

ANTI-ISRAEL INFLUENCE IN AMERICAN CHURCHES

A BACKGROUND REPORT

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PREFACE

This background report is, we believe, the first to survey systematically the sources of anti-Israel influence within American Christian churches. What constitutes anti-Israel sentiment has been carefully delineated: the use of double standards - harsher judgments and stricter demands made on Israel than on her Arab antagonists - biased or loaded renderings of history; and sometimes, resort to theological arguments hostile to Judaism.

Among the recent factors which have affected negative attitudes toward Israel is the rapid increase in immigration into the United States of Arab Christians and Moslems, resulting in a growth of population from some 250,000 to an estimated two million in the last fifteen years, coupled with recent efforts to bolster a growing pan-Arabism. Surely, Americans of Arab heritage have the same rights extended to all religious and ethnic groups by American pluralistic democracy: to develop their distinctive values, culture and influence. We affirm these rights - even as we may profoundly disagree with many of their positions and attitudes.

However, many of the recent immigrants come from nations so hostile to Israel that they still refuse to recognize her right to exist. Moreover, they come from cultures heavily imbued with anti-Semitism, where notorious documents of Jew-hatred, such as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion have been reproduced not only for intensive national consumption, but for export to other parts of the world. Of those who are Christian, many are adherents of a tradition of Christianity which has had neither dialogue nor contact with Judaism or with Jews, and whose theology denies any religious validity to Judaism.

We believe there are both theological and social grounds for building understanding and mutual respect between Arabs and Jews in America, as well as in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. Jewish-Christian dialogue has taught us that an essential aspect of understanding is the confronting and uprooting of sources of bigotry and inherited caricatures, whether of religious or cultural origin. American pluralism, and ultimately perhaps the achievement of full peace in the Middle East, may depend on the success of that process taking place between Arabs and Jews.

One final note: the purpose of this study was to identify the sources of anti-Israel sentiment and influence in American churches. To avoid distortion, it should be underscored that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches and major Protestant denominations have affirmed the right of Israel to live in security and to possess its full sovereignty as a nation-state. There are pockets of hostility to Israel in the organized church community, but there is also a broad and enduring sympathy and support on the part of millions of American Christians throughout the country for our sister democracy in the Middle East, the State of Israel.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Interreligious Affairs Director

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SOURCES OF ANTI-ISRAEL SENTIMENT

American Christians have long been divided in their views on Middle Eastern affairs. Since before Israel was actually founded, approval and disapproval of the Jewish state have existed side by side in the church community. Israel has not lacked friends and supporters; year after year, opinion polls have shown the American public to be much more sympathetic to her than to her Arab antagonists, and many of the nation's church leaders have spoken out in her behalf, singly or in concert. Yet at the same time, an anti-Israel, pro-Arab attitude has been much in evidence in certain segments of American Christianity.

A pro-Arab disposition is strongly in evidence among Protestant denominations with long-standing involvement in missions to the Arab Middle East; in churches and church-related groups engaged in aiding Arab refugees; among certain left-wing "liberationist" ideologues; and in communions with predominantly Arab constituencies, whether Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. In these quarters, champions of the Arab cause often influence church policies and organizational resolutions far beyond their numbers, giving church groups a pro-Arab tilt by constantly pressing for statements critical of or detrimental to Israel.

In this report, certain criteria have been used to determine whether a group or an action is considered anti-Israel. Concern for the welfare of Palestinian refugees does not, in itself, constitute hostility to Israel. Nor does appreciation of Arab culture, interest in religious dialogue with Islam, or disapproval of specific policies of the Israeli Government. What constitutes anti-Israel bias is the unequal application of standards -- for example, criticizing Israel for military reprisals without taking note of the hostile actions that provoked them, or calling upon Israel to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), still publicly committed to her destruction, without the contingent demand that the PLO recognize Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state. Bias may also reveal itself in an unbalanced rendering of history. For example, Israel alone may be blamed for the existence of Palestinian refugees with no acknowledgment that their displacement is also the result of Arab-initiated wars against Israel, or that an equal number of Jewish refugees were forced to flee Arab countries without compensation for homes or property.

There is also a potent anti-Jewish legacy in Christian tradition which sometimes comes into play when Israel is being discussed; in such instances anti-Israel sentiment takes on an anti-Jewish coloration.

The following pages describe the major sources of anti-Israel, pro-Arab sentiment within the organized Christian community in the U.S., the church institutions on which Arab sympathizers exert significant influence, the religious organizations which they have created or with which they are allied, and the ways in which they seek to win American public sympathy for their views through religious channels.

The Arab Missionary and Relief Establishments

Modern Arab nationalism has some of its roots in a Protestant missionary presence that began in the last century. A number of denominations have long been involved with philanthropic, educational and missionary ventures in the Arab Middle East: with universities, secondary schools, hospitals, social service centers, refugee aid projects and so forth. Many institutions of higher learning in the Moslem world began as American missionary undertakings -- among them the prestigious American University of Beirut (originally the Syrian Protestant College).

Out of these missionary and service activities, which have had strong financial support, has emerged a group of church professionals who naturally sympathize with Arab aspirations, identify with Arab views, and are ready to promote Arab interests both within their organizations and in public -- often at the expense of Israel. Men and women like these usually hold the staff positions in the Middle East departments of their denominations and of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. They are thus chiefly responsible for recommending lecturers and resource persons; for choosing, producing or distributing education materials including films; and for drafting resolutions on the Middle East.

In contrast, staff members sympathetic to Israel rarely serve in Middle East departments. They do serve in other departments, and try to alter or balance resolutions harmful to Israel at church conventions, but their efforts are almost invariably last-ditch struggles waged against the inertia of large assemblies of delegates who are only too ready to adopt statements drafted by "specialists."

Among Protestant bodies, those with the most active anti-Israel staff members include the United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Reformed Church in America, the Quakers (Friends United Meeting), the United Methodist Church, and the Mennonite Central Committee (the relief and development agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches of North America). Except for the Methodists, all of them, especially the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterians, have institutional commitments in the Arab Middle East. Officials of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches -- the latter a predecessor of the United Church of Christ -- founded the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,¹ which sent hundreds of missionaries to the Arab world.

In their appeals for support of relief services to Palestinian refugees, some of the Protestant missionary groups occasionally display anti-Israel bias and engage in distortions of historical fact -- for example, representing Israeli "aggression" as the only cause of the Palestinians' plight. This anti-Zionist animus is older than the State of Israel itself:

Protestant, AUB /~~American University of Beirut~~/ people, and oilmen helped the State Department in the 1930s to resist Zionism within the United States... In 1945 mission and

1. Renamed the United Church Board for World Ministries soon after its 150th anniversary in 1960.

church groups helped found the Institute of Arab-American Affairs to combat Zionism. During the next two years what was named the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry studied the Jewish homeland question. Testimony of American mission-related individuals was anti-Zionist, although one United States churchman, representing conservative Christians who saw a separate Jewish home as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, was pro-Zionist.²

Originally, Christian antagonism to the idea of a Jewish state rested as much on theological and religious as on political grounds (as did the few instances of support for the idea). The view that the Church, the "new Israel," had superseded the "old Israel" and thereby inherited the biblical promises was commonly cited in responses to early Zionist initiatives. So was the notion that the Jews had been condemned to eternal dispersion because they had rejected the messiahship of Jesus. Since the State of Israel has come into being, Western Christians hostile to the Jewish state seldom resort to these theological arguments, although Arab Christian leaders invoke them frequently.

Even in the West, traces of the pervasive anti-Jewish polemic in Christian tradition, and of the triumphalism that interprets Judaism and Jewish history through Christian eyes, still surface from time to time in comments about Israel, in anti-Jewish attitudes, and especially in the use of double standards of morality. Jewish (or Israeli) behavior is judged against a standard of absolute perfection, and deviations from this idealized norm are deemed proof of utter sinfulness; the failures and shortcomings of others are judged more pragmatically. Quaker Life, for example, combined almost all of these elements in an article clearly hostile to Jews and Judaism, as well as to Israel.³

In the Roman Catholic community of the U.S., things are somewhat similar. Some leaders with a background of philanthropic or educational service in the Arab Middle East actively promote anti-Israel positions. Foremost among them is the Reverend Joseph L. Ryan, S.J., who is Rector of Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, a member of the Center for the Study of the Modern Arab World at St. Joseph's University in Beirut, and a former Vice President of Al Hikma University in Baghdad. He was the founder and first President of Americans for Justice in the Middle East and is presently associated with the Middle East Resource Center, both anti-Israel organizations.

Father Ryan has made a number of nationwide speaking tours, lecturing at colleges and universities. His main themes have been that the PLO deserves support because there is a difference between the "violence of the oppressed" and the "violence of the oppressor"; that non-Jews are "second-class citizens in Israel"; that peace is impossible unless Israel withdraws from the territories occupied in 1967; and that a Palestinian state must be established on the West Bank and in Gaza. He does not believe, he has said, that Israel should have been created or should exist.

2. Joseph Grabill, Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), pp. 307-8

3. "Promised Land," by Harold Smuck, Quaker Life, September 1976.

Anti-Israel statements have also come from the present Archbishop of Anchorage, Alaska, Joseph T. Ryan (no relation to Father Joseph L. Ryan, above), who previously was National Secretary of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. The Association's present National Secretary, Msgr. John G. Nolan, is a board member of Americans for Middle Eastern Understanding, a pro-Arab group.

Liberationist Ideology

A second source of anti-Israel sentiment within the churches is the current ideology sometimes referred to as "liberation theology." Not unlike the Social Gospel movement of yesteryear, it calls upon Christians to identify with oppressed peoples and makes the active pursuit of racial, social and economic justice a religious obligation. This approach is supported, not only by many members of racial minorities and persons from the Third World, some of whom hold important staff positions in the church community, but also by some classic liberals concerned for justice and world peace.

In theory, liberationist thought should not lead to anti-Israel positions, for Jews, too, are a minority, and Israel is a beleaguered democracy if there ever was one. But the same selective morality which singles out Israel for special abuse in the United Nations is also at work here. Liberationist activists champion the Palestinians as oppressed Third World people and brand Israel as a racist, colonialist outpost of American imperialism. Though their numbers are not large, they are among the most vehement spokesmen on the American Christian scene, and sometimes manage to co-opt church professionals working for world peace and justice. Or they prevail on other committed liberals to endorse seemingly evenhanded public statements, which urge Israel to recognize the PLO or allow Palestinians to return to "their homeland" -- in other words, to admit hundreds of thousands committed to her own destruction.

Father Daniel Berrigan, S.J., who has denounced Israel as a "criminal Jewish community" and as a "settler state" seeking "Biblical justification for crimes against humanity," is perhaps the most dramatic spokesman for this viewpoint. Less drastic versions of his arguments are presented by others who, naively extrapolating from American history, find the call for a "secular, democratic state" appealing and the concept of a Jewish state retrogressive. The leftist liberationists, like other anti-Israel groups, insistently publicize the writings of well-known anti-Zionists Jews in the U.S., such as Rabbi Elmer Berger and Alfred Lilienthal, and the often totally unfounded accusations of a few Israelis -- such as Israel Shahak, a vehement anti-Zionist, or Felicia Langer, an attorney who is a member of Israel's Communist Party. The fact that Israel is a democracy in which, unlike most of the Arab nations in the Middle East, open dissent from government policy is guaranteed by freedom of speech, is never acknowledged.

ARAB CHURCHES

Though Protestant missionaries made a number of Arab converts in the last century, and though Arab Protestant Churches and congregations exist in the Middle East and the U.S., the overwhelming majority of Christian Arabs are Eastern Orthodox or Catholics of the Eastern Rite. This state of affairs ultimately stems from two major schisms in Christianity. Some Eastern churches, including the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, have stood apart from the rest of the Christian churches since the fifth century in a dispute over the question of the two natures (divine and human) of Jesus. The great schism of 1054 separated Byzantine (Orthodox) Christianity from Western Latin Christianity.

Communities of Arab Christians have existed in the United States for some time, but only in recent years have some of their leaders aggressively pursued political goals on Middle East issues. Not all American Christians of Middle Eastern background are against Israel; thus, many Lebanese support Israel as the defender and ally of the beleaguered Christian community in Lebanon. But those who do oppose Israel are a potent new influence in organized American Christianity. They have used public relations techniques skillfully and on occasion have made common cause with Moslem leaders. From their leadership positions in their own churches, they have pressed non-Arab church groups and agencies for anti-Israel statements, and have sought to influence the U.S. Government against Israel.

The major Christian Arab communities in the U.S. are described below.

ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

The U.S. and Canadian branch of the Antiochian Orthodox church, known as the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, came into being in 1975, when two groups that had split apart in 1936 were reunited. The parent church's Holy Synod is based in Syria; the North American headquarters are in Englewood, N.J. The size of the church's U.S. constituency is somewhat of a mystery. Spokesmen claim 50,000 "dues-paying members" but add that a total of 350,000 persons is "attached to" or "associated with" the Archdiocese. The 1978 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches reports a membership of 152,000, with 152 ordained clergy and 110 churches. The American Arabic-Speaking Community Almanac of 1975 lists 98 churches, broadly distributed throughout the U.S., but most numerous in California, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The Antiochian church has influence beyond its numbers because it is a member of the National Council of Churches with representation on the NCC's Governing Board. Its representative there is Dr. Frank Maria, chairman

of the church's Department of Near East Affairs. Metropolitan Philip Saliba, the head of the North American Archdiocese, was until recently a Vice President of the NCC. Both Metropolitan Saliba and Dr. Maria are vigorous advocates for the PLO; the latter has frequently introduced resolutions urging U.S. recognition of the PLO at NCC meetings. In similar vein, he has pressed for investigations of alleged human rights violations and breaches of international law in Israel and the occupied territories.

In mid-1977, the Patriarch of the church, Elias IV, toured the U.S. for six weeks, with appropriate panoply and publicity. He ceremoniously called on President Carter and UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim (on the latter visit, he was accompanied by the Lebanese and Syrian ambassadors, both of whom gave receptions for him). Patriarch Elias was also hosted by other Christian notables, such as Melkite Archbishop Joseph Tawil. In addition, the Patriarch, who was the only Christian leader ever to address a majority of the world's Moslem heads of state, when they met in Lahore, India, was guest of honor at a dinner given by ambassadors of Arab states in Washington.

At the church's annual convention, also in Washington, Elias declared in a press conference that Jews had little "historic connection" with the territory of the State of Israel. Speaking through his interpreter, he said: "As far as we Christians are concerned, we are the new Israel. All the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah... After the destruction of the Temple, the Jews were dispersed. Those who remained lived in peace with the Arabs and the Christians" until modern times, when, he said, "outsiders" came in.

A leaflet distributed by the church press conference quoted the Patriarch: "As Christian Arabs, we believe that the loss of Jerusalem affects the Arab cause in general. We shall not spare any effort to insure that Jerusalem remains an Arab city, open to all believers and to the entire world... The Palestinian plea is for a Jerusalem returned to its own people." He also asserted that "the exiled and dispersed Palestinians are the symbol of all human suffering."

Bolstered by his presence and his outspoken position, the convention passed five resolutions, all of them presented by Dr. Frank Maria. One condemned the Israeli Government's legalizing three "additional Zionist-Israeli settlements on occupied Arab lands in violation of international law," and called upon President Carter to persuade Israel "to abolish these settlements and any further illegal encroachment upon Arab territories." A resolution on human rights demanded that the United States withhold economic and military aid from Israel, charging that Israel stands condemned by the UN for violations of the human rights of Arabs. Another resolution, asserting that the Arab-Israeli conflict has been "the most poorly reported story in the history of American journalism," called upon the news media in this country and Canada to "stop being part of an insidious campaign to defame and misrepresent the Arabs."

Other resolutions advocated American Christian-Islamic dialogue, settlement of the Lebanese conflict with "peace and justice for all," and relaxation of U.S. and Canadian immigration regulations to allow admission

of Lebanese refugees. All these points, widely publicized, were repeated as the Patriarch traveled from coast to coast, attending six regional parish conferences and visiting New York, Boston, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Louisville, Oklahoma City and Los Angeles. In Louisville he said war in the Middle East was inevitable unless Israel gave back the territories taken in 1967.

Coptic Orthodox Church

Adherents believe the Coptic Orthodox church to be Christianity's oldest organized denomination and to have been founded by St. Mark in 40 C.E. in Alexandria. Today, about 7 million of Egypt's 40 million inhabitants are Copts. The head of the church is Pope Shenouda III in Cairo. In the U.S., according to the 1978 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, the inclusive U.S. membership totals 40,000, with 14 churches and 12 ordained clergy.

In April and May 1977, Pope Shenouda paid a ceremonial visit to the U.S. and Canada, traveling to Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Buffalo, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Houston, as well as to Washington and New York. In Washington he met with President Carter and visited by the local Catholic archbishop, William Cardinal Baum. In New York, accompanied by two Egyptian ambassadors, he saw UN Secretary General Waldheim.

Pope Shenouda is a former Egyptian Army officer. He took part in the Israel-Arab War of 1947, and during the War of 1973 was reported by Radio Cairo to have asked that he be drafted again. However, no anti-Israel remarks by him or others were noted during his North American tour, nor has the American Coptic community been particularly active against Israel.

Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (Archdiocese of the U.S.A. and Canada)

The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch traces its origin to the earliest Patriarchate established in Antioch by St. Peter the Apostle, and is under the supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. No information about its worldwide or U.S. membership is available. In the Middle East and India, it has 35 archdioceses as well as many churches, schools and seminaries. In the U.S. there are eight parishes, in California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey and Rhode Island. In Canada, there are three, two of them in the Province of Quebec and one in Ontario.

The present head of the Church is Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yacoub III. He has visited the U.S. twice, in 1969 and 1971. The Archdiocese of the U.S.A. and Canada was formally created in 1957. Its head is Archbishop Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, previously Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan in Jerusalem, who first came to the U.S. in 1949 to collect war relief funds for his co-religionists. His headquarters are in Hackensack, N.J. The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch is a constituent body of the National Council of Churches, and Archbishop Samuel serves on the NCC Governing Board.

Armenian Apostolic Church of America

This is a branch of the Armenian Church under the jurisdiction of the See of Cilicia in Lebanon, whose Coadjutor Catholicos is Karekin Sarkissian. Cilicia's jurisdiction traditionally extends over Armenian dioceses in Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus; it is also accepted by adherents elsewhere who consider the See in Soviet Armenia too much dominated by Communist authorities.

Catholicos Sarkissian has been active in the World Council of Churches and has been a vice chairperson of its Central Executive Committee since 1975. He came to the U.S. in 1973, and was prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America when he was elected to his present office in 1977.

Pan Orthodox Trends

When Patriarch Elias of the Antiochian church toured North America in 1977, he repeatedly pleaded for unity among Orthodox Christian churches, describing it as inevitable. And indeed, cooperation, if not structural unity, among Orthodox churches in North America is a significant trend. In October 1978, at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a National Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America was held for the first time, to consider the prospects for Orthodox unity and to make Orthodoxy "a major spiritual and moral force in this nation."

Already, the different churches interlock in many ways. Thus, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese is an outgrowth of the Syrian Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church. Antiochian Metropolitan Saliba is Vice Chairman of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, (SCOBA); its head is Archbishop Iakovos, the Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Also included in SCOBA are archbishops and bishops of the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church in America, the Orthodox Church in America, the Serbian Orthodox Church in America, the Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America, the American-Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese in the U.S.A., the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America, and the Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church in Exile.

Pan-Orthodox ecumenism is clearly an internal Christian concern, but its implications reach farther. A unified Orthodoxy would offer a far more prestigious platform to the more vehemently anti-Israel leaders in the Orthodox community than they have had to date.

EASTERN RITE CATHOLIC CHURCHES

Melkite Eparchy

Melkite or Byzantine-rite Catholics accept the Pope as their spiritual leader, but have their own liturgy and are governed by their own patriarchs and bishops. Their titular head is Patriarch Maximos V Hakim of Damascus. There are about one million Melkite Catholics in the world, half of them in the Middle East.

In the U.S., Melkites number about 20,000. An eparchy (diocese) was established by papal bull in 1977, in Newton, Massachusetts. The eparch or head of the American church, Archbishop Joseph Tawil, was one of and Eastern Rite Catholic and Orthodox Group which hailed the UN's recognition of the PLO, describing the latter as "a moderate organization whose concern had been the liberation of their homeland from Israeli occupation and aggression."

In July 1976, Patriarch Maximos visited this country to attend the annual meeting of the American branch of his church, as well as the International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia. At a press conference he urged the U.S. to be "more impartial, not involved one hundred percent with Israel," and added that he thought the U.S. was beginning to give "more consideration to the Arab side" in the Middle East. He asked that the U.S. use its influence to have the lands occupied by Israel since 1967 returned to Arab control, so that the Palestinians might create their own state on the West Bank.

In June 1977, on the tenth anniversary of the Seven-Day War, Patriarch Maximos celebrated a special mass in Rome to pray for Jerusalem. The ceremony was organized by the Egyptian Ambassador to the Holy See, who is the dean of Arab diplomats accredited to the Vatican; it was attended by a number of high Vatican officials. The patriarch called on the Jewish people to recognize the rights of the Palestinians, and told those present: "Let us pray for the return of the Palestinians to their homeland."

A curious conflict arose between Patriarch Maximos and the Vatican over the Patriarch's authority to ordain priests serving in the U.S. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the Melkite Church accepts married men into the priesthood. Two married priests ordained in the Middle East are serving in the Newton eparchy; a third was ordained in Canada and then was brought to the U.S. A Vatican spokesman claimed that the Canadian ordination was illicit, and that those performed in the Middle East were licit only for service in that area, not in the U.S. Maximos replied sharply, asserting his own prerogative and taking the Vatican spokesman to task.

The controversy over patriarchal vs. papal authority, while an internal Christian affair, has a bearing on the matter of Arab influence in American Christian institutions and thus is of concern to Jews. An influx of Arab clergy ordained by an Arab prelate with a record of strong hostility to Israel is not a heartening prospect. Significantly, the priest ordained in Canada, the Reverend Romanos Russo, is the director of the Damascus area group for the Friends of the Holy Land, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Yonkers, New York, which was founded in 1974 "under the guidance of His Beatitude, Maximos V Hakim...." Whether or not Patriarch Maximos will use the Newton eparchy to bring Arab prelates into the U.S., and what roles such prelates may play here, will bear careful watching.

The Maronite Diocese

The Maronites take their name from St. Maron, a monk who lived in Northern Syria in the late fourth century. Their liturgy is in Aramaic.

Although no exact numbers are available, they are known to be the largest Christian community in Lebanon. Outside the Middle East, they have an archbishop and many monasteries and religious houses in Rome, as well as bishops in Brazil, Australia and the U.S. Maronite parishes also exist in North Africa and in France, Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa.

In the U.S., after being an exarchate for six years, the Maronites became a diocese in 1972. The Diocese of St. Maron currently consists of 43 parishes, two institutions, 58 priests and 12 seminarians; its jurisdiction extends to all 50 states. The diocesan seminary is located in Washington. The see of Maronite Bishop Francis Zayek, head of the church, has recently been moved from Detroit to Brooklyn.

Chaldean Rite Catholics

The Chaldeans trace their origins to Nestorius, a bishop and prominent teacher in the Eastern Church during the fifth century, who was censured by Rome on doctrinal grounds. His followers subsequently split; one faction became the Nestorian Church, still in existence as an independent Eastern denomination, while the other, the present Chaldeans, reunited with the Roman Catholic Church, though retaining the Eastern rite. To this day, Chaldeans pray in Aramaic.

In the U.S., Chaldeans number about 1,500 families, comprising some 7,500 persons. Most of them originally came from Northern Iraq and settled around Detroit, where they now form two large parishes. There is a third parish in San Diego and a fourth in Los Angeles. They are under the jurisdiction of local Catholic bishops, but in matters of rite their superior is the Patriarch of Babylon, whose see is in Baghdad.

ORGANIZATIONAL TIES

To what degree do the various Arab Christian groups in the U.S. make common cause with one another, with Moslem leaders and with non-Arab Christian groups in promoting anti-Israel positions? The answer is that some are extremely active in this way, others not at all; the Arab-American community, far from being monolithic, reflects many of the differences and power struggles that divide peoples and governments in the Middle East.

Many Maronites, for example, are friendly to Israel, because Israeli forces have acted to protect and preserve their co-religionists during the recent fighting in Lebanon; others are anti-Israel, believing that Israel's policies -- indeed, her very existence -- are ultimately responsible for the influx of Palestinians which upset the delicate political and religious balance in Lebanon and helped precipitate the civil war there.

Yet despite differences like these, there are efforts to foster a growing pan-Arab consciousness. Sparked by the more vehemently anti-Israel spokesmen, a number of religious leaders have formed a Standing Conference of American Middle Eastern Christian and Moslem Leaders. The Antiochian Orthodox Metropolitan Philip Saliba is its Secretary General; the Melkite Archbishop, Joseph Tawil, is treasurer. Maronite Bishop Francis Zayek is also a member, as are Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri, Islamic Center in Detroit; Imam Muhammed Abdul Rauf of the Islamic Center, Washington; the Rev. George Garmo of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Southfield, Mich.; the Rev. Joseph Hourani of the Presbyterian Church in Elmer, N.J.; Msgr. John Nolan of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association in New York; Rafic Rasamny of the American Druze Society in New York; also, Bishop Mar Aprim Khamis of the Church of the East in Chicago; Archbishop Mar Athanasius Y. Samuel of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch in Hackensack, N.J.; and Bishop Mesrob Ashjian of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America in New York.

The Standing Conference claims to represent two million Americans of Arabic heritage and to be "composed of hierarchs and representatives of Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Sunnite Moslem, Shiite Moslem and Druze bodies in the United States." On March 22, 1978, Metropolitan Saliba, acting for the Standing Conference, wired to President Carter and Secretary of State Vance to protest the Israeli invasion and occupation of South Lebanon. In a press release of the Conference, issued on the letterhead of the Antiochian archdiocese, he commented: "Without Israeli withdrawal from all Arab-occupied land and self-determination for the Palestinian people, there will never be peace in the land of the Prince of Peace."

In the Washington area, Arab-American Moslem and Christian leaders came together in October 1977 to assure President Carter of their support for his human rights program. They particularly commended the 1977 U.S.-Soviet declaration concerning objectives for an Arab-Israeli peace settlement (a move since eclipsed by President Sadat's visit to Israel and the Camp David accords), and stressed that the legitimacy of Palestinian rights must be taken into account in any settlement. The signers were: the Very Reverend George M. Rados, pastor of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church; the Reverend Joseph Francavilla, pastor of Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek Catholic Church; Dr.

Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, executive director of the Islamic Center; the Reverend Esper Ajaj, pastor of the Arabic Baptist Church; the Reverend Hector Douehi, pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church; and Aida F. Habib, a member of St. Mark Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church.

It was the first known meeting of the Washington area's Arab-American religious leaders, and the first time they joined to speak in a common cause. Given the long history of Christian-Moslem tensions in the Arab world, marked as it has been by oppression and bigotry on both sides, these joint efforts certainly are a noteworthy development.

At the National Council of Churches

A move in a similar direction was the formation of a task force on Christian-Moslem Relations and the establishment of an Islamic Desk at the National Council of Churches, in August 1977. The formal request for the task force had come from Dr. Frank Maria and Metropolitan Philip Saliba of the Antiochian archdiocese, both officers of the NCC at the time. The two leaders emphasized that it was essential for American Christians to understand Arab Christian and Moslem attitudes and aspirations, "particularly in relation to a Middle East settlement."⁴

The inner workings of the National Council of Churches provide frequent illustrations of how forces sympathetic to Arab claims bureaucratically outweigh those sympathetic to Israel. The promoters of pro-Arab sentiment identified earlier in this paper -- the missionary establishment, the left-wing "liberationists" and the Arab churches -- are all represented in the NCC, many in key positions; and they tend to work together when matters pertaining to Israel are on the agenda.

In 1973, for example, when a number of state and local councils of churches publicly decried Egypt's and Syria's surprise attack on Israel during the Yom Kippur Holy Day, the NCC carefully avoided putting responsibility for the war where it belonged (though its then deputy general secretary, speaking as an individual, joined in the condemnation). Rather, a resolution by the NCC's Governing Board pointed to the United Nations as "the primary instrument for achieving long-range peace" and urged the U.S. and the Soviet Union "to halt immediately arms shipments to the belligerents" -- at a time when the Soviet Union had already sent massive armaments to the Arab nations and when Israel's military supplies were critically low.

Again, in May 1978, when Israel responded to a terrorist attack with a reprisal raid on southern Lebanon, the NCC's Governing Board passed a resolution scoring Israel's use of cluster bombs and criticized the U.S. Government for supplying them -- but rejected an amendment referring to persons "wantonly killed or maimed" in the terrorist action which occasioned the reprisal.

The affair of the Reverend Isaac C. Rottenberg is another case in point. In a letter to The New York Times (May 24, 1978), Mr. Rottenberg,

4. The Washington Star, August 6, 1977

for ten years Director of Communications at the Reformed Church in America, protested what he described as "a persistent anti-Israel propaganda campaign within the Council," noted that "every NCC Governing Board meeting has been preceded by internal bureaucratic power plays aimed at criticizing Israel," and claimed that whenever "concerns were raised in the Council about anti-Semitism, the Holocaust or the emergence of neo-Nazi movements, attempts have been made to trivialize or neutralize them." Earlier, Mr. Rottenberg had been among those who protested that Rumanian Archbishop Valerian Trifa, who was under Federal indictment on charges of having lied about his involvement in war crimes, was a member of the NCC Governing Board. Shortly after the publication of his letter in the Times, Rottenberg was fired from his denominational position.

There are, both within the NCC and in denominational groups, persons sympathetic to Israel and seriously interested in Jewish-Christian dialogue, but they are less close to the centers of institutional power and funding than those of the opposite persuasion:

Where churches have had an overseas missionary relationship with a particular faith, funds can be obtained from the mission agencies. However, where no such relationship exists, it is very difficult to attract financial support. The Jewish-Christian Advisory Committee of the National Council of Churches is an illustration. Because there are no parallel units with funding capability in the denominations, this office is facing a serious financial crisis. Our churches are not presently equipped to deal with other faiths outside the context of mission.⁵

A recent resolution by the NCC Governing Board on the Middle East peace effort, adopted on November 3, 1978, combined elements of sympathy and antipathy toward Israel. It welcomed the movement toward peace represented by the Camp David agreements, celebrated the role of Egypt and the initiatives of its President, and rejoiced with Israel "in feeling that its dream of peace and deliverance might be realized and the threat of annihilation diminished." At the same time, the resolution underscored the Palestinians' right to self-determination, reaffirmed "the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force," and urged President Carter "to broaden the context of the peace discussions to include the recognized representatives of the Palestinian people in order to enable them to become full parties in the peace process." The resolution also voiced the hope that other Arab states besides Egypt would agree to participate in the search for peace and cautioned that until the unresolved issues in the Middle East conflict were settled, "the unity, independence, and territorial integrity of Lebanon" would "continue to be in jeopardy."

Other Organizations

Members of the clergy and present or former church officials also sit on the boards of a number of pro-Arab organizations that are not explicitly

5. Robert L. Turnipseed: "Interreligious Relationship -- An Urgent Ecumenical Concern," editorial in Ecumenical Trends, September 1978

church-related. Thus, Americans for Middle East Understanding (AMEU) has the following among its board members: Harry G. Dorman, formerly director of NCC's Middle East and Europe Department; Msgr. John G. Nolan, the Pontifical Mission for Palestine; Father Joseph L. Ryan; and L. Humphrey Walz a former Synod executive of the United Presbyterian Church, who is also editor of AMEU's journal, The Link.

American Near East Refugee Aid, Inc. (ANERA) similarly counts a number of religious leaders among its present or former directors: J. Richard Butler, the NCC's director for the Middle East and Europe; the Reverend Dr. Edward L. R. Elson, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate; Msgr. Nolan (see above); and the Very Reverend Francis B. Sayre, Jr., Dean of the Washington Cathedral.

Father Joseph L. Ryan was a signer of a letter appealing for contributions to the Middle East Resource Center (MERC) in Washington. MERC, established late in 1975, is a project of Search for Justice and Equality in Palestine, an organization directed from Waverly, Massachusetts by Dr. Edmund Hanauer, an anti-Zionist Jew and disciple of Rabbi Elmer Berger. Father Ryan's co-signer was Dr. Hisham Sharabi, president of the National Association of Arab Americans, who has been publicly criticized by moderate Arab-American leaders for his defense of Palestinian terrorist tactics. MERC's function, the letter noted, was "to bring information on Middle East issues to members of Congress, journalists and citizens groups." MERC was "currently establishing personal contacts in the offices of members of Congress who have shown concern for human rights, in order to raise the issue of Israeli violation of Palestinian rights with these members of Congress as well as with the general public."

Finally, Middle East Perspective, Inc., which is headed by Dr. Alfred Lilienthal and publishes his vehemently anti-Zionist newsletter, has for its Vice Chairman John Nicholls Booth, a Unitarian minister.

CONCLUSION

Recent public opinion polls have shown some dilution of American popular support for Israel: not a reversal toward increased identification with the Arab cause, but a shift toward neutrality.

After thirty years of incessant refusal by the Arab states to recognize Israel, Egyptian President Sadat's dramatic visit to Jerusalem undoubtedly captured the imagination of many Americans and prompted them to view him as the prime champion of peace. On the other hand, Israel's concerns for security and normalization as part of the peace process may have impressed many Americans as foot-dragging or nit-picking. The shift in public opinion is probably due more to these developments than to the efforts of the anti-Israel groups described in this report. Undoubtedly, most Americans welcomed the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, but how that achievement will affect attitudes toward Israel remains to be seen.

Despite the peace treaty, anti-Israel forces will continue their efforts to attenuate the still broad support Israel enjoys among Americans. The Jewish community, in its interreligious contacts and programs, must help consolidate that support and give it expression, so that voices in the Christian community that are hostile to Israel will not resonate beyond their true proportions.

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