

# Conclusion

## *Whose Land?*

Any conclusion to a book of this kind will inevitably be a very personal view. Having tried to be as fair and objective as possible, I can't avoid attempting to make judgments and express opinions. It simply isn't possible to end with platitudes like 'There are rights and wrongs on both sides', 'Both sides have a right to the land', or 'It must be possible to find a just and peaceful solution.'

Having attempted, therefore, both a review of the history and politics of the conflict over the land in the last 130 years and a discussion of how Christians have used the Bible to understand the conflict, these are some of the major conclusions that I would want to draw in the middle of 2015.

### ***The seeds of conflict have been there from the beginning and were brought in from outside***

Before the War of Independence in 1948, before the Holocaust, and even before the First World War, the potential had been there for conflict between the Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs. The land in which the Jews settled from the 1880s onwards was not empty, and they knew it. But with the typical arrogance of Western colonialists they believed that they had a right to settle where they wished and that they would bring the benefits of Western civilization to a backward region. If they ever tried, they failed at almost every stage to integrate in any meaningful way with the people who were already there – people who, like the Jews in the biblical period, had been rooted in the land for centuries and whose identity was bound up with this particular piece of land.

Should the Arabs have just rolled over and allowed the immigrants to set up their self-contained Jewish community? The coming of the Zionists stimulated Palestinian nationalism. At later stages in the conflict, it also provoked Palestinian Muslims to articulate religious reasons – Islamic reasons – why they believed they had a claim to the land and should resist the Zionist colonizers. If we want to say that

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both sides have been guilty of violence, we should at least stop to enquire what were the first actions which triggered the tension and then the violence.

### ***The status quo is unsustainable***

Israel's continuing occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank since 1967, the building of settlements, and the failure of the peace process until now have created a situation which most of the world believes to be intolerable. In April 2014 John Kerry dared to say: 'If there is no two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict soon, Israel could become "an apartheid state."' In December 2014 Samantha Power, the US Ambassador to the UN, spoke no fewer than three times of an 'unsustainable status quo' in Israel/Palestine. When Israel's main and strongest supporter is prepared to use language of this kind in public, one can only hope that the rest of the world will recognize that the situation cannot continue as it is indefinitely and somehow summon the determination to move forward and explore different options.

### ***Time has already run out for the two-state solution***

In the conclusion to the 2002 edition, referring to the two-state solution as the most widely accepted option for resolving the conflict, I wrote some paragraphs under the heading 'Time may be running out'. In 2015, however, I have no hesitation in suggesting that time *has already run out* for the two-state solution. Israel's determination to hold on to the West Bank and East Jerusalem and its creation of so many facts on the ground have made the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state virtually impossible. If many of us had been hoping that Israeli and Palestinian leaders would one day sit down at the negotiating table and argue together on the basis of international law to find a way of resolving the conflict and sharing the land equitably, these hopes have long since been dashed. As long as the present processes continue, any so-called 'resolution' is likely to be an arrangement that the stronger party (Israel), supported by its main backer (the USA), imposes on the weaker party (the Palestinians).

If this conclusion leads some to despair, it may give others a glimmer of hope. **Avi Shlaim**, writing in 2009, expressed cautious optimism that nations can sometimes pursue rational policies after they have 'exhausted all the other alternatives':

Despite the serious deterioration in the relations between Israelis and Palestinians in the last decade, I refuse to give up hope. At present Israelis and Palestinians are locked into a horrific dance of death. But in the longer term Israelis may come to realize the error of their ways. They may eventually grasp that there is no military solution to what is essentially a political problem. One day they may stop deluding themselves that their country's security can be guaranteed by the unilateral exercise of extreme force. For my part, I draw comfort from the historical knowledge that nations, like individuals, can act rationally – after they have exhausted all the other alternatives.<sup>1</sup>

**Munther Isaac**, a Palestinian Christian theologian, has a similar mixture of pessimism and optimism: ‘The status quo must come to a drastic (potentially tragic) collapse before Israel realizes that a change in policy must take place.’<sup>2</sup>

***The time has come for serious consideration of the one-state solution***

If the two-state solution no longer seems realistic, the present situation on the ground looks more like a version of the one-state solution. Israel's total control of East Jerusalem and much of the West Bank, including all of the Jordan Valley, leaves the Palestinian-controlled areas looking increasingly like a collection of Bantustans in an apartheid state. As long as Israel continues its occupation and refuses to allow the creation of a viable Palestinian state, it has to find some way of dealing with the reality it has created or allowed to develop in the occupied territories. It's hard, therefore, to disagree with the conclusion of **Marc Ellis**: ‘There isn't going to be a Two-State solution... The One-State solution with Israel in the lead has been accomplished and, for all practical political purposes, is permanent.’<sup>3</sup>

If it is Israel's own actions on the West Bank that have undermined the possibility of the two-state solution, and if the rest of the world is not likely to allow the complete removal of the Palestinians or the continuation of an apartheid state, the one-state solution is the only remaining option. As we have already seen (in Section 3.5), this could take the form of either a binational state or a single democratic state. Books have been written on the subject, and a movement called *One Democratic State* has been in existence since 2012.

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The one-state solution, however, is more popular among Western academics than among Palestinians, who seldom even discuss the idea; and the Palestinian Authority refuses to believe that the two-state solution is dead. As the principle of self-determination was not applied by the United Nations in 1948 – with such disastrous consequences – it would be tragic if a solution were to be imposed on the the Palestinians once again without their consent.

It is of course extremely difficult to see how, with all the bitterness and hatred that have built up over the years, Jews and Palestinians could ever live side by side in a single state. But if the present situation is totally intolerable and could deteriorate even further, we may need to be prepared to think the unthinkable. The bitterest pill that would need to be swallowed is that the one-state solution would challenge many of the basic assumptions of Zionism and destroy the rationale for having a Jewish state – a state in which nationality is determined by race and religion. Within its present borders, Israel can never be *both* a democratic state *and* a Jewish state, for the simple reason that 20 per cent of Israeli citizens are not Jewish but Palestinian Arabs. Moreover, its refusal to end the occupation and its apparent pursuit for the goal of ‘the Greater Israel’ combine to undermine even further the idea that Israel could continue to be ‘a Jewish state’.

As long as the present situation continues, therefore, the watching world – and especially the younger generation – is likely to be more and more concerned about issues of justice and human rights in the occupied territories. The civil rights movement in the USA was sustained by the conviction ‘We shall overcome’, and Martin Luther King was able to say, ‘The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.’ In South Africa condemnation from the rest of the world played a significant part in ending apartheid. Could something similar, as unthinkable as this, ever come about in Israel/Palestine? The answer may depend on the interaction of all the other different factors that are likely to affect the outcome.

### ***Politics and religion will always be closely intertwined***

It is hard to think of another situation anywhere in the world where politics have come to be so closely bound up with religion, and where scriptures have such a profound effect on political action. But however much religion is tied up with politics in this conflict, political problems require political solutions, and if people of religion in the three faiths

cannot learn how to talk to each other and make compromises in the real world for the sake of survival, peace, and coexistence, they should be asked to retreat to their ghettos and talk only to those within their closed circle.

All religious Jews base their claim to the land on scripture, and all Muslims have strong Islamic reasons (which are both theological and historical) for claiming the land, and especially Jerusalem, for Palestinians. The problem is that fundamentalists of all kinds – Jewish, Christian, and Muslim – put themselves beyond the reach of reason. The clash of fundamentalisms (especially Jewish and Islamic) is particularly acute over the question of Jerusalem. Yitzhak Rabin knew, as Martin Gilbert says, that ‘if the conflict were to be theologized, there never would be peace. For, to theological conflict, there are no compromises, and therefore no solutions.’

It is not much comfort for anyone to be told by certain kinds of Christians that ‘the situation is so bad and the problems so complex that things will only be resolved when Jesus comes again’. It *ought* to be possible at least for *some* people of faith to work out what the problem is all about and, instead of opting out and hoping for the best in a future millennium on earth or in heaven, to get involved in the hard work of working for justice and making peace here and now. In the words of Mark Braverman, ‘The beliefs people hold about the meaning of the Holy Land are part of the problem, but they are also part of the solution.’

***Jews will inevitably feel they have a special relationship with the land***

While communities of religious Jews continued to live in the land from the second century, most of the first Zionists were very secular Jews who had little interest in religion. They colonized the land as a way of affirming their identity and escaping from the evil of anti-Semitism in Europe. It was only later that orthodox Jews (previously suspicious of Zionism) began to be associated with the Zionist movement and consciously related their vision to their Hebrew Bible. But if they were drawn back to the land because of their Jewish faith and their association with it in the past, and because they needed a safe haven, they had to reckon with the land as they found it, not as they imagined it to be, and that land was occupied by others with an equal sense of connection and rootedness.

For many Israeli Jews today the Hebrew Bible is simply part of their history and culture, and the book of Joshua is still a prescribed

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text in Israeli schools. For a number of religious Jews, however, it is still treated as the scripture which gives them a divine right to the land for all time. Those who read the sacred texts in this way need to ask themselves whether the settlers on the West Bank and in Gaza and their governments have ever seen the need to listen also to the command in the Torah about not oppressing the alien or the stranger (e.g. Exodus 22:21) – not that the Palestinians consider themselves to be ‘aliens’ or ‘strangers’. And is there any sense in which they can see the present State of Israel as a fulfilment of the dreams of the prophets who saw the restored nation in the land as a blessing to the whole human race? If Jewish claims to the land are based on the Hebrew Bible, are Jews willing for the State of Israel to be judged in the light of the Ten Commandments and everything else contained in these scriptures?

### ***Zionism is facing a crisis***

Could Theodor Herzl ever have foreseen the kind of unsustainable situation that we face in the land today? It’s easy to blame the Palestinians for the way things have gone wrong. Some, like Ari Shavit, see the conflict that took place at various stages as ‘an inevitable phase of the Zionist revolution’, for ‘perhaps there was no other way’. But for others it wasn’t inevitable that Zionism should develop in the way it did. ‘Zionism,’ says **Jacqueline Rose**, ‘as a unique national movement, had the opportunity to forge a model of nationhood, neither belligerently nor preemptively, but ambivalent, uncertain, obscure, something closer to this disquieting and transformative space. But it did not take it.’<sup>4</sup>

So what are the options facing the Zionist movement? They are summed up bluntly by **Ari Shavit** in these words:

There are only four paths from this juncture: Israel as a criminal state that carries out ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories; Israel as an apartheid state; Israel as a binational state; or Israel as a Jewish-democratic state retreating with much anguish to a border dividing the land... So far, Zionism has not been able to summon from within the forces that will save it from itself. It is up to its neck in the calamitous reality that it created in the West Bank.<sup>5</sup>

If the one-state solution is totally unacceptable to Zionists, can they begin to understand that it's the occupation that has made the two-state solution so unrealistic and forced them into this impossible dilemma?

***Christian Zionism is facing a crisis***

From the standpoint developed in this book, Christian Zionism – whether it is based on a Restorationist or a Dispensationalist approach to the Bible – appears to be a well-meant but misguided attempt to interpret the recent history of the Middle East in the light of Old Testament prophecies and to show sympathy for the Jewish people in their painful dilemmas in the modern world. Interpreting the Bible in a very literal way, it seems to read the New Testament through the eyes of the Old Testament, rather than reading the Old Testament through the eyes of the New Testament. It fails to grasp how the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus the Messiah was meant to transform first-century Jewish ideas about the chosen people, the land, the Torah, and the temple, and how new wineskins were needed to contain the new wine of the gospel of Jesus. It represents a regression to the mentality of the Jewish disciples of Jesus, *before* they finally got the point and began to understand the significance of who Jesus was and what he had accomplished.

In so far as Christian Zionists support the basic vision of Zionism and the actions of Zionists from the beginning to the present day, they are supporting something that has led to some disastrous consequences. While one cannot hold Christian Zionists responsible for *all* the actions of Zionists, it is hard to see how Christian Zionists can be so enthusiastic about the basic vision of Zionism and at the same time be critical of the direction in which the movement has developed in recent years. If conflict and violence were implicit in the original vision from the very beginning, how can Christians support *Zionism on biblical and theological grounds* as a solution to the problem of anti-Semitism, and believe that the creation of Israel and the victory of the June 1967 war should be seen as a part of God's plan for the Jewish people as understood in the Bible?

Christian Zionists of all kinds seem to be remarkably timid in talking about issues of justice. More and more of them are saying that their theology and biblical interpretation do not require unquestioning support for the policies of Israel. But they tend to lay most of the blame on the Palestinians for not understanding the plain teaching of

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the Bible about the return of Jews to the land and by so doing, resisting God's purposes for them and for the world.

### ***There is a way for Christians to bring together their understanding of the history and their interpretation of the Bible***

The approach underlying this book is that we dare not start with a particular way of interpreting the Bible and then use it as a grid for understanding the history. My own wrestling with these issues began as I lived through the civil war in Lebanon, beginning in 1975, and slowly realized that it was the Palestinian problem and the presence of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon which triggered off the deadly civil war which raged for fifteen years. I was trying to understand the history and the politics of what was happening and at the same time studying the Bible to see how it could help me to make some sense of it all. My eyes were first opened when I found a copy of David Hirst's *The Gun and the Olive Branch* in a small bookshop in Hamra in Beirut. Some time later, in the same shop, I discovered W.D. Davies's magisterial volume *The Gospel and the Land*. Slowly I began to find a way that seemed to combine integrity in understanding history with integrity in interpreting the Bible.

This way of interpreting the Bible sees the gift of the land to Abraham and his descendants as the preparation of the context in which God was going to reveal himself gradually to a particular group of people, but with a view to revealing himself eventually to the whole human race. The gift of the land was not an end in itself, but a means to the end of enabling the revelation of God's love to reach to the ends of the earth.

The climax of that process of revelation through the history of the children of Israel came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He claimed that through him God was breaking into history in a new way, revealing God's love not only to the Jews, but also to every nation and tribe in the world. While God's original covenant with Abraham still stands, therefore, enjoyment of the blessings of that covenant now has little or nothing to do with the land. For Christians, all the major themes of the Old Testament – the land, the Torah, the chosen people, and the temple – now point beyond themselves to a new reality – a person of flesh and blood through whom God was revealing himself and 'reconciling the world to himself' (2 Corinthians 5:19).

If this is how I articulate my faith today, however, I have to think long and hard about the role of the Christian church over the centuries



in allowing anti-Semitism to grow within it and then allowing the new nationalisms and ideas derived from the Enlightenment to water the soil in which Nazism could carry out its murderous designs. When Christians are inclined to pontificate on any of these issues, they need a special dose of humility to recognize and own up to these darker sides of their history which have contributed to the conflict.

***Islam is not the root of the problem, but Muslims have a distinctive approach to questions about the land***

Iranian rhetoric directed against Israel, the rise of Hamas and Hizbollah, and the threat of ISIS so near the Golan Heights convince many that there is a religious root to all the opposition to Zionism and to Israel. But our survey of the history and our analysis of the development of the Islamic dimension of the conflict over the years suggest that Islam is not the root of the problem. It's not Islam that makes Palestinian Muslims resistant to Zionism. It's dispossession which has forced people who happen to be Muslims to find further reasons within their religion and their history to resist dispossession and assert their claim to the land.

The land played an important part not only in the life of the Prophet, but also in subsequent Islamic history. The history of Islam has been intertwined with Christianity and Judaism from the beginning, through Muhammad's relationships with Jews and Christians and through his followers who have lived alongside Jews and Christians in the region for fourteen centuries. For 1,300 years Muslims ruled the land, from the first conquest in AD 638 until the end of the Ottoman empire in 1918, with the sole exception of around ninety years when it was under Crusader rule. Even if the Christian and Jewish perception of this history is not as positive as the Muslim perception was, Muslims can with some justification argue that Islam has generally been more tolerant towards Jews and Christians than Christian Europe was towards Jews and Muslims. Islam certainly developed its own kind of tolerance and pluralism – given, of course, a situation in which they as Muslims were in control.

Palestinians and Muslims, however, now face difficult questions over the place of Islamic ideology in arguing and fighting for the Palestinian cause. If Christian Zionists present religious reasons for exclusive Jewish political control of the land, are Muslims in danger of adopting a kind of 'Islamic Zionism', especially in the way they sometimes argue

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for exclusive control over East Jerusalem? The challenge to Muslims and Palestinians is to find the most convincing language to commend their cause in a world which understands the language of international law and human rights better than it understands the language of Islam.

### ***A great deal depends on the watching world***

This is no local conflict between two tribes which they can sort out between themselves. Western nations have been active (or rather interfering) in the Middle East for centuries.

Their interests in the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were tied up with their own regional rivalries, ambitions, and conflicts, with the need for markets and oil, with academic scholarship and tourism, Christian mission, their desire to limit the number of Jews coming into the West, and finally with their guilty conscience over the Holocaust. Britain shared all that but added more: the need to protect its interests in the Suez Canal and its empire in India and the East.

Having broken the promises made to the Arabs during the First World War, Britain took responsibility for Palestine during the period of deepening conflict between 1920 and 1948, and then handed the problem over to the United Nations. The State of Israel therefore owes its existence first to Britain and then to the United Nations. It has also been the subject of numerous resolutions from the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, but it has somehow found a way of ignoring most of them and carrying on with its plans.

If the peace process which began in 1991 seems to have stalled or failed until now, it is largely because of a failure to deal with the roots of the problem and the fundamental injustices at the heart of all that has happened, and because most of the self-appointed mediators have either been too closely identified with one side in the conflict, or been cowed by the strength and skill with which Israel has pursued its policies. The USA has a special responsibility as the only nation that has the power to put pressure on Israel. 'The asymmetry in power between Israel and the Palestinians,' says **Avi Shlaim**, 'is such that a voluntary agreement between the parties is simply unattainable. A third party is needed to push Israel into a settlement, and that third party can only be the United States.'<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the time has come to learn from the ways that other conflicts have been resolved. In South Africa, sanctions and strong moral support from all round the world eventually contributed to

the end of apartheid. In Northern Ireland there was considerable involvement and mediation from third parties (especially the USA). A major breakthrough occurred there when governments realized that they must deal not only with moderates on both sides but also with the so-called extremists. Could it be also that the fierce debates taking place on American campuses and the work of organizations and networks like *One Democratic State*, *Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)*, *Jewish Voices for Peace*, and *Kairos Palestine* will contribute to a major change of thinking on the part of governments, which will eventually steel their wills to see the situation changed?

***Jews, Christians, and Muslims have their own distinctive ways of understanding tragedy and suffering***

‘The conflict over the Holy Land – or Israel, or Palestine’, says Anton La Guardia, ‘is a vast story of tragedy and redemption.’ Within the worldview of the ancient Greeks, tragedy was seen in terms of noble but flawed characters and communities being sucked into a series of events leading to disaster, through the interplay of superhuman forces that are beyond their control. A more rational approach to modern tragedies attempts patiently to understand not only what has happened but also why it has happened. While it is careful not to oversimplify the issues, it says that it ought to be possible to understand the major factors that have led us to where we are. It does not need, therefore, to resort too quickly to purely supernatural explanations of historical events in terms of the miraculous.

But however well or badly we understand the ingredients of the tragedy, it is important that we recognize that we are dealing with *two* peoples who have suffered injustice, and not just with one. The title of Benny Morris’s groundbreaking history of the Zionist–Palestinian conflict, *Righteous Victims*, recognizes that it is not just Jews who see themselves as the victims of injustices done to them by others, but Palestinian Arabs as well. And if Jews are to recognize the suffering they have caused for the Palestinians, the Palestinians and other Arabs for their part need to admit the enormity of the Holocaust, even if this was not their responsibility, and not try to argue that it never happened or that it has been grossly exaggerated, as some still try to do.

It is easier, however, to see what La Guardia means by ‘tragedy’ than to see any signs of ‘redemption’. The depth of the tragedy and the suffering should be forcing Jews, Christians, and Muslims to look

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again to the roots of their faith to see what resources they can find for responding to suffering and evil. Do their teaching and their spirituality satisfy the mind and the heart, and do they give ordinary people the resources to ‘overcome evil with good’? Are they willing to look outside their own tradition to learn from each other?

### ***Wanted: just peacemakers!***

Pursuing justice and making peace are clearly linked by Jesus in the Beatitudes, where ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness’ is followed by ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ (Matthew 5:6, 9). Since the Greek *dikaiousune* can be translated ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’, the Revised English Bible has good reason to read, ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail.’ This is especially important in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, since many who are passionate about justice aren’t always as passionate about peacemaking and reconciliation. And those who see everything in terms of the need for reconciliation often seem to downplay the importance of justice.

The peacemakers required in this particular conflict need to be of a very special kind. While being able to understand the history, to appreciate the aspirations of both sides, and to empathize with them, they need to be genuinely impartial and not committed ideologically or emotionally to one side or the other. They need to be prepared to speak the truth to both sides and to different groups within the two sides. They need to understand the realities of geopolitics and be willing and able when necessary to speak the truth to the most powerful nations in the world.

They need to be tough enough to say to the fundamentalists of all kinds, ‘Look, if you want to belong to the human race, if you want to live in the global village, you will have to learn the language of human rights which has been accepted by the vast majority of the nations. You cannot go on imposing your worldview, your scriptures, your understanding of your rights on the rest of the world at the expense of your neighbours who live beside you. If you want to live in the real world and if you accept the need for coexistence, there are some things that you simply cannot do, and you’ll have to be willing to sit down and negotiate with others.’

Peacemaking will also require a great deal of work at the grass roots to enable the process of nation-building. Years, if not decades,

of tension and conflict have had a profound effect on the way people think and feel. The organization called *Musalaba/Reconciliation* has for over twenty years been bringing Israeli Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians together face to face for extended periods and providing a model of what's involved in grass-roots bridge-building and reconciliation. A powerful example of what may be required in building up civil society can be found in a valuable booklet, *After Liberation, Then What? Enabling and Protecting Communities in Post-Authoritarian Contexts*, by **Danut Manastireanu**. Writing out of his experience of living for thirty-five years in communist Romania, he writes in order to 'help readers... to acknowledge the profound experiences they have lived through, along with the challenges these experiences pose for building healthy communities'.<sup>7</sup> This is precisely what the Holy Land Trust has been seeking to do from its base in Bethlehem for the past seventeen years.<sup>8</sup>

### ***The land belongs to God***

So who does the promised land belong to after all? Whenever Jews and Christians use their scriptures to claim the land for themselves, they need to hear again this simple sentence buried away in the book of Leviticus where God insists that ultimately *the land belongs to him*: 'the land is mine and you are but aliens and tenants' (Leviticus 25:23). If God gave it to one group of people for a particular period of time, they were to see it as a *gift*, and not as something that they owned *by right*. The gift was a means to a greater end, not an end in itself.

When the promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants is read *only in the context of the Old Testament*, it is understandable that Jews (and some Christians) will interpret it as a divine gift for all time to Jews as the chosen people. But within the context of the Old Testament there is also plenty of teaching about the ethical standards required of the people who live in this land. There is no suggestion that anything like the conquest under Joshua would ever have to be repeated again. And there are plenty of visions about a future that will bring blessing not only to this people living in the land but also to the rest of the world.

When seen by Christians *in the context of the whole Bible*, however, *both Old and New Testaments*, the promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants does not give *anyone* a divine right to possess or to live in the land for all time, because the coming of the kingdom of God

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through Jesus the Messiah has transformed and reinterpreted all the promises and prophecies in the Old Testament. God has acted *in the land* not only to demonstrate his love but also to deal with the root causes of injustice and evil. Jesus the Messiah, who lived, died, and was raised from death *in the land*, has opened the kingdom of God to people of all races, making all who follow him into ‘one new humanity’ (Ephesians 2:15, NRSV).

‘Like everything,’ therefore, says W.D. Davies, ‘the land also in the New Testament drives us to ponder the mystery of Jesus, the Christ, who by his cross and resurrection broke not only the bonds of death for early Christians but also the bonds of the land.’ Perhaps this same Jesus can point to ways of being just peacemakers among those who live and suffer in the land today.

### ***We must work to realize our dreams***

The rest of the world – dare I say, including every reader of this book – has an enormous responsibility to support Jews and Palestinian Arabs as they seek to recognize each other’s rights and to find some formula that is based on internationally accepted principles of justice and enables them to live peacefully side by side in the land.

Is this an impossible dream? **Theodor Herzl** understood how impossible his Zionist dream must have seemed, but was bold enough to say ‘If we will it, it is not a dream.’ And he ended *The Jewish State* with these words: ‘The Jews who wish for a State will have it. We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, and peacefully in our own homes... And whatever we attempt there to accomplish for our own welfare, will react powerfully and beneficially for the good of humanity.’<sup>9</sup>

With so many of the problems involved in the outworking of Herzl’s Zionist dream unfolding painfully before our eyes, can we perhaps embrace an alternative dream that addresses the present realities on the ground and then try to move heaven and earth to make it a reality?

If we can do this, we may at last be listening and responding to the passionate but hopeful plea of Palestinian Christians expressed in 2009 in *Kairos Palestine*:

Our land is God’s land, as is the case with all countries in the world. It is holy inasmuch as God is present in it, for God alone is holy and sanctifier. It is the duty of those of us who

live here, to respect the will of God for this land. It is our duty to liberate it from the evil of injustice and war. It is God's land and therefore it must be a land of reconciliation, peace, and love. *This is indeed possible.* God has put us here as two peoples, and God gives us the capacity, *if we have the will*, to live together and establish in it justice and peace, making it in reality God's land: 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it' (Psalm 24:1).<sup>10</sup>