

JEWISH - CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

CONFERENCE REPORT

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE MIDDLE EAST

A CONSULTATION BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches meeting in Canterbury in August 1969 recommended in a statement regarding the Middle East, among other things, that "the subject of biblical interpretation be studied in order to avoid the misuse of the Bible in support of partisan views and to clarify the bearing of faith upon critical political questions". To follow up this recommendation a WCC Consultation was held in Cartigny (near Geneva) from 21 to 25 January 1974 devoted to the subject "Biblical Interpretation and its bearing on Christian attitudes regarding the situation in the Middle East". In these 4½ years between the Canterbury Statement and the Cartigny Consultation a process of reflection was engaged in: a questionnaire containing seventeen questions was prepared to stimulate a diversity of study groups in various countries to study the many problems involved. The answers to the questionnaire were analysed by Professor Johan Bouman of the University of Marburg, who wrote a background paper for the Cartigny Consultation. A critique on this background paper was written by Professor André Scrima in Beirut. Other preparation for this consultation included a conference between Lebanese Christians and theologians from the west, at Broumana near Beirut in September 1974 and a series of discussions between the Chairman of the Cartigny Consultation, Dr. Lukas Vischer, Director of the Department of Faith and Order of the WCC, and Jewish scholars and spiritual leaders in Jerusalem as well as Arab Christians in Israel and the administered territories. The meetings were also attended by a number of Western Christians, among them the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, George Appleton. This Jerusalem Pre-Consultation grew out of an initiative of members of the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, who felt that an important dimension had been left out in the preparations for the Cartigny Consultation; namely, listening to what Jews had to say about the theme. In the questionnaire which had been circulated, questions about Jewish identity, the link between the Jewish People and the Land, the significance of Jerusalem, etc. figured prominently, and in a time in which the World Council of Churches laid so much emphasis on the need for dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, it seemed inconceivable that Jews should not have been asked how they themselves considered these

questions which are of such paramount importance to them. Dr. Lukas Vischer responded to the invitation of the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, and spent — together with local Christians — two days of intensive listening to what Jews had to say about the three sub-themes which would be discussed in Cartigny, namely: 1. the relation of the Old and New Testament; 2. the Promise of the Land; 3. the biblical concept of justice in relation to the present conflict. To each of these subjects a session was devoted, with different groups of three to five Jewish scholars and spiritual leaders. In addition, a session was held with Arab Christians, since this was a suitable occasion for Arab Christians in Israel and the administered territories to express their views on the theme. In this section of *Immanuel* devoted to "Jewish-Christian relations" we present an extensive report of the discussions with Jewish scholars, which were a very significant instance of genuine Christian listening to Jewish self-expression and, especially in the third session (about justice), of a real dialogue between Jews and Arab Christians. The session with Arab Christians was very interesting, but not sufficiently focussed to be suitable for publication. However, some of their views are expressed in the third session about justice.

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SESSION I. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Invited Jewish discussion partners: Mr. Shalom Ben-Chorin (publicist, author of books on Jesus and Paul and on Jewish-Christian relations), Professor David Flusser (Professor of Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University), Dr. Pinchas Lapide (teacher at the American College, Jerusalem and Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan), Professor Shmuel Safrai (Professor of Jewish History, Hebrew University) and Dr. Michael Stone (lecturer of Judaism of the Hellenistic period, Hebrew University).

Dr. Lukas Vischer: Among Christians the evaluation of the relationship between Old and New Testament is that of basically different approaches. The existence and acceptance of the N. T. as a criterion for interpreting the O. T. seems to imply that we are not taking entirely seriously the self-understanding of the Jewish people. To what extent do Jewish scholars feel that we speak of the same book when Jews and Christians refer to the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible? An important underlying consideration is that it is crucial to avoid projections on to other people. A Christian understanding of the Jewish people can easily become either negative or positive without doing justice to the self-understanding, but rather making the Jewish people a factor within a Christian understanding. We want to come as close as possible to a living relationship, where the other is not an object of understanding but a counterpart in life.

Mr. Shalom Ben-Chorin: Basically we read the same book. The Hebrew Bible remains the common ground of Jews and Christians, and we

should work together for a better understanding of this common ground. Why do Christian seminaries not use Jewish commentaries on the Bible to come to a closer understanding? Similarly, Jews should be willing to learn from Christian scholarship and its insights.

The barrier towards a common understanding arises from a certain *Vorverständnis* (prior understanding). We do not read the Bible as a new book, but already have some ideas about what we think is written there.

In addition to the literal meaning of their scriptures, both Christians and Jews recognise three dimensions of time in their respective faiths. For Christians, Jesus is (a) the historical Jesus of Nazareth who lived some two thousand years ago in this land, (b) present today in his Church through his word and the sacraments, (c) the 'coming one' in the eschatological, messianic outlook. He was, and is, and is to come. Jews must be granted the same understanding of the Bible which is (a) the record of what happened thousands of years ago, (b) the key to understanding of their real existence and identity in this land today as the people of this book, (c) an eschatological and messianic looking forward to what is to come in the latter days. If we can accept that both communities have this three-dimensional understanding in addition to the scientific understanding, perhaps we can come to a better understanding of each other.

Dr. Pinchas Lapide: There are four possibilities regarding the nexus between Old and New Testament. Either (a) Jesus is the Jewish Messiah foretold in the Hebrew Bible, and his advent is almost a normal event in *Heilsgeschichte*; this makes for a continuum between the O. T. and the early Christians — it is the thesis of early Jewish-Christian groups like the Ebionites and the Nazarenes; or (b) Jesus is the culmination of Judaism, which he supersedes, the Jewish task being at end and post-biblical Jews a theological anachronism, and the Church being the 'new Israel' — this is the thesis of Matthew's Gospel and of the Epistle to the Hebrews; or (c) Jesus is the antithesis of Judaism, as stated in John's Gospel, leading to a total rupture and subsequent unfair interpretation of the O. T. as allegorical and the N. T. as literal, and ultimately to diabolisation of the Jewish people, culminating in Auschwitz; or (d) there is a position which speaks of the unrevoked covenant (*der ungekündigte Bund*) and the 'split' people of God (*das gespaltene Gottesvolk*), i. e. both communities form the people of God.

The new covenant described in Jer. 31:31-40 is comprehensive and eternal; it also describes the physical rebuilding of Jerusalem. But this is a new covenant with Israel and Judah; it has no new contracting parties, no new content and no new promises. God's covenant has been ratified some twelve times (with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, etc.) but it remains one covenant constantly renewed, with earlier provisions always reconfirmed though possibly extended. The gifts of God are beyond repentance. There is no

room for Christian arrogance, since the root bears the branches and not vice versa. The Gentiles who believe in Christ can become part of the 'Israel of God' but there is no such thing as a 'new Israel'. Romans chapter 11 deals with that section of Israel according to the flesh which does not believe in Christ: this unbelief is a mystery, but Paul is certain that *all* Israel will be saved. And the nature of this salvation is expressed in the immediately following words, "the Redeemer will come from Zion". Israel's Messiah is still a future hope. Israel is still God's chosen people, according to Paul and to the Synoptic Gospels. Full salvation is not yet, neither for Jews nor for Christians, and both are living in a pre-messianic dispensation.

There are five stages in the Jewish relation to the Testament. (a) It was written by Jews as a testimony of Jewish faith. (b) During a period of complete Church dominance the N. T. was ignored or outlawed in Jewish circles. (c) Disputations were forced by Christians upon Jews, aimed at glorifying the N. T. at the expense of the Old; this led to the N. T. being studied by Jews and translated into Hebrew for polemical purposes. (d) With the birth of Protestant Bible scholarship, scientific interest arose, with apologetic overtones of proving how Jewish Jesus was and how un-Jewish were those who preached, prayed and worked in his name. (e) After the creation of the State of Israel, interest developed in reading the N. T. as a source for the study of first century Judaism, and as outstanding source material for Jewish traditions. The N. T. is a book written by and of Jews, and partly for Jews, who feel a five-fold continuity, not of theology or halakhah, but of hope, eschatology and ethos and of faith and suffering.

Jews and Christians are linked by three inseparable bonds: our Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8) are common — our beginnings identical and our end hope identical; between these extremes we diverge, but here the third bond, the Judeo-Christian ethos, serves to guide us on our way between these two.

Regarding the salvific significance of O. T. key events, salvation history is still unfinished and continues today. If the Exodus from Egypt is a milestone of *Heilsgeschichte*, why is not that from Auschwitz another; if the return from Babylon is a milestone, why should this return not be one; if Joshua's conquest was a precondition for the building of the Temple, the creation of a Jewish Palestine and ultimately for the birth of Jesus, why should not this rebirth of the state be a prerequisite for the *parousia*? Jesus's environment was totally Jewish, and why should his second coming not be in a Jewish setting? Jerusalem is mentioned many times in connection with salvation history; Rome and Geneva are not!

Dr. Vischer: History undoubtedly has significance for our life of faith, and the possibility of the parallels suggested by Dr. Lapidé cannot be denied, but the whole question is necessarily ambiguous. What is it that makes us able to claim an event as an act of God? The suggested parallelism looks

like a plea for acceptance of present events as significant and inevitable and not subject to dispute.

Dr. Lapide: The plea is simply that an open mind should be preserved regarding the possibility that the next stage of salvation history *might* be taking place in the classic locus where it has taken place for so long. No Jew would claim that such events *only* take place here.

Professor David Flusser: It is a disturbing thing that many Christians regard the Bible merely as a historical document and part of the past, and have therefore felt it necessary to develop a new non-biblical theology based on the sociology of today. Many Christians fear that if they do not adapt their message to non-religious categories their numbers will decrease. On the contrary, there is a widespread thirst for an authentic Christian message and a Christian answer to what happens in the world, which is reflected in the rise of pentecostal and fundamentalist groups. The essential thing is to try to understand the real message which is contained in Old and New Testaments, and to get near to the teachings of the early Church, which had a firm hold on a truth based on historical events. A return to teaching of the basic historical facts of the faith is far more urgently needed than elaborate preaching. The danger of non-biblical theology is that it leads to an abstract Christ who has nothing to do with the historical Christ.

For an understanding of the New Testament, it is better for Christians to use a version of the Bible in which the apocryphal books are included. Both Judaism and Christianity understand the O. T. in the light of the first century B. C. and the first century A. D. Both see the O. T. through a later and purified form of Judaism, and it is necessary to know how the Bible was understood in the time of Jesus; some parts of the text were then no longer of practical significance to Jews. Christians will often use as prayers Psalms in which man refers to himself as righteous and deserving, which is surely not a Christian sentiment; but it should be kept in mind that since the first century no Jewish prayer would suggest that God should give a man anything because of his own merit.

How can the Bible be interpreted for our days? This is a great question for both Jews and Christians. For non-fundamentalist Christians it is impossible to accept the Bible exactly as it is written for today. On the Jewish side, Buber has described Judaism as a room containing many objects from which a man may choose those he likes. For example, the killing of Agag by Samuel (1 Sam. 15:33) is a horrible story which it is difficult to accept today, and in fact even the most orthodox Jews disregard many passages of the Hebrew Bible and stress others, and have done so for many years; the concept of holy war is never stressed in rabbinic literature, only possession of the Land. Because of the progress of Judaism, such disagreeable aspects were dropped. Here Christians can learn from Jews, who adhere to a truth based on history without becoming fundamentalist.

Jews believe in their Bible, but most do not regard the prophecies as a timetable for God. The prophecy of Jonah was nullified by the repentance of Nineveh. The demythologising of the prophets was a great achievement of Second Temple Judaism and was accepted by Jesus, but Christianity began as an apocalyptic sect and even today some Protestant extremists are happy that there has thus far been no settlement on the Syrian front since Gog and Magog's attack is prophesied as coming from the north (Ez. 38:15).

There is a tendency within Christianity towards a non-biblical tension between Christians and Jews, which will finally not be profitable for Christians. This is often combined with prejudices in the understanding of the Jewish nature of the N. T. and of the N. T. itself. In particular, the modern theological approach can, because of its non-historical interpretation, cause an anti-Jewish emphasis such as that indicated by the sub-headings used in the New English Bible text of Mark. Such apparently minor indications ultimately endanger the Jews. A prominent leader has said, "To be a good Christian, you have to kill the Jew in your heart"; does this not mean that the Jew to be killed is Jesus Christ?

What are the possibilities for a good Jewish/Christian understanding? It must not be based on an inferiority complex on the part of Christians, who have (or should have) their own very important merits in their theological and ethical position. But there is a tendency to emphasise the majesty of the resurrected Lord and to regard the historical person of Jesus as unimportant. Christians have to learn from Jews to adhere to God's command, which is both old and new, and it is possible to create a real understanding when Christianity is more 'Christian', i. e. more biblical. The strange new departure from basic Christian values must lead to opposition to the 'root of the tree' and can easily be combined with anti-Jewish elements.

Both Testaments speak of the salvation of the Gentile believers, but also about the children of Israel, with their present situation and their future hope which is connected with a special land. The fact of the (albeit reluctant) return in modern times poses a great question. The death of Jesus did not finish the Jewish people or abrogate the covenant, and all the N. T. writers would protest against such a suggestion. Tertullian said, regarding the story of Jesus, "*Credo quia ineptum*" (i. e. "I believe it because it is foolish"); no-one would invent such a story as that of Jesus, which indicates that it is true, and the same applies to the return of the sons of Israel to the Land, which is also an *ineptum*. Jews very much wanted to assimilate into other societies and to regard the return to Jerusalem as a fairy-tale, but the return has actually happened and this is part of the scheme of redemption as described in the O. T. It is not contradicted in the N. T. and may even be hinted at there. Jerome wrote that because things broken cannot be restored he could not believe in the return of Israel, and yet "we cannot con-

demn it because many of the Church men and many martyrs have said it" (*"damnare non possumus quia multi ecclesiarum virorum et martyres ita dixerunt"*¹).

Professor Shmuel Safrai said that he had, as a student, bought and read a copy of the New Testament in Hebrew and had immediately felt at home with it as a part of his own tradition, except for the story of the trial of Jesus which he still found entirely implausible. The N. T., like the classical Jewish literature of the period, is a commentary which tried to understand and make relevant to the daily life of the time what was written in the Hebrew Bible, which was regarded as the Word of God showing people how to live and behave. None of the N. T. figures are prophets, since by that time prophecy had ceased, they simply apply to their own days what was already written, and in some cases fulfil it.

Although it may sometimes appear that Jews and Christians are not reading the same book when they read the Hebrew Bible, in fact they are.

Dr. Michael Stone: There are degrees of scholarly interchange on biblical topics. In such fields as grammar and philology the exchange is free, but as soon as one approaches matters of interpretation ways begin to diverge. There are many Christian 'theologies of the Old Testament' aimed at tracing the development of theological thought but very few such works by Jewish authors, which indicates a difference of approach. The term "salvation history" is a good example of Jewish thinkers taking advantage of instruments prepared by Christian O. T. scholars.

One cannot use theology to predict what will happen next, and many questions about whether present events mean this or that simply cannot be decided. We have no way of knowing whether the rebirth of Israel marks the footsteps of the Messiah, though the options should be left open, but the assertions made by certain Christian groups that Jerusalem is devoid of theological significance are strange.

It should be borne in mind that all streams of Judaism contain the basic concept of the Oral Law, which represents the dimension of living interpretation and exegesis of the Bible, as an integral part of the revelation. Here lies the reason why Judaism never became fundamentalistic.

The extreme pro-Israel view of some Protestant Christians is foreign to Judaism, not because of its eschatology, but because Jewish self-understanding is not apocalyptic and thus the basic stance is different.

¹ Hieronymus, In Ieremiam Prophetam, IV (ad Jer. 19:10, 11),

SESSION II. THE PROMISE OF THE LAND

Invited Jewish discussion partners: Professor Moshe Greenberg (Professor of Bible at the Hebrew University), Rabbi Adin Steinsalz (Rabbi in Jerusalem and editor of a new edition of the Talmud), Professor Uriel Tal (Professor of Modern Jewish History, Tel Aviv University).

Dr. Vischer: What is the nature of the promise, what does it mean within history? To what extent are promises conditional, to what extent can they be counted upon? What is the relationship between the promise and the act of faith and obedience? What is meant by the promise of the Land; what does it imply; how does one make the transition from possession of the Land to the acceptance of the State? Exactly which land is meant? What is the relation between the promise given and the need of peace among men; to what extent can the fulfilment of a promise become a cause of strife and division?

Professor Moshe Greenberg: Biblical prophecy makes the salvation of the Jews and of men at large a matter of God's action. It regards the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel as a primary aspect of the salvation not only of Israel but of mankind, and so the fulfilment of the promise of the return to the Land is the result of God's initiative. This has from earliest times caused Jews to debate the question of man's part in the fulfilment of these prophecies. Since the prophets themselves do not assign any initiative to man, the question was asked, "What part, if any, does man — specifically the Jew — have to play in the fulfilment of the prophecies of salvation, particularly that of return to the Land?" There are two classical views represented in the Talmud and constantly repeated in exegesis of relevant passages, notably second Isaiah. (a) The Jews have only a passive role in their salvation, which includes the return to the Land, i. e. they must wait on the act of God and return to the Land under a God-sent leadership which will indicate in supernatural ways its divine origin. (b) Jews have an active role in their salvation to the extent at least of living in accord with the will of God so as to merit the intervention of God in history.

The passive view maintains that the moral state of the world on the eve of salvation is so much a matter of indifference that salvation will come at the nadir of morality and there is nothing in man's work that will have a decisive role in the salvation when it comes. The other view says that salvation will come when the Jews deserve it; this is usually in terms of doing works in accord with the will of God which will enable them to merit salvation. There was always a tendency among thinkers to go further and to maintain that it is not only a matter of meritorious living, but that Jews ought also to move physically and begin the return to the Holy Land, even if it is under foreign domination with its resulting hardships to Jews, and

this is a part of the good works that will lead to the salvation coming about. This 'activist' position was a minority view.

These two views were the mainsprings of Jewish behaviour towards the fulfilment of the promises until modern times, the majority being passivists or non-active activists, i. e. they did not go beyond meritorious living in their current location. The result was that great numbers of Jews have always remained outside the Land of Israel, waiting. This non-active view led to the possibility and the actuality of the great destruction of a large part of the Jewish people, and it is a very common opinion among Jews today that in a way they are partly themselves to blame for that catastrophe, for which their passivity was one of the causes. That conclusion has led, even among the religious, to the almost universal adoption of an activist position with regard to the promises, i. e. that God's action must be supported or triggered by the action of the Jews themselves with respect to the Land of Israel. The position of many religious Jews today is that the biblical prophecies regarding the Land must at least be acted on anticipatorily.

Finally, some personal reflections. The actions that men take, that Jews take, with respect to the fulfilment of the prophecies are always human, and will remain so, and it does not seem possible to endow these actions with divinity and to say that actions taken by men are taken as agents of God. Actions undertaken by men with the best intentions must remain under the judgment of being human actions. If they are crowned with success then they may perhaps be viewed in retrospect as having been under the aegis and blessing and with the help of God. But the question then arises of how to define success. How can it be measured so that one may infer a divine blessing for what one does? For Jews, success must be defined basically in terms of the Torah. If the endeavour succeeds in terms of the moral quality of the community, the goals of the community laid down in the Torah, the relation of the community to outsiders living in its midst — if these matters are disposed in accord with the Torah, in accord with the will of God as we understand it, then we may be allowed to define the human endeavour as having succeeded in Jewish terms. If the endeavour of the Jews in this country is crowned with success defined in terms of the Torah, only then will an inference be allowable that this work of man is indeed the beginning of the deliverance or the salvation.

Rabbi Adin Steinsalz, who defined himself as 'a committed Jew with an inclination towards theology', pointed out that the definition of 'religious' or non-religious Jew is made according to the orthodox view, with which many people do not agree. His own position might be defined as orthodox but does not represent any particular theological school; he can only speak for himself, since for many years no individual group has had the authority to lay down a generally binding view. For one who does not regard himself

as a Zionist, even though an Israeli patriot, the equating of Zionism with Judaism is basically mistaken. There are many good Israeli patriots who are not Zionists; there are also many religious Zionists, and many religious Jews who are indifferent to Zionism. Although there is no one person who can lay down theological views which are binding to the whole community, there are nevertheless certain more or less accepted theological views which have gradually achieved a consensus over a period of years and are ultimately as binding as the rulings of the official court when it existed. Kabbalah has increasingly become the unofficially accepted theology of the Jewish people. This process is somehow parallel to 'ijma' in Islam, which is a basic common understanding not yet binding but more or less regarded as the accepted way.

The question of the role of merit in the fulfilment of the promise is theologically complicated. The basic idea is that there are two kinds of redemption for the Jewish people; one may come according to merit, the other must come in any case to fulfil the promise without any connection with merit. The phrase *be'ita achishena* ("In its time I will hasten it" — Is. 60:22) is taken to mean that the Messiah will come anyway, but on the other hand we might by merit bring him earlier. In this sense every Jew was an 'activist', although not always with the same stress on the attempt to hasten the Messiah by good works, prayer and kabbalistic learning. The connection between this kind of activism and coming back to the Land of Israel is very slight, if it exists at all.

One of the problems in Jewish law is the disputation between Maimonides and Nachmanides as to whether there is a positive commandment in the Torah for Jews to come and settle in the Land of Israel. One view held that there is no positive commandment for the individual to come, while the other maintained that this is one of the basic commandments; on the other hand, everybody agreed that there is merit in living in the Land and fulfilling those commandments which relate specifically to it. Of the 613 mitzvot, about two-thirds are connected in some way with the Land, which means that a Jew living elsewhere can fulfil only a small part of Jewishness; a greater part can be fulfilled by living in the Land in any circumstances and a still greater proportion when it is a Jewish Land, complete with rebuilt Temple, to which so many of the commandments relate. Therefore, while there is undoubtedly merit in living here, the question remains as to whether there is an obligation to come here.

In the last hundred years a related problem has arisen in connection with various references in the Talmud to the question of whether it is permitted for the Jewish people to take any political stand as a body and come to the Land of Israel. Some people are sure there should be no such political movement, and this point of view prevented many orthodox Jews in Europe from coming, and caused their opposition to political Zionism as being against

the Law, even though they were keen on individual settlement and development. Orthodox Zionist leaders, struggling with these concepts, tried to show that according to the Talmud God had sworn (1) that the Gentile should not harm the Jew too much; and (2) that the Jews were not to return to Eretz Israel by their own will; and that since the first oath had not been fulfilled, the second one must be broken. This problem still arises among orthodox anti-Zionists today. In their view, *being* here is good, *coming* here is somewhat doubtful, and organising to come here as a political group is more doubtful still.

The *de facto* position of Jews in the State of Israel regarding the question of whether the State is the beginning of the redemption is very similar to that expressed by Maimonides. The coming of the Messiah is not a simple matter. He is regarded as human in every aspect, but Maimonides writes that he will be as great a prophet as Moses, wise as Solomon, etc. On the other hand, in a section devoted to the coming of the Messiah he states (and thereby gives the definite halakhic ruling) that when a Jewish leader arises who will bring back the people of Israel to the Land, enforce the Law of the Torah in the country and fight the wars of the Lord, then possibly he is the Messiah; if he is successful in this, and rebuilds the Temple and brings most of the Jews back to the Land he is certainly the Messiah, i. e. his *de facto* success proves who he is.

The problem of the Jewish State: for those people not committed to a strong Zionist view, it is not regarded as a first step to redemption, but the State of Israel as it is now simply contains a possibility of fulfilling the promise because it contains some, though not all, of the elements that make the promise true. If it would be a Jewish State instead of a State of Jews, then the idea that this is a part of redemption will be much stronger and most orthodox people would support it. Zionism is one answer to the problem of antisemitism. The State is now debating with itself how Jewish it is and trying to find out if we want to make it a fulfilment of the promise or a political answer to a political problem. What is the nature of the State and the people? The existence of a State of Israel is not essential in any way to the world view of redemption that comes of having the Jewish people living in this country. The discussion regarding settlement beyond the 'green line' (the pre-June 1967 borders) is a question of safety and not a religious problem, since the commandment to live in the Holy Land is not connected at present with the question of who governs the Land. If it can develop under any government into a fulfilment of the promise, this is one way, but political fulfilment is not part of the fulfilment of that stage of the promise.

Professor Uriel Tal: It seems essential that if Christians want to understand Jewish self-understanding, the right method is that of hermeneutics.

During the last years, both Catholics and Protestants have developed methodologies that modernised the triple pattern of traditional hermeneutics: (a) *subtilitas intelligendi* (das Verstehen); (b) *subtilitas explicandi* (das Auslegen); (c) *subtilitas applicandi* (das Anwenden).

In romantic trends, such as in Schleiermacher's teachings, the first two forms of hermeneutics tend to fuse, while in pietistic trends the last form, the applicative form, became dominant. Today these traditions have been renewed through a fruitful confrontation with modern epistemological forms of analysis such as philology and semantics, existential types of *Situationsanalyse*, models of *juristische Hermeneutik* and theological approaches to human phenomena.

As a result questions such as the normative authority of the Bible for both Man-as-an-individual and Man-as-a-citizen, or the feeling of temporal and conceptual remoteness from the Bible due to the modernisation of Man as compared with the historicity of the Bible, are discussed with a fair amount of objectivity. Moreover, a hermeneutic approach helps those who wish to explore their own self-understanding to separate essential forms of faith from temporary implications and situations. Confessional differences, doubts as to the binding authority or the existential relevance of the Bible for modern man, the need for a transposition of biblical motifs into present time and context -- all these issues become more understandable. The hermeneutic approach differentiates between essence and existence, lasting aspects of faith and temporary aspects of socio-political conditions.

Unfortunately, when Christian theologians wish to explore the Jewish self-understanding or the varieties of Jewish approaches to questions such as the binding authority of the Bible, the normative meaning of the Land promises, the literal or symbolic meaning of the Bible, the end of post-biblical tradition, etc., this very hermeneutical method is never applied. A study of the reports of the WCC in progressive areas of concern such as Development Education; Technology, Faith and Man; Human Rights; Social Justice; Prayer; Politics makes it evident that parallel experience and living traditions in Judaism are simply disregarded.

A fair and correct approach should be one looking for the first basic assumptions. The basis from which Israel's political reality emerges is often forgotten and people jump immediately to the political reality itself but rarely deal with the underlying hermeneutical structures, and it is never asked how exactly in Jewish understanding the Bible is related to today and to what extent its use or 'misuse' is based on a different hermeneutical approach. The rhythm of time is different among Jews, especially Zionists, compared with western modes of thought. What happened some hundred years ago is historically remote but biblical events are experienced as almost contemporary. Instead of considering the need for transposition of the Bible into the present, the situation has been -- starting with pre-Zionists -- reversed, and the

present is transformed into biblical language and associations. Biblical geography is contemporary, with the danger of metaphysical meaning being given to geographical places. The method should be one that starts with the hermeneutical problem.

Beginning with the first pre-Zionist dreamers in the mid-19th century, the Return has had a certain mystique attached to it, which has emerged from extremist neo-mystic schools of thought. The writings of Alkalai, Kalisher and of Shmuel Chaim Landau of the religious labour movement are examples of this; the philosophy of the non-religious labour movement is articulated in religious terms; and an analysis of the writings of ex-President Shazar would reveal a lot of mystical terminology and sanctification of political realities.

There are two patterns of inter-relationship, one representing a mystical approach and therefore creating a situation in which political reality is sanctified and metaphysical meaning is bestowed on the Land and the State; this is a danger reminiscent of the most dangerous 'myth of the twentieth century'. The second, more realistic approach, is the halakhic or the non-observant yet still biblical way.

We are torn between two poles; without having received the Land from God our being here would be meaningless; but interpreting the ownership of the Land in terms of having received it from God creates a great danger of bestowing mystical importance or value to the State. The fact is that there is no clear answer and one makes no sense without the other. According to the mystical approach, Zion is the counterpoint of *galut* (exile), but not simply in the political sense. The exile to which Zionism wants to be an answer is a situation of crisis embracing the whole cosmos. This total crisis of creation came about through the act of creation because creation is the shrinking of eternity into time and of infinity into limited space and into something relative; the undivided wholeness was divided into separated beings. So exile is a metaphysical process reflected in political reality. Fullness exiled itself into creation, into its own diaspora, and the particular exile of the Jewish people is only a reflection of this universal exile, of the crisis into which the universe has fallen. The Jewish people was chosen to fulfil the commandments, to suffer, to reflect in its own exile this cosmic crisis, and therefore the mystique is relevant today and the Yom Kippur War had an impact in returning people to their Jewishness. The vocation of the Jew is to dedicate his existence, works, joys, sorrows to the restoration of the cosmic state of original fullness. This is where religious Zionism comes in: the return to the Land in fulfilment of the promise is a reflection of the return to the original fullness. However, the biblical promises never define the same borders, and many young people (as did Nachmanides in his day) choose the widest ones, thus abusing the idea of the promise, which is related to the Land and not to the State. Fulfilment of promise is seen

in a mystical light different from the idea of fulfilment in Christ expressed in Christianity. It is connected with the restoration of the cosmic state of original fullness which may be furthered by living in the Land, but not necessarily so, as the majority of mystical Jews do not intend to make *aliyah*. The motif has been used by the founding fathers, and the religious kibbutz movement is the most authentic manifestation.

The rational approach, as laid down by Rabbis Reines and Landau, again faces the same problem that unless it is understood in metaphysical terms our being here does not make sense. A halakhic view is aware of the danger of mystification; this approach says that Judaism intends to relate the realm of the spirit to every aspect of reality and hence by definition statehood cannot be devoid of religious significance. Religion and society cannot be separated, though religion and State perhaps could. The commandment to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28) continues by requiring man to have dominion over all the earth, and State therefore cannot be separated from Torah. *Avodah* means labour, work, but it also means worship, sacrifice, service, prayer and sanctification, so labour and bestowing form on matter is an integral part of the existence of matter. On the other hand, this metaphysical significance of reality has dangerous totalitarian implications in giving metaphysical significance to daily life and to politics. This is a great problem, and we cannot expect one answer, or perhaps even any answer at all. We are called to live with this problem and not to solve it by total sanctification or total separation.

It is too early to analyse the present situation, but it seems that what happened in October and is continuing today has made for a more sober, more sophisticated return to the pre-Six Day War situation. The temptation of power is obvious and has been a problem to Christianity throughout its history. The people of Israel are different from others (though not better) and since 1967 to a great extent they assimilated to the failure of the western world in wrestling with this temptation of power. If there is any religious meaning to what happened, if revelation continues, then it must be to remind us of our being different. The vocation of working towards the completion of the metaphysical crisis is part of the Jewish vocation and this is a reminder of the mistake or sin committed after the Six Day War including the arrogance of power. A growing number of religious people realise that the last six years were years of upheaval and arrogance and it is important to make the young people aware of the great chance given now to learn from historical reality a theological or religious lesson.

Dr. Vischer: A distinction has been made by the Jewish speakers between the promise of the Land and the necessity of the State. On the one hand, the State cannot be entirely separated from the promise, but on the other as soon as one claims ownership of the Land the danger of power

arises. In the complete fulfilment of the promise there is a relativisation of the State. How does one translate such a statement of the dilemma into political reality, because it is one thing to state the dilemma at the level of personal faith, but if it could become political reality this could be of immense significance. What about the deep and full meaning of (a) exile and (b) return, and to what extent can a Christian be involved? An exponent of 'black theology' has said that he can finally never be free while one man is not free. Is the return similarly an advantage to the whole world, and if so could this also be translated into political terms?

Prof. Tal: Many mistakes have been and are being made, but nevertheless essentially something of this universalist or cosmic approach is translated into human — if not into political — reality. This is indicated, e. g. in the official educational programme for soldiers. A recent weekly portion included Gen. 32:7, "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed", and the interpretation taught was that of Rashi which says that Jacob was *afraid* that he would be killed by Esau and *distressed* lest he should have to kill others. The fact that it is being taught admittedly does not mean that it is being applied, but there is an honest effort to translate the teaching into reality, and if it does not work this is because people are human and weak and are tempted by power. There is no glorification of war, nor is there any joy or satisfaction derived from fighting. The prophecy of Is. 19:24, "In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth" has become a slogan taught as an honest attempt to convert into present-day reality. It is difficult to maintain a benevolent feeling if you are surrounded and you may at any time hear that your son has fallen into the hands of an enemy, and to try to maintain the attitude represented in the verse about Jacob's fear and distress is a great strain and harder and harder to do from day to day, but the effort is still being made.

Rabbi Steinsalz: Jews are trying to work out laws for the State as a Jewish state, because statehood grew out of the people and was not a formally organised thing. Post-biblical halakhic literature deals largely with kings but not with a State. We are pressed in so many ways that there is not enough time for such learning. Muslim and Jewish religious scholars deplore the little influence of religion in the state. If the Muslim kept his religious law, a Jew could contemplate being a subject in an Arab State because of the laws regulating treatment of Jews, but these states are not Islamic and the idea of Arab armies coming here is a subject for dread. Israelis are trying to learn what they can do together as a people and as a State which they try to give a Jewish face. The Prayer Book says that Jews are *chosen* to be *servants of God*, and to divide the verse is to mutilate it. When this is applied to the State, the State should be as good as possible;

but there has never yet been one year when this could be properly considered by the government or political bodies, to do things which are morally justified but are simply at present not practical. We are trying to establish a State which is armed but not militaristic, and to be able to speak about ourselves without being chauvinistic.

Prof. Greenberg: Particularly difficult is the position of the rabbi, whose teaching is a check, control and challenge to himself. He must preach morality and goodness, which means putting a mirror to himself. This is what happens within the Jewish heritage of the Bible and Talmud. The Bible is taught in every year of school life in some form, and is a constant challenge to any sort of wickedness. The Prophets have become the most significant part of the Bible for the non-religious movement and became the basic school text; they have a social and international message and denounce militarism. The fact that Rabbi Steinsalz is invited to talk to army officers about war and the treatment of the conquered shows that Jews are wedded to the only classical text that counts, i. e. the source of all Jewish culture, the Bible.

Creative writing since the Six Day War, the "period of arrogance", has produced much literature which ruthlessly exposes the nationalistic slogans. Particularly in the general high schools the attitude is one of deep scepticism to national ideas, drawn from the writings of the "underground" authors who are constantly critical of government policies. All this comes from the source of the culture and pervades every aspect of creative life. The question is whether it will be possible to infuse the best young minds with a vision of the positive Jewish possibilities of the State so as to make it possible for them to withstand the pressure to emigrate and make their careers anywhere in the western world. Their education has prepared them so well to hear the appeals of the underdog, and it is a problem to instil in them the idea of a positive Jewish future for the State.

Professor Ze'ev W. Falk, Professor of Family Law at the Hebrew University, who was also invited to attend the pre-consultation but was abroad at the time, sent the following comments, from an Orthodox Jewish point of view, to the questions of Dr. Vischer regarding the theological link of Judaism to the Land of Israel.

Believers rely on the divine promise of the land in Gen. 15. This promise is part of the covenant granting the heritage of Abraham to part of Isaac's seed, the land being the material basis for the realisation of the spiritual task. The promise forecasts the present conflict between the descendants of Abraham and it is a divine decision in favour of the Jewish claim.

The promise legitimated Jewish conquests and peaceful settlements in the land throughout history. Even after the destruction of the Second Temple,

Jewish revolts against the Romans testified to the living faith in the validity of the promise. Ancient Christianity in two ways rejected the promise: it justified the expulsion from the land as a punishment of the Jews for having crucified Jesus, and it claimed to have itself become Israel. After Christianity had become the state religion, these claims were the cause of the imperial policy of antisemitism and of the further limitation of Jewish presence in the land.

Muhammad recognised Jewish rights as long as he hoped for the acceptance of his prophecy: "And we gave to the people who had been brought so low the eastern and the western lands which he had blessed as an heritage; and the good word of the Lord was fulfilled on the children of Israel because they had borne up with patience" (Quran vii. 137). The older Arabic writers called Jerusalem *Bait el-Makdis*, referring to the Jewish Temple. However, as a result of disappointment and of the awareness of power, Islam came to disregard and deny the rights of Israel.

But Jewish presence in the Land and Jewish prayer all over the world was an undeniable sign of the firm belief in the promise. From time to time, messianic movements demonstrated the vitality and historicity of this belief and during the nineteenth century the rabbis Alkalai and Kalisher based their demand for the return to Zion thereon. The definition of Chief Rabbi Kook that modern Jewish settlement marked "beginning of divine redemption" was followed not only by the National Religious Party but by great parts of political opinion in present-day Israel.

The promise was apparently made subject to the condition of faith and obedience: "Take heed of yourselves, lest your heart be deceived . . . and the anger of the Lord be kindled against you . . . and you perish quickly from the good land with the Lord gives you" (Deut. 11:16-17; Mekhilta de R. Ismael Amalek ad Ex. 18:27).

However, the promise will not be revoked: "But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord" (Lev. 26:45). This is also the order of events foretold by the Song of Moses as interpreted by Nahmanides's commentary ad Deut. 32:40: "In this song there is no condition as to repentance and worship, it is rather a deed witnessing that Israel would successfully do evil, that God would angrily rebuke us, but that he would not make our remembrance cease. God will return and change by taking vengeance of the enemies with his hard, strong and big sword and he will atone for our sins for his own sake. The song is, therefore, a description of the future redemption, and this is against the view of the Christians".

The possession of the land need not necessarily imply the existence of a Jewish state. However, after the European holocaust and the Arab massacres, Jewish existence must be guaranteed by a state. The idea of the

"kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6), moreover, implies the existence of an independent political entity.

The exact borders of the promised land are a question of historical interpretation, but undoubtedly include the area of the present State of Israel. Once the Arabs within and outside the land will be ready to respect Jewish rights and existence there will be no difficulty in negotiating an equitable solution.

The fact that the fulfilment of the promise meets with vehement opposition and gives cause to constant war reflects the moral state of Israel before God. Had the Jewish people been faithful to their destiny, they would have been redeemed without suffering and they would have enjoyed the promised land without opposition. Under the circumstances they must defend their right and become redeemed through suffering.

It is not only political Zionism which is rejected by Arab nationalism but the very existence of Jewish settlers as equal human beings. Since the beginning of this century Muslim anti-Jewish sentiments were active to resist Jewish presence in the land. Present-day enmity towards the state of Israel, likewise, is fostered by the slander of Jewish religion, culture and history and by the use of Arab versions of European, Christian antisemitism.

If Western Christians are accused of solidarity with Israel, this is part of Arab policy to put pressure upon the rest of the world to obtain by diplomatic means what they have failed to achieve by force of arms. Christians should beware of theological opportunism. The need to come to terms with the "third world" and with Eastern Christians does not justify a reversal of biblical exegesis. Once Christianity has discovered the literal and historical meaning of the Hebrew Scripture and the theological justification of Judaism, it should not revert to its anti-Judaic, spiritualising tradition. The fulfilment of the divine promise towards Israel is so obvious that even an adverse theology will have little bearing on it.

SESSION III. *JUSTICE*

Invited Jewish discussion partners: Rabbi Dr. Jack Cohen (Director, B'nai B'rith Foundation at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem (Beit Hillel)), Rabbi Dr. David Hartman (senior lecturer in Jewish philosophy, Hebrew University), Professor Uriel Simon (Professor of Bible, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan).

The Christian Arab participants in this session were: Father Elias Chacour (Greek Catholic parish priest at I'billin), Canon Rafiq Farah (Evangelical Episcopal Church at Ramallah), Revd. Shehadeh Shehadeh (priest of the Evangelical Episcopal Church at Nablus).

Dr. Vischer: Some years ago, especially in the immediate wake of the Six Day War, of 1967, there was tremendous spontaneous sympathy for Israel among the younger generation in western countries, but this is no longer so. More recently, the consideration of how to create a just society has become pre-eminent, and the criterion has become how to arrive at a

new society. With this in mind, the earlier consideration of a basic solidarity between Christian tradition and the Jewish people subsided into the background. The Geneva Consultation wants to see how this challenge needs to be met and answered, and would welcome the views of Jewish scholars.

The following questions might serve as a guideline for the present discussion. Are we in a position to derive from biblical witness a teaching about justice in society; how do we arrive from biblical teaching to answers about a just society? Is there possibly a conflict between the promise to one people (the Jewish people) and justice for all men, or what is the relationship between the promise and justice for everybody?

Rabbi Dr. Jack Cohen: Are similar questions being considered in the Church in connection with Islam and its relation to this Land? Will this come up at the Geneva meetings?

Dr. Vischer: The relationship between Christian and Jewish thinking is older and more developed than that with Muslim thinking; WCC dialogues with Islam are more recent. In preparation for the meetings on 'Biblical Interpretation ...' an effort has been made to include the viewpoint of Islam. In practice, Islamic thinking has been expressed more by Arab Christians than by Muslims, though several Muslims took part in a pre-consultation in Beirut.

Dr. Cohen: If a Jewish-Christian understanding is reached in the absence of Islam, there is a great lack; its presence would change the whole focus.

Dr. Vischer: A three-fold meeting should perhaps ultimately take place, with a full confrontation of different claims to promises, to see what is a solution of justice in the situation, but the time is not yet.

Professor Uriel Simon: The Jewish-Arab conflict is not a symmetrical one from the point of view of the *aims* of the two parties, or the *means* (political or military), or the *dangers* confronted, or the *mentality* of the two peoples involved. For Arab nationalism, the *aim* is the negation of Zionism, which is regarded as an antithesis of Arab nationalism, and it is almost inconceivable that they should live together. The aim is to bring Zionism to an end. For the most extreme Israelis there is a territorial conflict, but Arab nationalism is a fact, and a just fact, though there is some debate about the validity of the concept of a Palestinian entity. As regards *means*, both sides use force in the military and non-military spheres, but the hesitation to use force in a brutal way is pronounced on the Jewish side and the ethical restrictions are never forgotten; on the Arab side there is much less limitation on the use of force. The *danger* facing the Arabs is that of defeat in battle; that facing the Jews is destruction, and even a political 'dove' considers that a total Arab victory means not only the destruction of

the Jewish State but a total catastrophe for the Jews. Regarding the different *mentality*, the Israeli problem is to gain recognition, while the Arabs want to gain honour — it is difficult for Israelis to give this, though perhaps the recent war will give some help.

What does political justice mean in such an asymmetrical situation? The parties have to accept each other in their own identity and self-understanding. If a Christian attempts to judge the situation, he should realise this imbalance and not condemn Israel disproportionately for comparatively minor sins while others are scarcely blamed at all for much larger ones. It is dangerous to the quest for justice if Israelis feel both that they are chosen and that everyone else is against them.

Election means that Jews are obligated to do more justice to others than is done to them; it is the Jewish charter “to do righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19). In association with this, we read (Amos 3:2), “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for *all* your iniquities”.

A widely held opinion says, “It is the outspoken will of God to be in solidarity with the ‘little ones’, the poor, the persecuted ... The will of God to take sides with those in whom nobody is interested ... is a key to the interpretation of Old Testament and New Testament”. It is good that there should be sympathy for little people, but is it true that God is on their side? Surely he is on the side of justice. God loves the orphan and the widow, who are liable to be treated unjustly, and when this occurs God must protect them; but the demand is that *society* should protect them (Ex. 22:22). In their struggle for justice, black Americans have been corrupted by the feeling that because they are ‘the poor’ they can do no wrong, and the danger confronting Zionism is for Jews to claim that they can do what they like because they have always been the underdog.

Dr. David Hartman: Before dealing with the problem of justice, one must first recognise that a precondition for adjudicating competing claims is the recognition of both parties as having legal rights. If one ignores another human being and does not respond to him as a human being with rights, the whole basis for a discussion regarding justice is emptied of all significance. This fundamental problem must be faced if we are to understand the painful dilemma that Jews and Arabs are caught in.

Jews are indigenous to the Land — they are not here because of the Nazi Holocaust, nor are they here because of the guilt of the West, they are here because this is where they built their first spiritual culture and in their Exile never for a moment lost the hope of return. One must understand why the Land is so central to Jewish spiritual self-understanding. If one desires to understand the Jewish People, it is necessary to utilise the categories of that self-understanding. Our faith in the Covenant was not lost

when we went into exile, our spiritual place in the world was not thereby aken over by a new covenant; we dreamed of return because we knew that Judaism demands for its full realisation a living national reality; Judaism is essentially for a community, it is concerned not only with inner spiritual purity of the individual but also with organising the total life of a society. It is from this perspective that one must evaluate the relation of the Land to Jewish spirituality.

The fundamental problem is that Jews in the Middle East are viewed as aliens and not as indigenous to the reality. This grew from the imposition of outside theological categories which caused the Jews to be unheard throughout history. The world did not recognise that the Jews were there, and therefore did not recognise their yearning to return and live according to their self-understanding. The indignity of being non-existent in the eyes of the world — which lies at the root of the Holocaust — is the force that drove the Jew to make himself visible again and not allow the world any further opportunity to ignore the concrete reality of this community. The image of the wandering, suffering Jew is not a value which can provide a basis for meaningful survival. A noble, dead martyr cannot continue a living culture.

The covenant principle maintained the Jewish People's will to live, and though secularists in Israel may not perceive what they do in terms of a spiritual reality, they have nevertheless created a living situation for implementing Judaism's total vision of a spiritual community. The return to Jerusalem in 1967 is a message to western civilisation saying, "We have always been here"; Jerusalem symbolises that Judaism was always a living force within history irrespective of the indifference of many to our spiritual self-understanding. Does Christianity have a way of handling Israel's visibility and making sense of Israel's return theologically? The Israeli political reality means that Judaism is again a fundamental force in western civilisation.

The demand for direct negotiations is a call to speak face to face and not ignore the other's existence. The problem of the Middle East is that there has never existed a dialogue of mutuality and therefore we do not know how to work out the problem of justice. I am opposed to the Masada complex and siege mentality for this is dangerous to morality and corrupting to the soul. For this complex to be healed the world is asked to speak out for our inner dignity and our place in civilisation. At present, however, unless we look after ourselves no-one else will. We ask for recognition that the Jewish people intend to keep Judaism alive, and the desire to be here is one to work and see how Judaism can live in the modern world as a society and not as a religious system according to which we pray in synagogues but live alienated lives. We want to face the challenge of the secular society, which has never been faced by Judaism before. Men do not have

to take up arms when their existence is respected, and when this recognition comes, borders can be settled.

Dr. Cohen: Between 1967 and 1973 there has perhaps been a change of mood but not much change of fact. The sympathy and pity that antedated the war of 1967, when Israel stood alone, were of no value to Israel then; for the most part these sentiments were not expressed in clear, public fashion: Israel had to fend for itself. In 1973 there was no period of waiting and tension before the sudden Arab attack, and by that time the world did not even sympathise with Israel. In its eyes, Israel was the stronger party to the dispute and needed neither sympathy nor assistance. Israel again fought alone, albeit with American aid in arms and ammunition.

The sense of loneliness in 1967 was similar to that felt in March 1948, when President Truman reneged on his support for the U. N. Partition Resolution and made it clear that the Jewish community of Palestine would have to fend for itself. This same feeling of isolation was stirred up again in 1973 when no major Christian voice was heard on the issue of the absolute evil of war. The Christian world did not proclaim that no state has the right to take up arms, as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan did, in order to resolve a conflict of interests that could have been settled years ago if only human recognition could have been accorded to the State of Israel. By their general silence, the Church and most of the states of the world put the stamp of approval on war, as opposed to conversation, as the proper method of solving the Middle East conflict. Thus, whatever change of mood has occurred since 1967, it makes no practical difference for the fate of Israel. Israel is still basically alone.

The State of Israel and the Jewish people are not synonymous. There are many Arab citizens of the State who will have to be considered in any settlement, and this factor poses many problems.

How can the Bible help us in facing the political and social problems of this world? We cannot approach the Bible solely as the Word of God — though many words of God are there. The Bible contains many hints and poses many questions which need to be asked. For example, in Gen. 25: 8-9 we read, "Abraham breathed his last and died . . . And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him". The lives of these two sons had been divided for years, but suddenly they come together like this. What was it that enabled them to come together, and what had prevented their being together during their lives? Surely Jews and Arabs have much to ponder here. Are we destined to share only the accidents of birth and death, but to be denied the drama of sharing life with one another?

In present history the Arabs and Jews have been brought together abruptly at a moment when both are ill-prepared. Neither is in a position in terms of his own identity to get to the roots of how to create in the

other a sense of empathy. The honour of the Arab States is set against the Jewish sense of election, both of which are unsatisfactory bases for solving the problems of mutuality. The responsibility to react ethically is accepted by Israel despite its fear of Arab enmity, but the Arabs are no less obligated to overcome their passion for honour in favour of an accommodation with Israel. The Arab sense of honour is wrongly based and is morally harmful to the Arabs themselves. For thousands of years Jews were subject to degradation; the world recognised their existence too much, but in the wrong way. If the honour of any people has been offended, it is that of the Jewish people, but the Jews have never sought revenge or a restitution of honour. A nation's honour can reside only in its feeling of its own decency. The fact, therefore, that the Arab people feels itself wronged because it has encountered and been militarily defeated by a technically superior society is not a sentiment which should be encouraged by Arab leaders. Instead they should accept the hand extended to them to build together a common future.

The Bible helps us in understanding the need to continue trying to create a symmetry between the deeds of a people and the reward or punishment received in this world. It is not the destiny of any people to suffer or to be rewarded more than any other; the Holocaust was an abomination and had no relation to any conceivable Jewish sin. The theological and ethical question comes back to the issue of having to face a dilemma of history; that of two peoples feeling that they have a right to the same piece of land. The image usually employed is that of two men competing for the favours of one woman — would it not be more profitable to consider the love of one mother for two sons? No spot of land belongs to anybody, for “the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof” (Ps. 24:1). To grasp this, we have to achieve a vision of mankind in which we can apportion whatever soil there is for the benefit of all concerned. We must continue to talk in Jewish-Christian dialogue but must bear in mind that even this perspective is not broad enough, that we are a small part of all mankind, and until all of us develop a sense of the unity of mankind many problems we have to settle will be set in the wrong context.

Dr. Visher: The western world increasingly discovers the need to recognise the third world. It is essential to discuss not only the issue of recognition of the Jewish people and its self-realisation in this Land, but even more that of the third world in search of its identity. Western Christians are accused of solidarity with Israel, which means a disregard for the identity of the third world.

Dr. Hartman: There is a strong relationship between the search of the third world and the Arab world for identity and the Jewish quest for identity. The most fundamental question here is ‘Who is a Jew?’, which is an identity question. Jews may come *from* western civilisation, but they are

not of it. If people see Jews as westerners, this is a tragic distortion. Jews have always been a 'scandal' in terms of Christian or Islamic universalism, or of eighteenth century rationalism and later political universalism. The Jew has always refused to be consumed by universalising tendencies. The suffering of Jews often exposed the weakness and the immorality of this universalising understanding of man. Their pilgrimage through history sets the seeds for a renaissance of the principle of particularity in the modern world; the Jew desires to be the brother of all those seeking their own particular spiritual identity. I perceive modern history as one in which God is speaking through the renaissance of non-universalising spiritual tendencies; one must learn to say the Lord is *our* God, and also affirm that he is *one* God who manifests himself in many ways.

The belief in the unity of God should not mean making everybody one and the same. The return to Jerusalem demands a new understanding of the concept of election and of God working through a particular people. It provides a theological meaning for all cultures, e. g. those in the third world, attempting to re-establish their particularity. This is a profound chance for a spiritual humility to take root in monotheistic faiths.

Father Elias Chacour: The point of Arab honour is over-exaggerated. The search is for an address, an identity. The Arab asks for the same recognition that the Jew asks from the western world.

The problem of Bir'am and Ikrit symbolises the question of Jews and Arabs trying to gain recognition from each other, and the Arabs in Israel should be a symbol of the justice of Israel to the minority living among them.

Prof. Simon: A wrong has been done to Israel's Arab minority, which should be corrected, but this is not the perspective through which the whole issue should be seen. The Arabs like to see in Israel a western people, and forget that they have themselves tried very hard to adopt western culture. They do not want to regard Zionism as renaissance of a Middle Eastern people but as political movement and an extension of imperialism. The State of Israel is not the product of post-war Christian guilt, but of Jewish renaissance.

The Arabs should be warned not to inherit antisemitism in its ugliest form. Publications emanating from Egypt and Syria include the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and show that these countries are really striving to become antisemitic, and this is a tragic plight for them and has nothing to do with the search for their own identity.

Should we believe the Arabs when they threaten destruction, or should we not? The Jew cannot fail to be afraid that the Arabs mean what they say. However, this is no reason why Jews should not behave well towards Arabs and take such risks as allowing the return to Bir'am and Ikrit.

Archbishop Appleton: Surely there are differences of opinion among Arabs. The Arabs of Israel and of the West Bank [of the River Jordan] are the key to healing and reconciliation; surely it would be the right strategy to concentrate on these two groups and not pay too much attention to the extremists further away in Libya or Iraq.

Canon Rafiq Farah: Talk of the 'Arab world' is out of focus. The problem lies between Jews coming to Palestine and the people already living there. These are the people confronting Israel; Egypt and Syria would probably have no dispute if their territories are returned. The issue is that of those who were forced to leave their homes, and what is to be done with them; the question of justice lies here, with these displaced persons. It was not a question of Jews coming to live with the Arabs of Palestine; the Arabs simply were not wanted there, because the Jews wanted to fulfil their own identity in that particular place. The Palestinians who feel that they have an identity as such have links of many generations with that particular piece of land.

Dr. Hartman: If the return and renaissance should be at the expense of any human being this would be contrary to any spiritual meaning for the Jewish people in the modern world. Full expression of our heritage does not need to come from negations; the Jewish full expression need not be at the expense of another identity. If everybody would leave Jews and Palestinians alone to work something out together, this could be done to the mutual enrichment of both. The problem comes when political forces claim to speak on behalf of the Palestinians, and assert that the existence of the other party has no meaning. Jews are here because this is where they have always lived and want to live. If belonging is denied, the basis for any relation is gone and the broader political issue overshadows the internal challenge of building a meaningful Jews-Arabs culture.

It does not follow that everything that Israel does is good, and when injustice is done it should be condemned. The dignity of the Jew should not be at the expense of the Palestinian Arab. Voices should be loudly raised when an indignity or an injustice occurs. The good that could come from a mutual understanding between Jews and Arabs here has not been given an opportunity; alien political forces are acting against this. Both want to be recognised *de jure* and not only *de facto*.

Revd. Shehadeh Shehadeh: If there had been no war, what would Israel have done with those Arabs who stayed in the Israeli part of Palestine after partition? The Jews would have thrown the Arabs out. Now they say the problem is security, but how far should war and conquest go for the sake of security?

Dr. Hartman: Security does not only come from territory but from understanding. Throughout history, Jews went when told, but now they be-

lieve that power makes it less easy to destroy them, though this is no foundation on which to build a life. The reality is that we live in a climate of the threat of destruction. We do not believe there can be a military solution to the Middle East problem.

Revd. Shehadeh: War has a tragic effect on both sides and will bring only more war; problems must be solved by peaceful methods. Arabs now understand the problem differently, especially since 1967, and do not want the destruction of Israel but to live in peace in the area. There are Israeli Arabs who would fight against any Arab State attempting to destroy Israel, and the Government talks too much about the Arab threat of destruction. The Arabs have their own problems of unity and have tried to use Israel to promote that unity. What was being said ten years ago is not necessarily being said now, and the return of occupied territory and recognition of Palestinian rights would meet Arab requirements.

Canon Farah: If justice is desired, it is important that Israel knows how to speak of its identity. Some political parties have made it a precondition for any settlement that Israel retains the West Bank; the Minister of Defence is constantly emphasising the role of power. The way to peace is to know how to present yourself. Israel has pinned too much on power, and the events of October 1973 have therefore caused great frustration.

Prof. Simon: The Arab voice heard at today's meeting is too optimistic and does not calm Jewish anxieties. The resistance movement has been recognised by all Arab States as the official representative of the Palestinians. According to the "secret" resolutions of the 1973 Algiers conference, the aim of the Palestinian revolution is that laid down some years ago of erecting in Palestine a secular, democratic state where Jews, Christians and Muslims would live in peace — but Jews will get citizenship only if they or their parents were born in Palestine prior to the "Zionist invasion" of 1917 (i. e. prior to the Balfour Declaration).

Abp. Appleton: Israelis perhaps do not recognise a big change in Arab thinking. During the Yom Kippur war, there were proclamations in Egypt that this was a "war for peace". Syria habitually takes a harder line, but even there talk is now of "peace with Israel" rather than of "war with occupied Palestine". This change should be encouraged as much as possible. How could Jews indicate that, assured of acknowledgement of identity and rights, and relieved of the pressure and struggle for survival and the Masada complex, they would try to build up a just society for the world as well as for Israel?

Dr. Hartman: From the experience of the last twenty-five years, we do not know and do not feel comfortable in trusting. This cannot be changed by an act of will; memories do not support this call to trust. You cannot

ask a broken people to relax and trust, you must allow time for them to gain back the ability to do so. There is fundamentally no feeling of being at ease, and you cannot expect that fine declarations will quickly produce this trust. Much time is needed, and opportunities to hear a different language and grow to believe it. There may indeed be a different spirit, but let us hear its voice and see its exponents in control of political realities. Until such voices reflect the dominant spirit in the Arab world, it is unfair to expect concomitant trust.

Canon Farah: President Sadat's speech after the war, when he began to suggest ways of settlement, was a great step forward compared with previous speeches. It was a step on the part of the Arab world towards trust, and you no longer hear threats to "throw the Jews into the sea". The question is — who is afraid; because both sides are afraid.

Dr. Hartman: Of what is the Arab afraid?

Canon Farah: He fears war.

Dr. Hartman: But the Jews fear destruction and cannot afford to be defeated.

Canon Farah: There is some progress in talking about the way to settlement, and Israel should stop talking about power.

Dr. Hartman: This is a mistake in perception. Israelis hate war, but they want to live.

Abp. Appleton: Let us all pray for the Geneva meeting in light of what has been said here.

Report by Joyce Wilson