to learn from one another. There are always

challenges that come with dialogue, and are also there when three religions are in discussion at the same time. Such challenges are deciding if there is a section of the belief that can be tabled for the discussion. This does not mean the section would never be talked about, but there are certain aspects that are better discussed when the people are comfortable with one another and know they can talk about this section without fear of disrespecting the other people. It may also be because the person does not have a strong enough understanding of that part of their own religion and need to learn more in order to answer questions posed by other people. Each religion is unique and holds its own beliefs; however, there are similarities in where these three religions believe they stem from. Dialogue and Trialogue help people to learn this about one another as well as what makes each religion different. It is important to understand the differences and to respect the differences; however, people often seem to focus on the differences and do not know or understand that there are similarities. If the people do not understand one another then how can they hope to find something that fits with everyone's beliefs?

The information that Bishop Younan gave about the people in general seemed to coincide with what was learned on the study tour. Many Palestinians have connections to the United States in that they have relatives living there. It seemed that most everyone we would meet had family either currently in the United States or were planning on moving there themselves. In many cases people within Palestine have similar experiences in that they travel internationally, a small amount for business but most for family. However, Bishop Younan may have had slightly different experiences than the majority of people. This is because of the position he is in. However, this is a benefit for writing books about this topic. He is able to give views and thoughts from a religious perspective, but anyone

who is strong in their faith would be able to give this perspective. He is also able to give examples of people from other countries that he has had conversations with. With this he is able to present questions that many readers may have and give them an answer and explanation.

Overall the book gives a good background of the people of Palestine, what is happening, and what is or needs to happen. Many people wonder why the various peace talks held by the leaders in Israel and Palestine often hosted by a United States president or British prime minister, have not lead to something fruitful. This book gives some reasons as to why this is, granted this is from the Palestinian view and does not account for the Israeli view. It serves as a voice for what the Palestinians think and feel, which does not always receive coverage in the media. This is a good book for a person who has some background and would like some more, but also for those who have no background of what is happening within the Middle East and would like to learn.

## CONCLUSION

With the three books that were explored in this paper there is no inclusive conclusion that can be made. Each book is different in its own right. However, each book gives the reader a slightly different perspective of the area of Israel and Palestine. With *A Peace to End All Peace* the reader is given a thorough background of the history of the area of historic Palestine. With this history a person is able to start to see what the Palestinian people have been dealing with for many years.

It is not a wonder why there have been harbored feelings of hurt and distrust. Palestinians basically lost their right to land they had been living on for centuries. It did not matter to the greater world that people would lose historic homes or areas that had been important to different families. Palestine is not the only country that has gone through such an experience; however, they continue to experience the loss of land to this day. Not only by knowing what had been taken from the Palestinian people but also by land being taken today.

History is often said to be told by the winner, because of this the history can sometimes be distorted. This can sometimes be dangerous, especially when the history is still occurring and has not passed. This distortion of history can also lead to problems when people pass history to other generations. One group of people hears the story from one perspective while another group of people hear the story from a different perspective. This can lead to distrust and a strong dislike from one group over the other. This is not

exactly the case in Israel and Palestine, but is similar. For a period of time people were led to believe that first, there was no one living in Palestine and second, there has been dispute as to who has the true claim to the land. Palestinians have lived in Palestine since people inhabited the area, however, Jews were promised the land by God. Is one claim seen as greater than the other, can a person claim one and not recognize the other? These are questions that are both touched on with the three books, but there is not an easy answer to either of them.

In *Blaming the Victim* the reader is given a background look at the history of Palestine from the perspective of the Palestinian people. With this view of the history we are not receiving the story from those who are now in power but from those who have become the victims in various ways. The ways recounted include a book that accuses Palestinians of not actually being from the area they claim as their homeland. From the beginning of the planning of the State of Israel the people who were already there were ignored. This has not changed much since that time. More people are becoming aware of the situation of the Palestinians, but there is still much change that can happen.

In the book *Witness for Peace* the reader learns about Bishop Younan and the idea of witnessing for peace. When I read over Bishop Younan's book I noticed points that he made that I do not think I would have made myself. He has seen and grown up in a context that is very different from the context I have grown up in. Bishop Younan draws on his own experiences and those of others. With these examples those of us who read the book are made aware of situations we may not have known before.

Through the writings of David Fromkin, Edward Said, Christopher Hitchens and Bishop Munib Younan people are able to learn about a population that has not always

been present in the thoughts and ideas of the rest of the world. Because of the writings of these individuals and others there is once again discussion regarding the Holy Land. With this discussion there is once again the question as to who the land belongs to. This has been a question for a long time and appears it will always be a question. This question seems to be one that will never really have an answer.

As one can see when they read the reviews of the books, or the books themselves, they are written from the perspective of the Palestinians. This is important to know, one because it will differ from the perspective of most Israelis. Another reason is because the perspectives are now being heard and people feel they should tell others what has happened and what is happening. This does not mean that everyone knows or believes the stories. There are some people who may think it is not important to know both sides of a story. However, if one does not know the story of a people do they really know the people? While a person cannot know a people or their culture or society by only reading books it is a beginning. In order to really learn about these a person needs to be among the people and immersed in the society and culture.

With books such as those presented in the paper it seems that it will be more difficult for people to ignore what is happening in the Holy Land. People should not want to ignore what has happened to people. In the United States people are reminded that the government of the United States is allied with the government of Israel. Because of this, the side of Israel is usual the side that is heard or recognized. A large amount of United States money goes to Israel and is used for what is said to be protection. This means that the money is used, at least in part, to finance the building of the barrier which was discussed earlier. The government would say that a country has a right to protect itself,

which is true. If a country feels threatened by another country they should be able to take defensive measures to prevent an attack. However, the defense should not be an action that causes harm to people especially when nothing has been done to those creating the defense. Various forms of the harm to people were discussed in a previous chapter of this paper. Some of the harm has to do with the barrier and other parts of the harm have to do with people moving into areas that were taken from other people.

With learning about what is and has been happening in the Holy Land can be very overwhelming. There are many emotions that come out in a person and a large amount of information to comprehend as well. The situation between Israel and Palestine is not one that can be easily understood. There are many elements that make the situation so complex. There is an extensive history to the area and there are the stereotypes and misunderstandings that accompany the history.

Study tours such as the one through Luther Seminary and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary help to make people aware of what is happening in the Holy Land today. The preparatory work for the tour and the presentations given during the tour helped each of us to learn about the history of Palestine and the between Palestine and Israel. With the people that we met were able to see and learn for ourselves what is true and what is false.

Many people upon the return of the study tour asked me and the other members if we felt safe while in the Holy Land. Many people assume there is danger all the time. There were violent actions that happened while we were in the Holy Land, but this is unfortunately everyday life there. We arrived just after U.S. President George W. Bush had been in the area. We were told that we were in the Holy Land at an interesting time.

There is usually a time of calm when a world leader comes to the area and then shortly after they leave things start “heating up” again. We were there as things slowly began to heat up. Even though we were told we were present in the in between time none of us felt in danger. Our tour guide and bus driver each did a wonderful job of informing us what was happening and if it were safe for us to be out on our own in the evening. We were never close to where the actions of the heat up were happening though. Most of the actions while we were there were in retaliation of oppression though. The largest action, which was covered on world news, was of the people in Gaza tearing down a section of the wall between themselves and Egypt. Even when the people had a taste of freedom to buy supplies in Egypt many of them appeared to return to Gaza because that is where their family is. The people of Palestine are proud of where they are from, but have been growing tired of not being heard. It appears today as if the world is at a point where it is starting to hear the Palestinian people.

## Bibliography

Abbad, Professor Dr. Abdul Ruhman. Secretary General, The Muslim Scholars and Olama' in Palestine

Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace: the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*. New York: Avon Books, 1989.

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

Sabella, Dr. Bernard. Executive Secretary DSPR/MECC Associate Professor of Sociology, Bethlehem University

Said, Edward W. and Christopher Hitchens ed. *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*. New York: Verso, 1984.

Sami, Khalid Abdus M.D. M.S., leader within a Mosque in Schaumburg, IL

Sharp, Jeremy M. U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel. Washington D. C., USA: On-line. Available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>

Yunan, Munib. *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Zoughbi, Zoughbi, Founder and Director of WI'AM Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center