

## The Vatican, U.S. Catholics And The Middle East

By George E. Irani

Many Catholics in the United States are probably unaware of the following facts related to Christianity in the Middle East:

- More than 10 million Christians in the Middle East are spread between Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Syria. In Lebanon alone there are 1.5 million Catholics.
- Two major New York City-based institutions—the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, headed by Msgr. John G. Nolan, and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, overseen by John Cardinal O'Connor—fund humanitarian and educational projects in the Middle East.
- Bethlehem University, totally funded by the Vatican, is managed by the American Catholic order of the Christian Brothers.
- The Directors of the Pontifical Mission offices in Lebanon, Jordan and Jerusalem are American-born clergymen.
- The late Terence Cardinal Cooke of

New York visited Lebanon in 1980 and 1982, and his successor, John Cardinal O'Connor, completed a 3-day visit in June 1986.

All these facts, together with the death of 250 U.S. Marines in Lebanon, the TWA hijacking crisis in June 1985, and the long agony of six U.S. hostages in Lebanon—one of them Father Martin Jenco—symbolize for the Catholic community, as well as all Americans, the importance of finding a peaceful solution to both the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and the Lebanese conflict.

Definitive comment by American Catholics regarding Israeli-Palestinian issues emerged in an October 1982 public opinion survey on U.S. atti-

tudes on the Middle East. Eighty-one percent of the American Catholics polled stated that Palestinians have the right to establish their own state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This attitude contrasted with the spirit of the Reagan Plan for the Middle East (September 1, 1982), which advocated "self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan."<sup>1</sup> However, 54 percent of Catholic respondents were against U.S. government recognition of the PLO and 63 percent expressed opposition to U.S. aid to Israel.

How do these views correspond to the Middle East positions adopted by the Holy See<sup>2</sup> and the Catholic hierarchy in the United States?



Msgr. John G. Nolan, national secretary of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association and president of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, with Mother Teresa of India and Palestinian children in Jordan

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# The Vatican And Islam

Muslims number one billion worldwide, of which 150 million are Arab. And because Jerusalem is one of the three shrines holy to Islam, the relationship between Catholics and Muslims is closely tied to the question of Palestine.

The turning point in Catholic-Islamic relations came, as it did with Judaism, with the Second Vatican Council; and, as with Jews, the Church began its dialogue with Muslims with an acknowledgment of past hostilities.

Islam, in the first century of its expansion (622-732 B.C.), reached into the heart of Christendom, establishing an empire greater than that of Rome. Europe responded with the Crusades, a series of Middle East incursions, from 1096-1291, under the banner of religion. The colonial enter-

prise of the 19th century brought with it renewed Catholic missionary activity. Not until after World War II did respect for Islam receive serious attention in Catholic theology.

Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* officially sanctioned this change in perspective. Of Islam the Council declared that "although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding."<sup>9</sup>

The ensuing dialogue has focused on the common ground between the two world religions: morally, both are opposed to modern atheism and materialism; doctrinally, both believe in the same God, Creator of heaven

and earth; both recognize Jesus as a great prophet, Mary his Mother, and Joseph as Mary's esteemed husband (Isa, Maryam, and Yussuf are common Muslim names); both accept the Virgin Birth of Jesus, his miracles, and his bodily ascension into heaven. Politically, the dialogue has provided both with channels for expressing their views on the status of their minorities throughout the world.

A spectacular impetus was given the dialogue last August when Pope John Paul II accepted an invitation from King Hassan II to visit Morocco.

This was not the first time the pontiff had visited an Islamic country. He had been to Turkey (1979) and Pakistan (1981), and subsequently, he would meet Muslims in Ghana and the Philippines. But Morocco was special, and the King, who bears the title Commander of the Faithful, was the ideal choice in the Pope's quest to improve the Church's relations with Islam. The King had visited the Vatican in 1980 as the head of the Islamic Conference's committee on the status of Jerusalem, and the meeting had led to closer ties with the Vatican.

Addressing a crowd of 80,000 young Muslims, John Paul II stressed the religious and conciliatory nature of his visit. Without minimizing the theological differences between the two faiths, particularly the doctrine of Christ's divinity, the pope highlighted the commonalities of the two faiths. And he emphasized the dangers created by fundamentalism and the mixing of politics and religion. "God," he affirmed, "can never be used towards our ends."<sup>10</sup>

As in the dialogue with Jews, however, Catholic-Muslim encounters are often permeated with politics. The question of Palestine, the status of Jerusalem, these are ever present in any gathering between Catholics and Muslims.

Such was the case during a conference—the first of its kind—on the "The Vatican, Islam, and the Middle East," held in October 1985 at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. The presence of Francis Cardinal Arinze, president of the Vatican's Secretariat for non-Christians, under-

Pope John Paul II talks with Morocco's King Hassan II as they met leaders of the Islamic community upon his arrival in Casablanca in August 1985.



AP/Wide World Photos

# Vatican-Israeli Ties As Seen In The U.S.

Israeli-Holy See relations gained a new dimension as Catholic and Jewish members of the U.S. House of Representatives on November 26, 1984 urged Pope John Paul II to initiate the necessary steps toward establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.<sup>17</sup>

time when disagreements were reported inside the Roman Curia between those favoring the creation of a Palestinian homeland and those preferring closer ties with Israel.<sup>19</sup> The move also came in the wake of a leak to the U.S. media by someone in the State Department.



**Pope John Paul II, escorted by Rome's Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff, enters synagogue on April 13, 1986, marking the first recorded visit by a pope to a synagogue.**

For the 26 concerned American legislators "the exchange of ambassadors between Israel and the Vatican would be a watershed in the history of Jewish-Catholic relations equivalent only to the Second Vatican Council."<sup>18</sup> Very likely the representatives were unaware of the purely religious significance of the Vatican II-issued Declaration on the Jews, and that diplomatic ties between Rome and the Jewish state is a matter of temporal politics that would place the Holy See in an awkward, untenable position in the Arab-Israeli dispute.

The Congressional call came at a

Reportedly, William A. Wilson, U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, had held a behind-doors meeting with a personal associate of Pope John Paul II. In a letter to me, Ambassador Wilson shared his misgivings about the unexpected attention given to the meeting.

Unfortunately this matter is receiving far too much publicity and, in my personal opinion, the publicity which it is receiving and which was recently augmented by a letter to the Holy Father signed by a group of Congressmen may have

the unfortunate effect of even postponing such a decision [to establish relations with Israel].<sup>20</sup>

In the fall of 1985, the issue of Vatican-Israeli relations arose once again, this time as an internal debate inside the Jewish community in the United States. Some believed the time had come for the Vatican to disregard its hesitancy toward establishment of official diplomatic ties. These feelings emerged in a forceful address (November 6, 1985) by Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress.

At a dinner honoring New York's Cardinal O'Connor, Bronfman, addressing the cardinal, asked him to "please convey to Rome the importance to Jews everywhere of normalizing relations between the Vatican and Israel, which is home for so much of Jewish culture and so many of the world's Jews."<sup>21</sup> O'Connor, taken aback by the blunt tone of the American Jewish leader, replied: "The Holy Father is exceedingly sensitive to the question of relations with Israel, and is exceedingly sensitive to the problems of the Palestinians in the Middle East."<sup>22</sup> There were similar decisions from other Jewish quarters within the United States to increase the pressure on some Catholic churchmen to urge the Pope to change his stance toward Israel.

Soon after, the columns of the *New York Times* considered the appropriateness of forcing the Pope's hand at this sensitive stage of Vatican relations with world Jewry and Israel. In a letter to the *New York Times* (December 14, 1985) Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher, founder of the Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University and known for his pro-Israeli sympathies, wrote that "according to Roman view, diplomatic recognition of Israel ought to follow, not antecede peace in the Near East . . . Instead of clamoring for Rome's diplomatic recognition of Israel, all lovers of Zion ought to seek ways to bring understanding and reconciliation to Israel and its neighbors."<sup>23</sup>

George Friedman, chairman of the



affairs. In this specific case, the Vatican statement wanted to emphasize that together with the Jews, who were the direct target of Nazi genocidal plans, there were other populations, such as the Gypsies and the Poles, who were not spared from Hitler's onslaught.

The Catholic hierarchy in the United States defended Pope John Paul II's decision to meet with Yasser Arafat. In a statement issued on September 15, 1982, Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and former president of the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted that those who criticized the Pontiff's meeting with the Palestinian leader "seem to miss the point of the Holy See's and the Pope's interest in the Middle East. . . . Over the years the Holy See has also shown in words and deeds its commitment to the rights and legitimate interests of the Jewish people."<sup>30</sup>

According to the American prelate, John Paul II's concern for the Palestinian people is based "not on political partisanship, but on human compassion and a realistic assessment of the requirements for justice and peace for all the peoples of the Middle East."<sup>31</sup>

Finally Archbishop Roach clarified a point overlooked by many when he suggested that conditions in the Middle East were ripe for some kind of a settlement and that accordingly the Pope had received Arafat "as one who can interpret the views of many Palestinians."

Following the meeting between John Paul II and Arafat, the Holy See issued a press communiqué highlighting the three major principles guiding Vatican attitude toward the Israeli-Palestinian dispute:

1. John Paul II asserted his opposition to acts of terrorism and the use of reprisals, which is in line with the policy followed by the Holy See since the beginning of the conflict.

2. The Palestinians are entitled to a homeland of their own. This represented a new approach adopted by the Pope to grapple courageously with the political implications of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Furthermore, it was consistent with papal

statements, which, since 1973, have stressed the necessity to recognize the Palestinians as, more than refugees, a people with a definite and legitimate right to self-determination.

## The Vatican And The Palestinians

Since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the Holy See has maintained a stand sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinian people, motivated by the Papacy's concern for the fate of Catholics in Palestine and the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees, following the various wars between Arab and Israeli armies.

In the last twenty years sovereign pontiffs have condemned acts of terrorism from all sides and have called for a just and equitable solution to the Arab-Israeli quarrel in the framework of the resolutions adopted at the United Nations.<sup>32</sup>

While recognizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to a homeland, the Holy See believes that "this cannot happen in isolation, but a solution must be constructed with the agreement and cooperation of all the countries involved."<sup>33</sup>

By the end of the 1960's, and following the defeat of Arab armies, the Palestinians reasserted their desire for nationhood through guerrilla warfare and the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).<sup>34</sup> Palestinian guerrilla actions and ensuing Israeli military retaliation became the typical pattern of response which still characterizes the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis.

References to the resurgence of Palestinian nationalism appeared in Paul VI's speeches. By the end of 1975, he had declared that both Palestinians and Israelis had to recognize each other's right to self-determination and nationhood.

His feelings were dramatized in an often-quoted address he gave on December 22, 1975. In it the Pope said:

Even if we are well aware of the

3. The Holy See recognized the *de facto* existence of the Jewish state and its right to secure and defined borders.

tragedies not so long ago which have compelled the Jewish people to seek a secure and protected garrison in a sovereign and independent state of their own, and because we are aware of this, we would like to invite the children of this people to recognize the rights and legitimate aspirations of another people which also have suffered for a long time, the people of Palestine.<sup>35</sup>

Given his focus on the struggle for justice and human dignity, molded by his personal background in Poland, Pope John Paul II adopted a more active and outspoken posture toward the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.<sup>36</sup> The Pope's attitude toward the conflict was highlighted in a controversial speech delivered on October 5, 1980, in Otranto, Italy. In it John Paul II described the situation in the Middle East as being explosive. He then explained his perception of the origins of the dispute between Israelis and Palestinians:

The Jewish people, after [a] tragic experience linked to the extermination of so many sons and daughters, gave life to the State of Israel. At the same time a sad condition was created for the Palestinian people who were in large part excluded from their homeland.<sup>37</sup>

The Pontiff's address was stunning in its frankness. No previous pope had ventured to go so far publicly by linking Israeli responsibility in part for the plight of the Palestinians. Not only was this address the most explicit papal statement regarding the Palestinians, it also symbolized the stand the Holy See had decided to

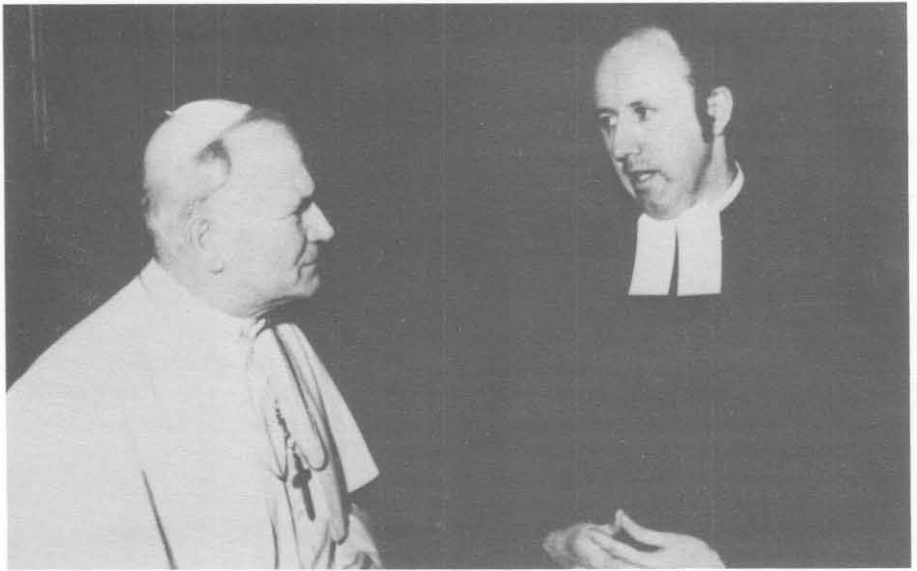
(CNEWA).

On July 16, 1974, Pope Paul VI sent a letter to the agency's president, Msgr. John G. Nolan, in which he dramatized the importance attached by the Holy See to the plight of the Palestinian people. First, the Pope wrote, "the people of the Holy Land," are entitled to the same rights to self-determination as any indigenous population, which represented an implicit rebuttal to the Zionist claim that Palestine was a land without people. Second, the Palestinians, or some among them, are Christians, a fundamental reason for papal attention. Finally, the Palestinians are a people beloved by the Pope because they have been and are still being "so tragically tried"—denoting his constant theme of fostering peace through justice.

Two equally important points also emerged from the Pontiff's letter. By expressing his "support for their legitimate aspirations," he in a sense implied that the Holy See backed efforts for the establishment of a Palestinian homeland. He then explained why the Papacy had to condemn "acts of violent protest" perpetrated by Palestinian commandos, offered in full awareness of the causes that led to such acts of violence.

In 1964, following Pope Paul VI's pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Holy See became aware that immediate action should be taken to stem the decline of Christian communities and to improve the quality of education. As a concrete step, the Holy See's Sacred Congregation for Oriental Churches signed a contract with the Brothers of the Christian Schools (Christian Brothers) to administer Bethlehem University, which opened its doors on October 1, 1973.

In a memorandum prepared for Monsignor Nolan, Archbishop Pio Laghi, then apostolic delegate in Jerusalem and presently apostolic pro-nuncio in Washington, wrote about the necessity and urgency of establishing Bethlehem University. It was, Archbishop Laghi wrote, "Necessary to consolidate the Christian presence in the Holy Land and to show by example that we care not only for stones and shrines but also



Pope John Paul II greets Brother Thomas Scanlan of Bethlehem University.

Bethlehem University

for people and, in particular, the youth."<sup>42</sup>

Together with a few other academic institutions on the West Bank, Bethlehem University has become a center for training the leadership for a possible future Palestinian state. This situation has caused tension with the Israeli military authorities. Brother Thomas Scanlan, vice chancellor of Bethlehem University, expressed his own apprehension about the success of educational establishments in stabilizing the population and increasing its level of education. "As we stabilize the population, we are running against the policies of the present [Israeli] government which would like to increase emigration and make annexation easier."<sup>43</sup>

The universities are in fact the only substantial institutions left on the West Bank, and if "the universities were terminated, the next focus of

pressure," according to Brother Scanlan, "would be on the churches because they are providing many social services, committing the same 'sin' that we are."<sup>44</sup>

The Israeli government's suspicion of Bethlehem University and other Palestinian educational institutions reflects how history can repeat itself in reverse. In 1922, almost twenty years prior to the establishment of the Jewish state, Chaim Weizmann, the prominent Zionist diplomat, met with Cardinal Gasparri, then secretary of state of the Holy See, and explained to the Cardinal the purposes and aims of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. After hearing details of Zionist settler efforts in drainage, afforestation, education, etc., Gasparri looked at his guest and exclaimed in French: "C'est votre université que je crains."<sup>45</sup> (It is your university that I fear.)

## The Vatican And Jerusalem

Vatican policy toward Jerusalem has, in the past fifty years, evolved from one of supremacy to one of fostering ecumenism and interfaith relations.

Throughout history, the Holy See has never wavered in asserting its rights in Jerusalem and the Holy Places. These rights are recognized by

international organizations such as the United Nations, the other Christian churches, Arab and non-Arab Islamic countries, and finally by Israel.<sup>46</sup>

Until 1947, the Papacy promulgated the preeminence of Catholic rights and privileges in the Holy Land over

constant theme since the Lebanese War erupted in 1975: "The Lebanon of 1984 must take up the challenge of moral improvement and the advent of a society faithful to its prestigious heritage of civilization and clear with regard to its future."<sup>52</sup>

The Christians in Lebanon were being asked, at the same time, to maintain the example of Christian-Islamic

coexistence that was in Lebanon before the strife. The Pope, in addressing the bishops about Lebanese Christians, wrote that "the development of Christianity in Lebanon is a condition for the presence of Christian minorities in the Middle East: of this, the Pope and the universal Church are aware."<sup>53</sup>

## The U.S. Catholic Church And The War In Lebanon

The role of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States has greatly aided Holy See policy in Lebanon. During the war, the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) issued several statements related to the Arab-Israeli dispute and the conflict in Lebanon.

One key figure, the late Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York, served as president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) and a member of the Board and Executive Committee of Catholic Relief Services (CRS).<sup>54</sup> Cardinal Cooke had known John Paul II personally and was present at the two papal enclaves of 1978 which elected both John Paul I and John Paul II. These factors, in addition to the late cardinal's friendship with both Presidents Carter and Reagan, facilitated the Holy See's access to the U.S. administration.

Cardinal Cooke visited Lebanon twice, the first time at the invitation of the Maronite Patriarch (December 29, 1979 to January 1, 1980). On the second trip, Cooke spent Christmas 1982 in Lebanon as the Vicar of U.S. military forces. Just the year before, that is in September 1981, Maronite Cardinal Khoradish had visited the United States at the invitation of the NCCB and was welcomed by President Reagan and Cardinal Cooke.<sup>55</sup>

Following the first trip to Lebanon, Cardinal Cooke issued his "Report on Visit to Lebanon," in which he stated that the conflict in Lebanon was not a civil war and that a solution to the strife depended on "finding a homeland for the Palestinians." Cooke also

called for the U.S. administration "to persuade Syria to withdraw its forces" from Lebanon, and "to exert its utmost influence" on the Palestinian forces and Israel, "for a mutual cessation of hostilities in the South of Lebanon."<sup>56</sup> The cardinal seemed to stress what papal envoys had said following their missions in Lebanon—that the Lebanese needed to be freed from external pressures in order "to agree among themselves."<sup>57</sup>

A copy of the unpublished report was given to me by Msgr. John G. Meaney, former regional director of the Pontifical Mission in Lebanon, who felt that the report "had great influence in getting the State Department perspective on the right track. It shaped their policy to a great extent and the policy of Congress."<sup>58</sup>

In fact, the first term Reagan administration abandoned its attitude of considering Lebanon as a "sideshow" and adopted a more active posture toward the country's crisis.<sup>59</sup> Together with the Holy See and Saudi Arabia, the administration tried to find a solution to the Lebanese quagmire.

Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the American Catholic hierarchy made its views known through testimony during July 1982 on U.S. policy on Lebanon and the Middle East. Father J. Bryan Hehir, associate secretary for World Justice and Peace of the U.S. Catholic Conference, spoke before a subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Hehir stressed that Lebanon had become the "theater in which all

the major tensions of the region have been played out."<sup>60</sup> He also offered three reasons to discredit the Israeli government's justification of the invasion of Lebanon.

First, there was the killing of civilians. He stated that "Israel's rationale for the invasion is predicated on defending its civilian population. The same principle should be used to assess its action."<sup>61</sup> Second, Father Hehir defined the Israeli invasion as having "violated reasonable standards of proportionality. The standard was violated not only in the actual military attack, but also in some of the measures adopted during the siege of West Beirut."<sup>62</sup> Third, Hehir criticized the Israeli action because "the invasion of a sovereign state ('even an enfeebled one like Lebanon') needed more justification than has been offered thus far."<sup>63</sup>

Father Hehir also underlined the negative and sometimes disruptive impact of Syria and the PLO. The PLO, he said, had to leave Lebanon because "they are a major part of the problem in Lebanon." Hehir, in addition, called on the Reagan administration to channel its efforts towards achieving the following objectives in Lebanon: (a) withdrawal of all foreign forces; (b) establishment of a strong central government; and (c) rehabilitation of the country.

In the course of his statements, Father Hehir urged the U.S. government to give "assistance to a nation which has always been a stable ally and whose sons and daughters form a significant part of the United States today."<sup>64</sup> He also mentioned the actions taken by the Catholic community in the United States toward relief and other humanitarian efforts in Lebanon.

American Catholic efforts—whether humanitarian or diplomatic—are still very important in relation to Lebanon's stability and welfare. As recently as June of this year, Cardinal O'Connor, on behalf of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, visited Lebanon to show solidarity with that country's Maronite Catholics and to meet with Muslim religious leaders.



constituency of conscience requires a process of disciplined dialogue within and among the religious organizations."<sup>72</sup>

As the 1982 survey of U.S. public opinion regarding the Middle East indicated, Catholics appear to be conscious of the realities of the Middle East conflict. There is still, however, a lot to do in terms of education to awaken the 55-million member community.

Catholics in America can serve as the fundamental element in John Paul II's attempt to find a resolution based on the consolidation of peace through justice. The weight and influence that Catholics in America exert is of crucial importance in the formulation of a fair and balanced resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian and Lebanese dilemma.

## Notes

1. See the full text of the Reagan Plan in Walter Laqueur & Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israeli-Arab Reader* (NY: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 656-63.
2. In this article the terms "Holy See," "Papacy," and "Vatican" will be used interchangeably.
3. Regarding Vatican II and the debates on Christian-Jewish relations, see Arthur Gilbert, *The Vatican Council and the Jews* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1968); Rabbi Emanuel Rose, "Jews and Judaism in Vatican II," Diss. Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, May 1969; on the evolution of the Christian-Jewish dialogue since the Council see Marie-Thérèse Hoch and Bernard Dupuy, compilers, *Les Eglises Devant le Judaïsme: Documents Officiels, 1948-1978* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1980); L. Sestrieri and G. Cereti, compilers, *Le Chiese Cristiane e l'Ebraismo, 1947-1982* (Casale Monferrato: Casa Editrice Marietti, 1983). See also, Eugene J. Fisher, "A New Maturity in Christian-Jewish Dialogue: An Annotated Bibliography 1973-1983," in *Face to Face: An Interreligious Bulletin*, 11 (Spring 1984), pp. 29-63.
4. The full text of *Nostra Aetate* can be found in Walter M. Abbott, S. J., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (Piscataway, NJ: Association Press, New Century Publishers, 1966), pp. 660-68.
5. G. Weller, "The Zionists and the Vatican," in *Middle East International*, January 10, 1986, p. 15.
6. A. Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), p. 493.
7. Statement by Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976.
8. "Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church," cited in "Special Interest Report" of the American Council for Judaism, vol. XVI, no. 8, August 1985, pp. 1-2.
9. On the Christian-Islamic dialogue, see *Christian-Muslim Encounter in the Middle East, MECC Perspectives*, No. 4/5, July/August 1985. Also Pietro Rossano, "Les Grands Documents de l'Eglise au Sujet des Musulmans," *Islamochristiana* (Rome), 8 (1982), pp. 13-23. The full text of the Council's statement on Islam can be found in Walter M. Abbott, S. J., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (Piscataway, NJ: Association Press, New Century Publishers, 1966).
10. *Le Monde*, August 21, 1985, p. 1.
11. On the relationship between the Holy See and the Zionist movement since its inception, see Charlotte Klein, "Vatican and Zionism, 1897-1967," *Christian Attitude on Jews and Judaism*, Nos. 36-37 (June-Aug. 1974), pp. 11-16; Pinchas Lapide, *Three Popes and the Jews* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967); Raphael Patai, ed., *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, 5 vols. (New York and London: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960); Florian Sokolow, *Nahum Sokolow: Life and Legend* (London: Jewish Chronical Publications, 1975); Esther Yolles Feldblum, *The American Catholic Press and the Jewish State, 1917-1959* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1977); Maria Grazia Enardu, *Palestine in Anglo-Vatican Relations, 1936-1939* (Florence, Italy: Cooperative Universitaria Firenze, 1980); Yehoshua Rash, "Herzl, Weizmann, Leurs Papes et Leurs Cardinaux," *Sens*, 12 (December 1983), pp. 283-303.
12. *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 28, 1948.
13. On this subject see Edmund Francis Konzakowski, "Vatican Policy toward the German Oder-Neisse Line: A Study of Foreign Policy Evolution, 1945-1972," Diss. Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1976. The Holy See also has no diplomatic relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
14. Personal interview with Dr. Meir Mendes, former liaison officer between the Israeli Embassy in Rome and the Holy See, Tel-Aviv, May 1, 1983. Dr. Mendes is the author of a book in Hebrew on *The Vatican and Israel* published by the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, The Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem, 1983.
15. *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, the French Greek-Catholic journal published by the White Fathers in Jerusalem gives regular account of tensions between some Israeli groups and local Christian communities.
16. *New York Times*, June 25, 1985, p. A4.
17. *New York Times*, November 26, 1984.
18. Liz S. Armstrong, "Catholic, Jewish House Members Urge Vatican to Recognize Israel," *NC News*, November 26, 1984.
19. *New York Times*, October 22, 1984.
20. Personal communication, December 12, 1984.
21. Joseph Berger, "Jewish Leader Asks Cardinal to Seek Vatican-Israel Links," *New York Times*, November 7, 1985.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *New York Times*, December 14, 1985.
24. *New York Times*, December 30, 1985.
25. Monsignor Oesterreicher has kindly accepted to share a copy of his letter with me.
26. Personal interview with Vatican official, June 13, 1983.
27. *Le Monde*, September 17, 1982.
28. *Origins*, Vol. 12, No. 15 (September 23, 1982), p. 240.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Origins*, Vol. 12, No. 15 (September 30, 1982), p. 245.
31. *Ibid.*
32. See for instance Paul VI's speech in welcoming President Sadat, *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, Tome XXVI, 1976, pp. 132-44. Speech delivered by Paul VI in welcoming Moshe Dayan, *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, XXVII, 1977, p. 341; and the speech Paul VI delivered during the visit of King Hussein of Jordan, *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 30, 1978.
33. *The Pilot*, May 6, 1983, p. 4.
34. For further details on the Palestinians and the PLO, see Hatem I. Husseini, *The Palestine Problem: An Annotated Bibliography* (Washington, DC: Palestine Information Office, 1980); William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosley Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973).
35. *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 23, 1975.
36. See Joseph L. Ryan, S. J., "Palestinian Rights: Resonances in the Life and Themes of Pope John Paul II," prepared for the Fifth United Nations Seminar on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, March 15-19, 1982. (Mimeographed.)
37. *The Washington Post*, October 6, 1980.
38. "Israeli Settlements on the West Bank of the Jordan," *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., November 10, 1977.
39. *Holy Land*, Vol. VI, No. 1, Spring 1986, p. 31.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
41. From a pamphlet distributed by CNEWA's office in New York. Also personal interview with Brother Joe Lowenstein, responsible for the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, Jerusalem, April 25, 1983; and Msgr. John G. Meaney, regional director of the Pontifical Mission for the Near East, Jall-Eddib, May 27, 1983.
42. Memorandum prepared by the Apostolic Delegate for Monsignor Nolan,

nearing the last of these dispensations. He saw no hope for our world. It will end "in disaster, in ruin, in the great, final world-catastrophe." But, he insisted, born-again Christians should welcome such a catastrophe because once the final battle begins, Christ will lift them up into the clouds. They will be saved. They will be raptured. They will endure none of the torment below.

Of course, people are free to follow the religious tradition they choose. But it is important to reflect on the implications for all of us when such beliefs enter into political decision-making. James Watt, former Interior Secretary and a dispensationalist, indicated to a U.S. House of Representatives Committee that he did not worry much about the destruction of the earth's resources because, "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns."

And what about the dispensationalists who believe that only a nuclear holocaust can bring Christ back to earth? In a sermon preached on September 2, 1985, dispensationalist Jimmy Swaggart proclaimed:

I wish I could say we will have peace. I believe Armageddon is coming . . . It is going to be fought in the valley of Megiddo. It's coming. They can sign all the peace treaties they want. They won't do any good. There are dark days coming . . . It's going to get worse . . . I'm not planning on going through the hell that is coming. The Lord will descend from heaven with a shout. My Lord! I'm happy about it! He's coming again . . . It thrills my soul!

The implications for all of us are most frightening if such thinking seriously affects our political decision-making. How much commitment to any peace process could there be? How serious would any efforts to avert nuclear war be?

There is another dimension of this book that is also very important. The dispensationalist teaching involves a very particular theological perspective on Israel. How this teaching

enters into U.S. political decision-making has profound implications for policies for the Middle East. It also forces the reader to look more closely at what has happened there and what is being planned for that area. Perhaps this book will awaken large numbers of people in the United States to the importance of getting to

know more about the complexities and ramifications of Arab-Jewish questions. This in itself makes the book very valuable.

I hope it gets wide readership.

*Thomas J. Gumbleton serves as Auxiliary Bishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, MI.*

## In Memoriam

*[Excerpts from tribute delivered by Rev. Arthur Whitman, pastor of the Universalist Church in Auburn, Maine.]*

While Americans of late have had their minds focused on men of war, I invite you to think about a man of peace.

Peter Kilburn was such a man: quiet, unassuming, young in spirit even though he walked with a cane in his later years. He was 61.

Peter's professional concern was books. The acquisition of books and periodicals, the cataloguing and organization of books by title, author and subject, the circulation of books to those who needed them, and the cleaning and protection of rare books.

I came to know Peter at the American University of Beirut where he was Acquisitions Librarian, a massive job maintaining the currency of a library used by scholars from all over the world, particularly by Middle Eastern scholars and the University's 4,500 students and faculty. A.U.B. is a research institute working on the cutting edge of new ideas. It houses 334,500 volumes and 4,850 periodicals in its main Jaffet Memorial Library, the new Medical

School library, the Engineering and Architecture library, and the library for the Agricultural Sciences.

Peter was convinced, as indeed I and many others are, that this century-long investment in education is our most powerful instrument for peace—one worth risking your life for. On April 18 of this year, Peter Kilburn, kidnapped since December 3, 1984, was executed by his captors in reprisal for the American raid on Libya.

Peter gave his life for you and me so that we might even at this late date begin to address the root causes of our conflict with the peoples of the Middle East, those who have been made pariahs in our society, namely, the Palestinians, who have been driven from their homes over and over again, and the Shi'ites of South Lebanon, who have had their land invaded and their families destroyed.

Peter Kilburn's family will not be interviewed on the evening news, because like Peter himself they strongly oppose America's bellicose policy in the Middle East. The only appropriate memorial to Peter is the re-examination of our own thinking and our public policy towards people whom we appear intent on making our enemies.

## Books To Order

### New Selections

□ Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on a Path to Nuclear War*, Lawrence Hill and Company, 1986, 256 pp., \$14.95. An investigative journalist explores the close relationship between prominent "televangelists" and Israeli ultra-nationalists. The author's extensive research includes notes from two tours to

the Holy Land organized by Reverend Jerry Falwell. Our price, \$8.95. See review, page 14.

□ Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers*, Chosen Books, 1984, 224 pp., \$9.95. Father Chacour, a Palestinian priest known for his social work in the Galilee, tells the story of his search for conciliation between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. A native



of Biram, a Christian Galilean village deliberately destroyed by the Israeli army on Christmas Day, 1951, Chacour grew up in Israeli apartheid society. His story reveals much about the concerns of the Palestinian Christians as they struggle for survival within a society designed to destroy their community, aware that the rest of the Christian world community regards them, if at all, with indifference and even hostility. Our price, \$4.95.

Dewey Beegle, *Prophecy and Prediction*, Pryor Pettengill, 274 pp., \$5.95 (paperback). Refutes the biblical claim of Zionists to the Promised Land by discussing what the Bible teaches about prophecy, especially concerning the predictions of events which already have occurred and those which are to come. Our price, \$4.50.

Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?*, Lion Publishing, 1983, 253 pp., \$7.95.

Outlines the conflicting claims to the Holy Land from the time of the Bible on. Discusses the relevance of biblical promises to the modern age. Our price, \$4.95.

Y. Haddad, B. Haines, and E. Findly, eds., *The Islamic Impact*, Syracuse University Press, 1984, 264 pp., \$12.95. Ten noted authors analyze the manner in which Muslims in the past have attempted to nurture, synthesize and implement the prescriptions of their faith in fashioning their world, and current efforts to recapture the impetus and dynamism of Islam to create a new Islamic civilization. Informative texts on Islamic music, law, mysticism and other subjects are neither esoteric nor opaquely technical. Our price, \$7.00.

Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*, New York: Random House, 1982, 432 pp., \$6.95. A Middle East specialist for the *London Times* puts

Islamic politics in the context of historical, regional and cultural experience. A well-organized, readable background on a complex subject. Includes excellent chapters on Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Our price, \$3.50.

John Sabini, *Islam: A Primer*, Middle East Editorial Associates, 1983, 127 pp., \$7.50. A clear and concise account of the religion and civilization of Islam for the general reader with an interest in the Muslim world. Our price, \$4.50.

Regina Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism*, Zed Press, London, 1983, 144 pp., \$9.95. Two centuries before Herzl the Protestant revolution generated the belief that a Jewish return to Zion would expedite the Second Coming of Christ. That belief continues among certain fundamentalists, and the author attributes the axiomatic support of Israel in the West today to this theological foundation as much as to Jewish lobbying and diplomacy. Our price, \$5.50.

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December 26, 1972. For a full text of Paul VI's letter to Monsignor Nolan, see *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, Vol. XII (Vatican City: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1974), pp. 682-83.

43. Personal interview.

44. Personal interview.

45. See Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 286.

46. Regarding the Holy See and the issue of Jerusalem, see the article published by Pietro Pastorelli, "La Santa Sede e il Problema di Gerusalemme," *Storia e Politica*, Fasc. 1 (1982), pp. 57-58. This document is considered as expressing the semi-official stand of the Holy See. J. D. Montois, *Le Vatican et le Problème des Lieux Saints* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1984); see also Silvio Ferrari, "Il Vaticano e la Questione di Gerusalemme nel carteggio Spellman-Truman," *Storia Contemporanea*, 13, No. 2 (April 1982), pp. 285-319. This article is part of an ongoing joint Italian-Israeli research on the Vatican and the Middle East, 1920-1976. Also, Anna Beccali, "Gerusalemme e la Posizione della Santa Sede," *Il Politico*, a. xxx/x (March 1974); Bernardin Collin, *Rome, Jérusalem, et les Lieux Saints* (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1981).

47. *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 30, 1984, English Weekly Edition, p. 6.

48. See Eugene J. Fisher, "The Pope and Israel," *Commonweal* (January 11, 1985), pp. 16-17.

49. *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 1984, p. 7.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition, May 14, 1984, pp. 10-11.

52. *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 14, 1984, p. 11.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

54. For a biography on the late Cardinal Cooke, see *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Weekly Edition, October 10, 1983, pp. 2, 16.

55. *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, XXXI, 1981, pp. 287-88.

56. Terence Cardinal Cooke, "Report on Visit to Lebanon," December 29, 1979 to January 3, 1980, p. 9. (Mimeographed.)

57. *Ibid.*

58. Personal interview, Jall-Eddib, May 1983.

59. For further details on the debate inside the Reagan administration regarding the Lebanon policy, see Michael G. Fry, "United States Policy in the Middle East: Lebanon and the Palestinian Question," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 7, No. 1 (Winter 1985), pp. 27-35.

60. The complete text of Father Hehir's testimony can be found in *Origins*, Vol. 12, No. 9, July 29, 1982, pp. 131-34.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

65. For further details see Rev. Joseph L.

Ryan, S. J., "Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East: A Catholic Perspective," in Basheer K. Nijim, ed., *American Church Politics and the Middle East* (Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc., 1982), pp. 99-108.

66. Among the several documents that U.S. bishops issued regarding the Middle East, the following should be mentioned: (1) November 13, 1973 statement "Towards Peace in the East" and "The Structure of the Question" by Rev. J. Bryan Hehir; (2) September 3, 1975 statement by Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin, president of the U.S. Catholic Conference on "Israel and the U.N."; (3) November 11, 1975 statement by Archbishop Bernardin "On U.N. Vote on Zionism"; (4) January 23, 1976 statement by Archbishop Bernardin on "Lebanon and the Middle East"; (5) August 15, 1978 statement by Archbishop John R. Quinn on "The Crisis in Lebanon"; (6) October 31, 1978 state-

ment of Archbishop Quinn on Lebanon; (7) November 16, 1978 statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on "The Pursuit of Peace with Justice." 67. The text of the statement is reproduced in Robin Madrid, ed., *Statements and Position Papers of Major American Organizations on Middle East Peace* (Washington, DC: Middle East Associates, February 1985), pp. 44-47.

68. *Ibid.*

69. United States Catholic Conference, *Middle East Issues: Statements by Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin, President, National Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976), p. 7.

70. See Madrid, op. cit., p. 46.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

72. Father Bryan Hehir, "Ethics and Foreign Policy: Creating a Constituency," Roanoke College, Salem, VA. (Mimeographed.)

## Book Views

**Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on a Path to Nuclear War**  
*By Grace Halsell*  
*Lawrence Hill and Company, 1986,*  
*256 pp., \$14.95.*

**Reviewed by Thomas J. Gumbleton**

*Prophecy and Politics* is a book that everyone should read. Its subtitle, *Militant Evangelists on a Path to Nuclear War*, indicates the serious nature of the situation Grace Halsell has chosen to report about in her latest book. Her reporting, as always, is thorough. She has traveled extensively, researched carefully, and interviewed a long list of knowledgeable people in order to search out the truth. She also writes in a good reporter's style. Reading the text is easy and enjoyable—until you begin to ponder carefully the implications of her report.

There are perhaps 40 million evangelical fundamentalists in the United States. Their belief system centers around the biblical land of Zion and the modern state of Israel, which they equate as one and the same. The belief system itself is known as dispensationalism. It is a

system that seems to have developed out of the writings of a 19th-century Irishman, John Nelson Darby, a priest in the Church of England. It began to be spread in the United States about 150 years ago, largely through the efforts of Cyrus Ingerson Scofield.

At the present time most of the major TV evangelists preach this belief system. One of the most popular such preachers is Hal Lindsey. It is his belief that this Planet Earth will very likely, in our lifetime, become the late great Planet Earth. According to Lindsey, God knows it will happen. He knew it from the beginning. But God kept His plan secret from all the billions of people who lived before us. But now God has revealed His plan to the current preachers of dispensationalism, who preach what has come to be called an Armageddon theology.

According to this theology, we must pass through seven time periods, or dispensations—one of which includes the terrible battle of Armageddon, where new and totally destructive nuclear weapons will be unleashed and blood will flow like mighty rivers.

Scofield believed that we were

# The U.S. Catholic Church And The Middle East

The Catholic Church in the United States has for a long time expressed its concern toward the Middle East.

In the last fifteen years, the U.S. Catholic Church has faithfully and frequently reflected the policy and statements issued by the Roman pontiffs. Moreover, following the decline of European power in the Middle East, the American Catholic Church, now 55 million members strong, has become a fundamental pillar for Vatican diplomacy in the Levant.<sup>65</sup>

Several documents produced by U.S. bishops have appeared on the Middle East.<sup>66</sup> The fundamental thrust of their statements regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict evolved around the following principles:

1. The rights of Israel: to exist as a sovereign state within secure and recognized boundaries;
2. The rights of the Palestinian Arabs: to participate in negotiations affecting their destiny, and to a homeland of their own;
3. Compensation: just compensation should be provided for all parties concerned, of whatever national origin, deprived of home and property by the three decades of the conflict;
4. The status of Jerusalem: recognition of its unique religious significance which should be preserved through an international guarantee of access to the Holy Places, and through the preservation of a religiously pluralist citizenry;
5. U.N. Resolution 242: its continuing utility as a basis for a just settlement in the region.<sup>67</sup>

Palestinians have always been critical of U.N. Resolution 242 because it spoke of them only as

"refugees" and not as a "people" with inalienable rights. At first U.S. bishops, out of concern for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians driven from their homes, also spoke of them as refugees; in 1978, however, the bishops dropped the word "refugees" from their statement and instead focused on the rights of the Palestinians as a "people."

Another evolution pertained to the element of compensation. In 1973, the U.S. bishops called both on Israel and the "international community responsible for the 1948 partition plan" to compensate the Palestinians for past losses. In their 1978 statement, the bishops considered Palestinians and Israelis as both entitled to just compensation.

According to the American bishops, the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had to be based on U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, the recognition of Palestinian rights and Palestinians' explicit acceptance "of the right of Israel to exist in the Middle East as a sovereign state within secure boundaries."<sup>68</sup>

In his capacity as President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, in 1976, called on the United States government to take two specific actions: "first to set an example of disinterested and constructive diplomacy in the Middle East; and second, to explicitly take the position that the Palestinians be included as partners in future negotiations about the Middle East."<sup>69</sup>

Unlike the Vatican, which has always refrained from advancing technical solutions to the Arab-Israeli dispute, the Catholic hierarchy in the United States has exercised a free hand to unambiguously express what the United States should do in order to resolve the conflict. In a statement in 1978, the U.S. bishops indicated that, for example, the Camp David

Accords between Egypt and Israel "have an intrinsic value which ought to be praised and supported."<sup>70</sup> However, there were limitations which needed to be "acknowledged and amended." According to the bishops, the Camp David Accords had limitations both in the scope and terms of the agreement. Two limitations singled out were the status of Jerusalem and the fate of the Palestinians.

Finally, the bishops expressed their belief that the involvement of several parties was needed in order to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East. The international community, the United Nations, regional actors, and Middle Eastern religious communities, were all called to support "the movement for peace with justice for all the peoples of the region."<sup>71</sup>

The Catholic hierarchy in the United States, in conclusion, is sometimes vulnerable to the pressures exerted by American Jewish organizations. Given the strength they enjoy in the American political process, Jewish groups have used all the means at their disposal to court American Catholics.

The sympathy that some in the Catholic hierarchy profess towards Judaism and Israel is reflected in the presence of a Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C. The Secretariat's purpose is to deepen the understanding between Jews and Catholics on religious matters. For the sake of balance, a similar secretariat should deal with issues related to Eastern Christian communities and the relations with Muslims. Creation of such a body is warranted by the increasing influence of Islamic communities in the United States and the increasing migration of Middle Eastern Christians.

In an address delivered in June 1978, Father Bryan Hehir, forementioned associate secretary for International Justice and Peace at the U.S. Catholic Conference, stated that U.S. religious organizations should attempt to "build a constituency of conscience within the wider political process . . . The cultivation of a



those of other religious denominations. Then the Balfour Declaration, with its promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, became a major concern. The Vatican anxiously wondered about the impact of such an eventuality on Catholic influence in Palestine.

From 1967 onward the Holy See, bearing in mind the shift in the majority of U.N. membership toward the non-Catholic Third World, as well as changes brought by Israeli occupation of the Old City, reassessed its policy toward Jerusalem and the Holy Places. Dropping its call for an international regime for Jerusalem, the Papacy opted instead to call for a special status with international guarantees.

The evolution of Vatican policy toward Jerusalem can be subdivided into five stages:

Stage one, characterized by the championing of the supremacy of Catholic rights and privileges (Benedict XV, Pius XI);

Stage two, the U.N. plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem and free access to the Holy Places for pilgrims (Pius XII);

Stage three, distinguished by its spiritual emphasis on three basic points: (1) a special status for both Jerusalem and the Holy Places, guaranteed by an international body, (2) a safeguard for the civil and religious rights of all religious communities, and (3) a recognition of the equality of all three major monotheistic religions (Paul VI and John Paul II);

Stage four, marked by the Holy See's willingness to accept national sovereignty subject to international supervision.

The latest stage came to light in Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Redemptionis Anno* (April 20, 1984).<sup>47</sup> The letter reiterated the Holy See's official position on Jerusalem, already enunciated in Pope Paul VI's exhortation *Nobis in Animo* (1974) and in an article published by *L'Osservatore Romano* (1980).

Fundamentally, the Pontiff had taken the Catholic position a step fur-

ther by suggesting that Jerusalem, with its various communities, should become the fulcrum of a possible resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.<sup>48</sup> The City of Peace thus would represent the unifying and pacifying religious element between Arabs and Israelis—Christians, Muslims and Jews. Lack of effort in arriving at a satisfactory solution to the status of Jerusalem would, according to the article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, "only compromise further the longed-for peaceful and just settlement of the crisis of the whole Middle East."<sup>49</sup>

*Redemptionis Anno* could be con-

sidered as the most elaborate position yet adopted by the Holy See regarding the question of Jerusalem. To the juridical status of the city and civil and religious rights of the communities living in Jerusalem, John Paul II added the sensitive political dimension. The Pontiff acknowledged the right of Israel to secure borders and the right of the Palestinians to a homeland and called on "all the peoples of the Middle East" to discover "again the true sense of their history" in order to "overcome the tragic events in which they are involved."<sup>50</sup>

## The Vatican And The Conflict In Lebanon

Since the beginning of the Lebanese war in 1975, the Vatican has followed a policy based on advocating the territorial integrity of Lebanon and the preservation of the Lebanese formula of coexistence with the required amendments.

In addresses and written statements, both Paul VI and John Paul II underlined their total support for the legitimate authorities represented by the President of the Republic. Maintaining that the Lebanese alone were capable of solving their problems, the Holy See expressed its willingness to use its influence with friendly governments to defuse the bloodshed.

The war in Lebanon represented a challenge to Holy See diplomacy, prompting it to deal with three inter-related levels of feuds: inter-Christian, inter-Lebanese and Lebanese-Palestinian.

While other powers trying to mediate a solution actually faced the same challenge, the Papacy's problem was compounded by the deep misunderstanding that developed between the Holy See and the Christian Maronite community.

The Maronites, or more precisely some influential Maronite politicians and clergymen, did not share the

Papacy's equidistant and conciliatory attitude in the clash between Lebanese and Palestinian nationalisms. From the Maronite perspective, Rome did not seem to undertake necessary steps to soothe the fears of Christian minorities in the Levant so that the Maronites could pursue a dialogue with their Muslim counterparts.

In effect, the Maronites in Lebanon thought that they could count on the total and unswerving support of the Holy See in their struggle against the Palestinians and their Muslim allies. It is however the welfare of all Christians in the Middle East which dictates the Holy See's approach to Lebanese Christians.

In the spring of 1984, Pope John Paul II issued three letters relating to the conflict in Lebanon: the first directed to the Maronite Patriarch; the second to the Lebanese; and the third an Apostolic Letter to All the Bishops of the Catholic Church.<sup>51</sup> The last document for the first time addressed Catholic bishops on a subject not related to doctrinal or disciplinary matters, but which dealt with a country—Lebanon, and the cause it represents.

John Paul II repeated the Holy See's

adopt in light of the increasing militance and expansionist policies of the Israeli government in the Occupied Territories after 1967. *L'Osservatore Romano* had in fact published on November 10, 1977, an article critical of the Israeli settlement policy on Palestinian occupied lands.

The article stated:

it is clear to everyone that a massive Jewish presence in the occupied territories would make it impossible to realize their return to the Arabs. As regards the West Bank the introduction of Jewish population radically upsets the plans that are being made to set up there a "Palestinian homeland"—whatever form this "homeland" may take—in order to solve the Palestinian problem, which has

now become the most complex and at the same time fundamental difficulty in the whole tangle of the Middle East crisis.<sup>38</sup>

The plans mentioned by *L'Osservatore Romano* were those agreed upon in the Camp David Agreements (1978) between Egypt and Israel under the supervision of the United States. In fact, the Holy See adopted a position not too different from that of the Carter administration as regards to the future status of the West Bank and Gaza. Even if the Papacy remains faithful to its stated policy of not offering "technical solutions" to the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, it nevertheless keeps the door open to support a possible involvement of Jordan in deciding the fate of the Occupied Territories.

## The Vatican And Middle East Catholics

Depending on the societies in which they live, Middle Eastern Christians differ in their relations and attitudes toward both Judaism and Islam. This situation results in conflicting Chris-

tian attitudes toward political problems erupting from the war between Arabs and Israelis.

One illustration is the hostile attitude toward Arabism and Islam—

**Pope Paul VI praying in the Holy Land during his historic pilgrimage in 1964**



Bethlehem University

partly provoked by Palestinian activism in Lebanese politics—among some elements in the Christian community in Lebanon. On the other hand, Palestinian Christians, because of their minority status and their opposition to the Israeli authorities, experience reinforced identification as Arabs and thus feel more deeply rooted in the Arab and Islamic nation.

Another important problem facing the Papacy is the ever-increasing migration of Christians from the Holy Land. In a recent interview, Archbishop Lutfi Laham, patriarchal vicar of the Greek Catholic Patriarchate of Jerusalem, noted that since 1975 the number of Greek Catholics living in Jerusalem has dropped by 12 percent.<sup>39</sup>

The migratory trend is caused by the scarcity of jobs, housing problems and the cost of living. Furthermore, Jewish extremist groups have on several occasions attacked churches and Christian bookshops. Today, 125,000 Christians live in Israel against 3.5 million Jews and 1.5 million Muslims.<sup>40</sup>

With the decrease in the number of Christians came the realization that Rome could not pretend to have a say in matters related to the fate of Catholic communities and institutions in the Holy Land. In order to stop the migration of Middle Eastern Christians, the Vatican established several institutions. Two major institutions, the Pontifical Mission and Bethlehem University, were created by the Holy See to oversee relief and educational initiatives in the Holy Land.

The Pontifical Mission, founded in 1949 by Pope Pius XII, assists Palestinian refugees through the provision of goods and services for educational, cultural, religious and humanitarian needs. It predated efforts of the United Nations Relief Work Agency (UNRWA).

While main offices of the Pontifical Mission are in New York, its regional offices operate in Beirut, Jerusalem and Amman, with a liaison office in Rome. The agency is closely associated with the Holy Father's Mission Aid to the Eastern Churches,<sup>41</sup> affiliated with the U.S.-based Catholic Near East Welfare Association

political science department of Dickinson College, did not agree with Monsignor Oesterreicher's assessment. In reply, Friedman accused the Vatican of being anti-Semitic, because it had set higher standards for Israel in order to receive diplomatic recognition. Friedman wrote that "the nature of anti-Semitism is that it maintains a separate and unattainable set of standards for Jews. This double standard allows anti-Semites to demand things from Jews that they expect from no one else."<sup>24</sup>

Monsignor Oesterreicher reacted to Friedman's claims in an unpublished letter to the *New York Times*, in which he wrote:

I wonder whether in writing that last phrase Professor Friedman

## Yasser Arafat And Pope John Paul II

On September 15, 1982, John Paul II met with Yasser Arafat. The audience was justified on the grounds that Arafat was a prominent personality and could say yes or no to any decision related to his people's fate.<sup>26</sup> The Pope was also influenced by several events related to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

During a 1982 summit in Fez (Morocco), Arab heads of state, together with Arafat, approved a resolution which implicitly recognized the existence of Israel. This marked the first time that an Arab gathering had accepted the reality of the Jewish state. The Fez Declaration in a sense answered diplomatic initiatives taken at the international level, such as the European Community's Venice Declaration (June 13, 1980), which stressed the importance of PLO participation in any settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.<sup>27</sup>

For some Israelis directly involved in the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, the announcement of the meeting between the Pope and Arafat came as a shock. An unnamed Israeli official,

forgot that at the time when Pope Paul received Golda Meir and again when Pope John Paul II received Shimon Peres, the two prime ministers of Israel were met by Vatican officials as heads of a legitimately established government? Some may ask, "If this is so, why does the Holy See not take a further step to give the State full diplomatic recognition? Were the Holy See to contemplate such a step, would it have to recognize Israel within its pre-1967 frontiers or together with the administered territories? Or would the recognition have to be contingent on the acceptance of U.N. Resolution 242, not only by Israel, but also by its Arab neighbors?"<sup>25</sup>

who some believed to be Prime Minister Begin, expressed his outrage in these words:

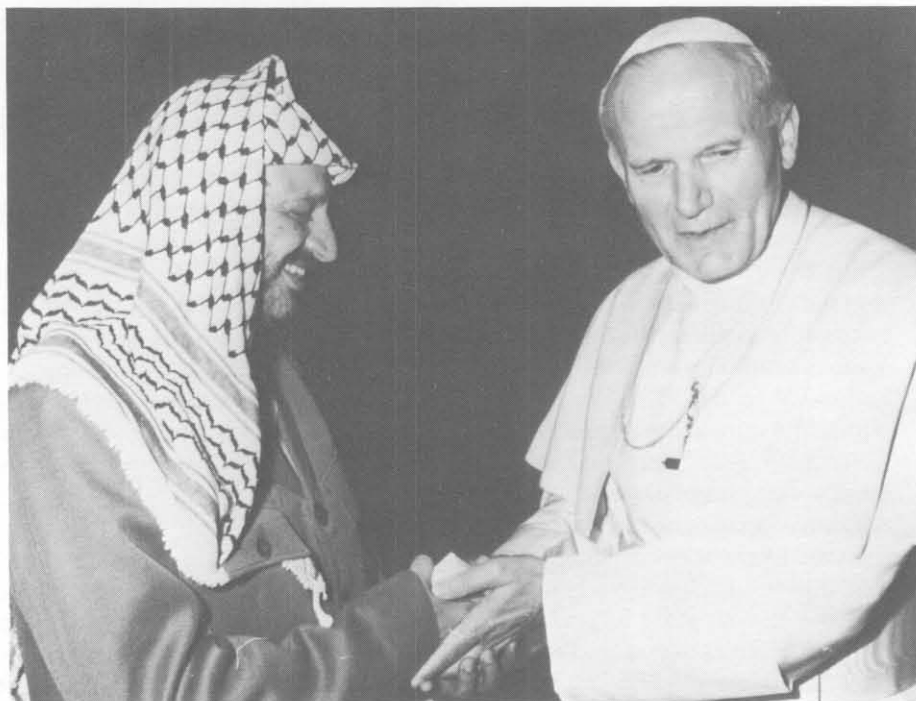
The Church, which did not say a word about the massacre of the

Jews for six years in Europe and has not had much to say about the killing of Christians for seven years in Lebanon, is now ready to meet a man who committed the killings in Lebanon and who wants the destruction of Israel in order to complete the work carried out by the Nazis in Germany . . . If this man [John Paul II] meets with Arafat, it is indicative of a certain moral standard.<sup>28</sup>

This statement synthesized the contentious nature of the relationship between the Holy See, Judaism and the state of Israel. In the eyes of the Israeli government, the legitimization of the Palestinian leader was total anathema.

In replying to the contemptuous words used toward the Pontiff, a Vatican communiqué revealed that the Israeli official's statement showed "little regard for the person of a pope in regard to whom one cannot overlook what he has said on numerous occasions, and particularly during his visit to Auschwitz, to condemn and denounce the genocide of the Nazis against the Jewish people [and not only against them]."<sup>29</sup>

The last sentence clearly demonstrated how John Paul II's Polish origins affect his views toward world



Pope John Paul II with Yasser Arafat during September 1982 meeting



scored the importance the Papacy accorded the event.

Several papers were read at the conference. Professors James Bill and John Alden Williams drew an interesting parallel between Roman Catholicism and Shi'ite Islam. Other papers covered the various aspects of Vatican diplomacy in the Middle East, the status of Eastern Christian communities, and the impact of Islamic revivalism on Christian-Muslim relations.

The Saudi delegation, led by a personal advisor to the Saudi monarch, complained that Catholics failed to appreciate the fact that Muslims recognize Jesus as a great prophet.

The Arab-Islamic delegation underlined the negative treatment that both Arabs and Islam receive in the Western media, while nothing is said of Israel's "aggressive" policies in the Middle East.

A lay participant, Dr. Edward Hazbun, an American Catholic born

in Bethlehem, complained that, while the Vatican's position on the Palestinians was quite correct, this message had not reached down to the parish level.

Gradually, however, the Catholic-Muslim dialogue is taking place on the diocesan level. In Los Angeles, for example, the Archdiocesan Commission of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs has established a productive relationship with Muslim scholars and laymen. In September 1983, the two groups jointly issued a document on the significance of marriage in Islam and Roman Catholicism. The document and an illustrative videotape were widely acclaimed. And in late 1985 Muslim representatives met with Cardinal O'Connor in New York to establish an official Catholic-Muslim dialogue. The first meeting resulted in the decision to read and discuss each other's holy books: the Koran and the Bible.

avoids establishing diplomatic relations with states that lack definitive and recognized borders (e.g., the Holy See's position regarding the Oder-Neisse border between Germany and Poland<sup>13</sup>); (b) the reluctance of the Holy See to recognize states in controversial and changing situations, which is the case of Israel today; and (c) the substantial loss, since the Middle Ages, of the Pope's temporal authority with the result that today the pontiff has to take into account "the global view and undoubtedly the views of the Christian churches in the Arab countries [Maronite, Copt, etc.]."<sup>14</sup>

Finally, another problem exists in relation to establishment of official diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel. As with all other countries having diplomatic ties, the Holy See requires guarantees regarding the regulation of Catholic teaching and presence in Israel proper. The Christian presence in Israel is not viewed positively by some Orthodox Jews, who are concerned about the threat of possible Christian missionary activities.<sup>15</sup>

The most recent Vatican rejection of a temporal link between the Jewish people and the state of Israel came in a 12-page statement, issued June 1985, marking the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II's declaration on Judaism. While Christians are invited to understand the religious attachment of Jews to the state of Israel, noted the statement, "the existence of the state of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is itself religious but in their reference to the common principles of international law."<sup>16</sup>

While the Vatican may be handicapped by its historical stand towards Judaism and by the absence of diplomatic relations with Israel, it has the major advantage of being in permanent contact with all the parties involved in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Moreover, the prestige and influence enjoyed by the Holy See in international institutions such as the United Nations clearly motivate Israeli leaders to pay close attention to the positions taken.

## The Vatican And The State Of Israel

Since the early days of the Zionist movement, with its stated aim to establish a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, reaction by the Holy See has been mostly negative.<sup>11</sup> Of central concern was the fate of the Holy Places as well as Catholic presence and interests in the Holy Land. Following the proclamation of the State of Israel (May 14, 1948), *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Holy See's daily newspaper, commented that "Zionism is not the embodiment of Israel as it is described in the Bible. Zionism is a contemporary phenomenon which undergirds the modern state [of Israel], which is philosophically and politically secular. The Holy Land and the Holy Places as they are form part and parcel of Christendom."<sup>12</sup>

Since then has come an evolutionary attitude toward Israel, characterized by a mixture of theological presuppositions and political prag-

matism. Following the 1967 Middle East War, when the Holy Places of Christianity fell under Israeli control, the Holy See opted for informal talks with the Israeli government in order to work out a *modus vivendi* regarding the status of Catholic interests in Palestine.

Despite its readiness to acknowledge the Jewish state as a political entity, the Holy See has yet to establish official diplomatic ties with Israel. Current reasons used by the Holy See to explain the absence of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state are: (1) the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982; (2) the Jewish settlements on the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; (3) the fate of the Palestinians; and (4) the status of Jerusalem and the Holy Places.

Other motivations often mentioned include: (a) the fact that the Holy See

## About This Issue

Why has the Vatican never officially recognized the state of Israel?

Why did Pope John Paul II agree to meet with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat?

Why, according to a February 1985 poll, do 81 percent of U.S. Catholics support an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza?

In December 1980 the *Link* surveyed the Middle East position of 40 major Protestant denominations, which make up the National Council of Churches; and in a November 1983 issue we looked at the Middle East perspective held by most Christian dispensationalists. In this issue, Dr. George Irani examines the Middle East viewpoint of the Catholic Church, the largest Christian denomination with a membership worldwide of 800 million, including 55 million Americans, or 27 percent of the U.S. population.

The question of religion and politics has assumed special relevance over the past decade, particularly in regard to U.S.-Middle East relations. Our book selection, *Prophecy and Politics* by Grace Halsell, is reviewed on page 14 by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton. A.M.E.U. has obtained advance copies of this book, available only to *Link* readers. For details on ordering this and other books at substantial discount prices, see page 15.

Regular subscribers to *The Link* will note that we have reduced the number of books that usually appear in the Books to Order section in order to reprint on page 15 a tribute to Peter Kilburn, an American custodian of books, who gave his life in the Middle East.

Our October/November issue of *The Link* will offer a critical examination of the "Strategic Asset" thesis of the U.S.-Israeli relationship.

John F. Mahoney,  
Executive Director

## The Vatican And Judaism

A turning point in the Catholic Church's attitude towards Judaism occurred in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Debates during the Council centered on, among other issues, clearing Christian teachings of anti-Semitic remnants and establishing a frank dialogue between the Catholic Church and Judaism.<sup>3</sup>

The basic attitude of the Church toward Judaism emerged in the Council's Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*), issued on October 28, 1965.<sup>4</sup> The declaration stated that responsibility for the death of Christ cannot be "blamed upon all Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today," and it went on to deplore "the hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source."

Jewish observers at the Council charged that, in order to placate conservatives in the Curia and bishops from Arab lands, the Council Fathers had rejected the original draft, which had formed a separate document dealing exclusively with the Jews, and had inserted a much watered down version in the document dealing with non-Christians in general. Zionist Jews specifically complained that the Council failed to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism and failed to acknowledge the historical and religious significance of the state of Israel.

Arab, and particularly Palestinian, Catholics emerged from the Council apprehensive as well. They feared that Zionists would use Vatican II to deflect criticism of Israeli policies, ultimately leading to official Vatican recognition of the Jewish state. They knew that the Zionist delegation from North America had won the sympathy of Cardinal Bea, head of the Secretariat that drafted *Nostra Aetate*, and had taken an active role in its for-

mulation.<sup>5</sup> Their fears were only heightened when Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, then director of the Synagogue Council of America, returned from the Council insisting to U.S. Catholic leaders that Vatican II's repudiation of anti-Semitism did, in fact, encompass anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli criticism.<sup>6</sup>

Israel's 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, effectively quadrupling the land under its control, caused the Vatican to clarify its position. Far from equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, the Vatican supported a resolution at the United Nations Habitat Conference in 1976, which denounced racism as "defined in U.N. Resolutions," a reference that included the U.N. Resolution calling Zionism a form of racism. (Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, then president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called the U.N. resolution unjust, charging that it opened the door "to discrimination and denial of basic rights to members of the Jewish community throughout the world."<sup>7</sup>)

And, last year, on the twentieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican reaffirmed its rejection of anti-Semitism and the charge of collective guilt for the death of Christ, but refused to grant theological import to the Jewish state. A Jewish umbrella group—the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, whose members are the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Israeli Interfaith Committee, the World Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee and Synagogue Council of America—sharply criticized the Vatican for issuing new guidelines which failed to "acknowledge the religious significance of the state of Israel to the Jewish people," and which refer "only briefly and superficially to the Holocaust."<sup>8</sup>