

# Reconciliation in the Middle East

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In everyday parlance, the term "reconciliation" is used in at least two distinct senses. Think of someone saying: "They were reconciled with each other after all those years". The picture which comes to mind is the establishment of some kind of peace or harmony after years of disagreement. "Reconciliation" in this sense is seen as eminently good and well worth striving for by active means. In religious terms, when one talks of reconciliation, one tends to think of an almost eschatological situation, when all human beings are consciously reconciled in Christ, and God is "all-in-all". There is, however, another, more ambiguous sense of the term, although it is not as common, and does not spring as readily to mind as the unambiguously positive usage of the term. Consider hearing someone say: "They have reconciled themselves to the probability of being made redundant next week", or something of the sort. Here, the term "reconciliation" is used in a manner not unlike "resignation". "They are now resigned to their situation." It is not necessarily positive, and implies a passive and perhaps grudging acceptance. It is worth bearing both of these senses of the term in mind, since different models of the tensions created in the Middle East by the existence and behaviour of the State of Israel use different senses of "reconciliation" in positing ways in which the conflict could be brought to a resolution.

My brief is to talk about "reconciliation in the Middle East". It is my intention not to talk about the Middle East in general, but rather to focus upon Israel, to examine those things which demand reconciliation, the actors in the Israeli situation, and factors making for reconciliation. In this context, my own use of the term "reconciliation" is in its unequivocally positive sense. My interest in the State of Israel and the Zionist-Palestinian conflict derives from the fact that I had a strongly Zionist upbringing, was born and bred in South Africa, whose government I despise, and lived for a long time in Israel. I might add that the experience of life in Israel completely undermined my Zionist faith.

One final point is called for by way of introduction. I am sure that it is rather hackneyed in this forum, but please bear with me when I repeat it. For Christians and socialists, reconciliation is not resigning oneself to a nasty situation. Reconciliation is the result of the struggle to put wrongs right. Reconciliation is achieved together with radical change. In looking at the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians and the prospects of reconciliation in that situation, we want to look for lines of radical change, and for factors making such change possible. In order to see where and how change is

possible in a given situation, that situation and those acting in it must be understood. I propose to look at the situation and the actors under several heads. Firstly, to briefly delineate the situation and the classical Zionist view of "reconciliation" in the Middle East. It is well then to go on to look at the Palestinians, outside and inside Israel, at Oriental Jews within Israel, and at Israeli workers. We can then look briefly at the views of the governing Likud coalition in Israel, the labour opposition, the PLO and the non-Zionist left in Israel itself. Perhaps we will be able to make some sense out of this montage and to find some hope of peace. One final question will be whether President Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977 and the Camp David agreements signed the following year represented a real "reconciliation".

The State of Israel was founded in 1948 after a long period of gestation, and found itself immediately embroiled in a war with its neighbours. Its basis had been laid by successive waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, which established settlements and political organs of power long before Israel was granted independence. The creation of the State of Israel resulted in the displacement of the vast majority of Palestinians, who were expelled or induced to flee. A small Palestinian minority remained within Israel, and was subject to military rule, extensive harassment, and expropriation of land. In 1956, war broke out with Nasser's Egypt, and Israel, co-operating with the British and French, conquered the Sinai peninsula, but was forced to return it to Egypt by the United States. In 1967, war once again broke out. The Israelis claim that it was provoked by the Egyptians, but it is probable that the Israelis fired the first shots. The war lasted six days, and resulted in the occupation of the West Bank of the Jordan, Gaza, the Golan Heights and Sinai. In 1973, war once again broke out, the culmination of a protracted and unofficial war of attrition which had claimed one or two lives every day since 1967. The 1973 war was initiated by the Egyptians on the Jewish day of atonement, and is therefore known in Israel as the "Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) War". It was a relatively long war, and was not as successful for the Israelis as the 1967 war. Israel lost pieces of the territory she had captured from Egypt in 1967, and was forced to enter into negotiations with the Egyptians. That, incidentally, was probably Sadat's purpose in declaring war – to force Israel to negotiate. In 1977, Menahem Begin, acting on a remark made by Sadat in the Egyptian parliament, invited Sadat to come to Jerusalem to address the Israeli Knesset. The invitation was taken up, to the horror of the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular, and became the first step towards the signing of peace accords at Camp David the following year. In 1978, shortly after the Camp David agreements, Israel invaded Lebanon, occupied territory up to the

Litani river, and mercilessly shelled so-called PLO strongholds indiscriminately, flattening substantial portions of many villages. They established Major Sa'ad Haddad, a right-wing Lebanese Christian, as effective ruler of the territories which they had occupied, and left his Israeli trained troops and militia to look after what was effectively an Israeli-controlled buffer zone. Last year, the Israelis once again invaded Lebanon, pushing forward to Beirut this time, laying siege to Beirut, and subjecting East Beirut to as fierce and random a bombardment as that which decimated Dresden during the Second World War. The purpose of both of the invasions of Lebanon was to liquidate the PLO – this, at least, was the stated aim. This sketchy and inadequate account of “high points” in the history of the State of Israel is enough in itself to show that the history of the State is a history of conflict.

The classical Zionist justification for the State of Israel takes for its starting point the fact of anti-semitism in a history which culminated in the Nazi holocaust. The only solution to the problem of anti-semitism, any Zionist will tell us, is the existence of a Jewish homeland. What better place for a Jewish homeland than the Land of Israel? For one thing, there was always a Jewish yearning for the return to Zion. In the second place, Palestine was “a land without people for people without land” as Herzl said. The Palestinians – they were settlers, and were not indigenous to the land, in the first place. In the second place, they could have remained in the country after independence rather than fleeing. In the third place, the fact of the holocaust was sufficient justification for setting up a refuge for the Jewish people in Israel, whatever the cost. The Arabs have plenty land. Why can they not give some of it to the so-called Palestinians? The land of Israel is all that we have. We have nowhere else to go.

The classical Zionist reaction to the plight of the Palestinians, until a few years back, was to say that there was no Palestinian dilemma since there were no Palestinians. As for the history of conflicts with Israel's Arab neighbours – that was not explicable in rational terms. It was the expression of pure anti-semitism. The occupied territories formed part of the historical land of Israel, and were in any case necessary as a security buffer, since pre-1967 Israel lacked secure borders. The carnage in Lebanon was justifiable on the grounds that the security of the State demanded it. The aim of the exercise was to exterminate the PLO, and the PLO had to be treated precisely like vermin. As for the Palestinians who did not flee Israel in 1948, they were an alien element to be harassed to some extent but tolerated of necessity. Contingency plans would soon become necessary, however, since their rate of natural increase could make them a substantial minority, or even a major-

ity, and the Jewish State would then be faced with what is known as the "demographic problem". The Jewish character of the State must be preserved at all costs, and it would not be a bad thing were Arab-populated areas in Israel, such as the Galilee, and even the Occupied Territories, to be "Judaicised". This is a pretty straight Begin-Sharon line on the situation. In these terms, reconciliation is something passive, and not something the Israelis must go in for. The Arab regimes must reconcile themselves to the fact of a Zionist State with expansionist aims, and the Palestinians must reconcile themselves to the fact that they do not exist as a nation, and that they have no homeland.

Begin and Sharon are not the only Zionists to have views on the situation. What underlines their hard-line view (though it must be pointed out that there are even tougher views than theirs) is a vision of the historic homeland of the Jewish people, the complete land of Israel, which includes both sides of the Jordan and what is now the Kingdom of Jordan. The occupied territories ought not to be negotiable in principle. Sinai could be given up because, regrettable though it was, it did not form part of the complete, or greater Israel. The West Bank, on the other hand, is an inalienable part of the land of Israel. For the Labour Party, on the other hand, the occupied territories are negotiable. It is desirable to occupy and settle the West Bank, but in principle it is exchangeable for a lasting peace. What ought to be avoided, however, is any possibility of a Palestinian state arising on the West Bank. The Palestinians exist, though the Labour Alignment would prefer them not to exist. Any settlement must defuse them as a political entity. The occupied territories are a bargaining card to ensure precisely this. The Labour Alignment's views imply that reconciliation comes about when the Arab nations recognise the State of Israel and totally absorb or shackle the Palestinians, in return for some or all of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Like the Likud, they see the Palestinians actually living in Israel as a necessary evil, and agonise over the demographic problem and the unsavoury necessities that it may give rise to. Golda Meir once complained in the Knesset, in her Jewish-grandmotherly fashion, that she could not sleep at night because the thought of each Arab child born in Israel gave her nightmares. The Labour view of the situation, while it doesn't accept the notion of a greater land of Israel as its political and military objective, does view the Jewish character of the State of Israel as paramount, in common with the Likud of Begin and Sharon.

What about the Palestinians? Who are they, in any case? About 700 000 Palestinians fled Israel in 1948, leaving a Palestinian population of just under 70 000. In November 1948, the population of Israel was 782 000, and it passed the million-mark the following

year owing to massive Jewish immigration. With immigration, the Jewish population shot up to the region of 3 000 000 by 1966. The Palestinian population remained an insignificant minority. There would have been about two million Palestinians in exile by then, concentrated in the West Bank and trans-Jordan, and in the Gaza strip, with heavy concentrations in the Lebanon as well. Some educated Palestinians went abroad, some went to work in the Gulf-countries, other educated Palestinians obtained well-paid employment in the urban centres, but a high proportion of the Palestinians, landless peasants, were housed in refugee camps, and were viewed with suspicion by the regimes which gave them shelter.

Prior to 1967, there was very little in the way of an overt Palestinian consciousness among Palestinians living in Israel. They were, in effect, third-class citizens, much of whose land was in the process of being expropriated, and the on-going expropriation of lands created a great deal of resentment, and doubtless maintained a covert Palestinian identity. Political mobilisation among the Palestinians living in Israel at this stage tended to focus on the issue of land-expropriation rather than on national identity and oppression. The Israeli Communist Party became a platform for protest. There was an attempt to set up a political party independent of the Communist Party. It was called 'Al 'Ard, "the Land" (in the sense of agricultural lands), but it was declared illegal, and several movement's leaders were put under house arrest or detained. Things changed dramatically in 1967. The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza brought another million-and-a-half Palestinians under Israeli control, and this encouraged many Palestinians living in Israel to cast off their fear at calling themselves Palestinians. Nearly ten years later, in March 1976, protests concerning the expropriation of lands in the West Bank and Gaza spread into the "Arab" sector in Israel as well. There were massive demonstrations in most Palestinian villages in Israel, and the police reacted to these by making widespread arrests and firing shots. A few youths were killed. These demonstrations are marked by an anniversary each year, and the day of the demonstrations and the shootings is known to Palestinians in Israel as "Yum el 'Ard", "Land Day". Land Day heralded a much more aggressive Palestinian identity on the part of Palestinians in Israel. Many Palestinian youths in Israel are now quite open about their support for the PLO, which they, in common with many adults, see as their sole legitimate representative. They tend, also, to openly affirm the unity of the Arab Palestinian people, and to state that they are an inseparable part of it. They tend also to define their aim as the setting up of a Palestinian state. The more moderate Communist Party supports

the setting up of a Palestinian State in the West Bank. More radical people talk of the need for a Palestinian State covering the entire territory of the historical Palestine. Many Communist Party members, when pushed, will whisper to one that they too see the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank as a first step, and that further developments are possible. What those further developments are is usually left unsaid, since the walls in Israel have ears, but anyone with some political sense and sympathy for the Palestinian cause has no difficulty in guessing what it is.

In theory, at least, Palestinian members of the Israeli Communist Party argue quite passionately for the right of the State of Israel to exist, stating that the aim of the Palestinian is the establishment of a Palestinian state which will co-exist with the State of Israel. This line is justified by taking recourse to the Leninist principle of self-determination. The Palestinian ought to have the right of self-determination, but this right ought not to be denied to the Jews as well. The argument tends to falter a bit when one asks whether an area in which there is a Palestinian majority, such as the Galilee on the whole, and the so-called "Arab triangle", ought to be part of the State of Israel or of the Palestinian state. It is nevertheless true to say that Palestinian activists of the Israeli Communist Party show no official animosity towards either Jews or the notion of an Israeli state. One group of organisations which push a stronger Palestinian nationalist line are the 'Abne el Balad, "Sons of the Village", in several villages, notably Umm el Fahm, the largest Palestinian village in Israel, and the Progressive National Movement in the towns. These groups are in sympathy with what was the rejection front in the PLO, and they reject the notion of a Palestinian State limited to the West Bank and co-existing with the State of Israel. At the same time, their leadership displays little animosity towards Jews in Israel as such, and they would certainly accept that there are criteria which can establish the right of Jews to remain in Palestine. The dominant rubric they tend to use to describe the type of Palestinian state they aspire to is "a secular-democratic state of Palestine which would ensure that all its citizens enjoy full civil and communal rights". The Sons of the Village movement, while a viable opposition within the Palestinian sector to the Israeli Communist Party within a handful of villages, is a minority, and the ICP dominates the "Arab" scene in Israel on the whole, or at least did so when I was last there.

Movements such as the Sons of the Village draw a lot of strength from their emphasis, like the suppressed 'El 'Ard, which I mentioned earlier, on the land and its expropriation. The Israeli Communist Party has also made wide use of this issue. The love the Palestinians in Israel feel for the agricultural land they are being rob-

bed of is inextricably linked with their ever-growing sense of belonging to a wider dispossessed Palestinian nation. It is well to talk briefly about the problems faced by the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and then to look at the significance and consequences of land-expropriation.

Military rule no longer obtains within Israel itself, but it is practised with a vengeance in the West Bank and Gaza. Curfews, beatings, searches and arbitrary arrest are day-to-day events in the occupied territories. Settlements – set up in the main by fanatical, violent and armed religious Jewish zealots, and funded by the “settlement department” of the government – spring up like mushrooms. Armed settlers go on ad hoc patrols in Arab villages and towns in the territories, and go out of their way to intimidate the inhabitants. The policy of the military administration is officially described as a “strong arm” policy – the phrase used in the Bible and the Passover story to describe the plagues and punishments visited on the Egyptians by God. Settlements are established on expropriated lands, so that, quite apart from the fact that there are armed settlers, Palestinians in the West Bank are continually having land expropriated for reasons of “security”. The effect of the Israeli occupation, particularly in the West Bank, has been to consolidate Palestinian consciousness much in the way this happened in the State of Israel itself. The West Bank inhabitants, formerly under Jordanian rule, obviously wish to be free of Israeli occupation, but have no great desire to be absorbed once again by Jordan. Many activists on the West Bank have experienced both Jordanian and Israeli courts and prisons. The consensus of the inhabitants of the West Bank is that they ought to form part of a Palestinian state.

In economic terms, the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza have become assimilated into the Israeli economy as cheap migrant labourers, particularly in the construction sector and in agriculture. Perhaps up to 250 000 occupants of the territories work in Israel, and many are employed in menial capacities in the burgeoning settlements set up by the Israelis within the West Bank itself. Given the fact that there is a population of around one-and-a-half million in the occupied territories, a high proportion of whom are children, this is a substantial section of the work-force. The West Bank is virtually a reserve army of labour for the Israeli economy, in a manner not dissimilar to the so-called “Black homelands” in South Africa, although the scale of the South African reserve army is much larger by comparison. The very existence of this army of labour is probably itself a consequence of land-expropriation in the territories.

In Israel itself, there had been an on-going process of land-expropriation from Palestinians since 1948. Lands are declared a

closed military area, and their owners are forbidden to enter them. In due course, they are declared to be neglected by definition, and are then expropriated by a land-comptroller, who generally gives them to the Jewish National Fund. The JNF generally allocates land for agricultural settlements, such as Kibbutzim, and sometimes makes land available for urban settlements. It is forbidden to rent JNF land to Arabs, so that their former owners cannot even rent their land back. Sometimes settlements employ the former owners to work as casual labourers on the land they once owned. The Palestinian agricultural sector in Israel was greatly reduced by land-expropriation. Many villages, which had been self-supporting, lost their economic base, and villagers were forced to seek employment in the towns. They were not allowed to take up residence in the urban areas on the whole, however. Most urban centres were built on JNF land, which cannot be sold or rented to Arabs. Thus, many Palestinians in Israel were forced to become unskilled migrant labourers, often spending six days a week in make-shift accommodation in the urban areas, and returning to their villages on Saturdays. Together with the work-force from the occupied territories, Israeli Palestinians are a cheap reservoir of labour. Palestinians formed an insignificant part of the work-force before 1967. Since 1967, the economy has become increasingly dependent on them, and it is common to hear Israelis referring to menial tasks as “Arab labour”. I might add that life is not easy in the Palestinian villages in Israel. The local councils are notoriously underfunded for everything – health, education, sanitation, you name it. It is also extremely difficult to obtain building permits despite a burgeoning population. When houses become unbearably crowded, villagers often invest large amounts of savings, time and sweat building new, solid, but sadly illegal houses, which the Israeli authorities bulldoze or blow up, usually when they are virtually complete, often without warning, and sometimes without giving the occupants a reasonable chance to get themselves and their possessions outside. One demolition – at Majd al Krum in the Galilee – caused a great deal of resentment, because the bulldozers brought to demolish an illegally built house were escorted by many soldiers (local inhabitants say that there were five hundred soldiers but that sounds unlikely) and the house was bulldozed over a sleeping baby whose mother was not allowed to go in to get him out. The baby was later pulled out with minor scratches, but the people of the village have never forgotten the incident.

The effect of land-expropriation was to make many Palestinian peasants living in Israel and the occupied territories into landless peasants. The fact that they are predominantly migrant labourers, and that their homes continue to be in the vicinity of their expro-



priated lands perhaps accentuates this peasant consciousness. It is this which makes the image of farm-land so central to Palestinian national consciousness and protest in Israel and the occupied territories. For these Palestinians, national liberation means, perhaps more than anything else, farming their own land again.

Israel's substantial Sephardic population – the Oriental Jews, mostly from the Arab countries – overwhelmingly supported Menahem Begin and his Likud alignment in the last general elections in Israel. The Sephardi vote is increasingly associated with a hard-line foreign policy, involving military harshness, stepping up the settlement of the West Bank by Jews, and in favour of the annexation of the occupied territories *de jure*. The Sephardis, who formed forty-four per cent of Israel's Jewish work-force, have an objective interest in the continuation of the influx of unskilled migrant labour from the occupied territories, since it has facilitated greater Sephardi socio-economic mobility than was possible before 1967. Migrant labour from the occupied territories has partially displaced the Sephardis as Israel's reserve army of labour.

There are still substantial inequities between the Sephardic Jews and the Ashkenazic (or European) Jews in Israel. These inequities are not, and never were enshrined in the law of the land, but they have been part of the culture, which is strongly Eurocentric, since the establishment of the State and the subsequent waves of immigration from the Arab East and North Africa.

“A large part of the immigrants come to us with no knowledge of letters, with no sign of Jewish or human education. Two things cause this: the time and the place. They are born in a period of destruction and devastation in the world, the period of the world wars and the material and spiritual decline associated with the shaking of the world's institutions, and they come from dark, depressed and benighted lands. . . . The spiritual integration of this wave of immigration, its mixing and gelling, turning this human muck (or dust) into a cultured, creative and visionary nation – this is no easy task, and its difficulty is no less than those (which face us) regarding economic integration. What is required is an enormous effort, moral and educational . . .” “Human muck” – this was how David ben Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister, and of Eastern European extraction, characterised the Sephardic immigrants in 1950. It is simply not true that the bulk of Sephardic immigrants were uneducated and uncultured. Most of them came from well-established Jewish communities, and many had been *petit-bourgeoisie*. A few had even been *big-bourgeois*. Upon arrival in Israel, they were put into what were called *Ma'abarot*, shanty towns with very poor facilities in the middle of nowhere, without

adequate schools and the like, and a process of sharp, but not short lumpenisation began. An entire generation of Sephardic Jews was deprived of a proper education thanks to the short-sighted policy of the authorities and their denial that Sephardic Jews could possibly be at all cultured. By way of contrast, when a wave of Polish Jews arrived in Israel, the authorities built special urban housing for them. One rather expensive neighbourhood in Tel Aviv stemmed from this period and policy. The Sephardim, on the other hand, were sent to remote areas in the country. In periods of low employment, they were put out to do what was called "Avodat Dakhaf", literally "forced labour" along Keynesian lines, digging holes and filling them up, and the like – arduous, senseless work which they had no choice but to do, which added to their sense of powerlessness. Until the period following the 1967 war, the Sephardic Jews were the unskilled, uneducated labourers in Israel. As late as 1977, the signs of a Sephardi-Ashkenazi division of labour could be seen in the breakdown of economic activity. Some 36.6 per cent of the Ashkenazi work-force was involved in scientific, academic, professional, administrative and managerial work, as against 13.4 per cent of the Sephardi work-force. Roughly equal proportions of each section of the work-force were employed in clerical, trade and service activities, on the one hand, and in agriculture on the other. Nearly 40 per cent of the Sephardi work-force was employed as skilled and unskilled labour in industry, transport and construction, as against about 20 per cent of the Ashkenazi work-force. Sephardic Jews feel discriminated against in employment, and in cultural terms. The Israeli "establishment" is still strongly Eurocentric, and Sephardic culture tends to be somewhat looked down upon. Moroccans are often referred to as "tschach-tschachim", Hooligans, and some Ashkenazi Jews associate Sephardim with crime and street-gangs – an almost unavoidable consequence of the treatment meted out to Sephardic Jews in the early years of the State, which did indeed push many of the youth into the lumpen-proletariat, the "dangerous class". This is no longer strictly true, but old associations remain. Many Sephardis are highly suspicious of "wuss-wusses" (from the Yiddish "wuss", "what?"), and many Ashkenazim see Sephardim as an alien element within the State of Israel. If the Palestinians living within Israel are third-class citizens in practice, the Sephardic Jews are second-class citizens.

Israeli workers, whether Sephardi or Ashkenazi, do not enjoy an easy existence in the State of Israel. Since Menahem Begin's Likud coalition came to power on the basis of an ultra-hawkish foreign policy and monetary economics of a Miltonian variety (familiar enough to residents of Thatcherite Britain), inflation has soared to around 150 per cent per annum. Trade unions long ago

won the right to have cost-of-living increments every three months, which contribute towards buffering inflation for wage-earners, but these by no means match the soaring inflation. Wages in Israel, and standards of living, are relatively low in any case, to the extent that it is profitable for a few industries in the United States to have parts for their products manufactured in Israel. The government is involved in constant skirmishes with the Labour-dominated general trade union, the Histadrut, which, corrupt though it is, and though it is the largest owner of industry in the State, is nevertheless the sole protection the workers have. The security of every single resident of the country is also perpetually endangered by the risk of wars of attrition and open wars which are possible at any time. This risk is largely the the product of an unwillingness on the part of the Israeli leadership, Likud and Labour, over the years, to as much as acknowledge that the Palestinian leadership in exile ought to be negotiated with. Insofar as the official line is that any compromise made with the Palestinians constitutes an abrogation of Zionist principles, and that Zionism and the Palestinians cannot co-exist under any circumstances, Zionism poses a constant threat to the physical security of the Jewish population in Israel. Inasmuch as Israeli workers are a source of surplus value to those who employ them, and the Israeli industrial complex is an integral part of the Zionist system in Israel, Israeli workers are exploited by Zionism, and have an objective interest, in the “de-zionification” of Israel. It is very rare indeed for this objective interest to be realised subjectively. In another sense, the land which Israeli workers live on, the trade-union health schemes, the industries in which they work, and so on, are all based on a “primitive expropriation” from the Palestinians. Should Israel be “de-zionified”, the Palestinians would have to be compensated, at the expense, presumably, of ordinary people in Israel. Israeli workers therefore have a real interest in the perpetuation of the Zionist status-quo in another sense. It is not incorrect to talk of the “dual character” of the Israeli Jewish working-class, which has, on the one hand, an interest qua workers in the demise of Zionism, and an interest qua Jewish Israelis in the continuation of the status-quo.

There are groups of Jews in Israel which do not unequivocally accept Zionism, and there are a few small groups which are explicitly anti-Zionist. One significant movement, which does however fall squarely within the Zionist camp, but which opposes the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the drive into Lebanon, is the Peace Now movement. It was formed by a group of young reserve-officers in 1977, before Sadat visited Israel, and even then mobilised tens of thousands of people in mass rallies throughout

the country. Many of its supporters come from Labour-aligned kibbutzim. The Labour alignment leadership has been making moves over the last three years which would seem to indicate that it is trying to make itself the "power behind the throne" in the Peace Now movement. This is bad news, since the movement is broad, and a large measure of its influence and ability to mobilise people stemmed from the fact that it was not aligned with any existing party. There are other, smaller, movements of soldiers who are not happy about serving in the Lebanon and the Occupied Territories. One party on the Zionist Left is what is called "Shelli". It comprises the pro-Zionist section of the Israeli Communist Party, which broke away from the anti-Zionist section in the mid-sixties. It also comprises various people who had been on the left-wing of the Labour Party. It opposes the occupation of the territories, and favours negotiations with the moderates within the PLO. Further to the left is RAKAH, the Israeli Communist Party. Most of its members are Palestinian, but its leadership is fifty per cent Jewish. It strongly supports the Soviet Union, and my guess is that it is tolerated largely for the sake of covert contact and dialogue with the Soviet Union. RAKAH, while against Zionism as such, holds that the State of Israel has a right to exist, and pushes a rubric of Jewish-Arab fraternity in Israel, and a Palestinian State on the West Bank which will co-exist with the State of Israel. It also points out, correctly, that the State of Israel as now constituted is the agent of the USA in the region. Rakah recognises that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people. Rakah is viewed with suspicion and hatred by most Israeli Jews, particularly since it has four (I think!) mandates in the Knesset, and is vociferous in that forum.

There are a number of minute groups of Jews on the far left in Israel, notably the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen-Marxist) and the Israeli Socialist Organisation (Matzpen). These are splits from one organisation, which was originally formed as a split from the Communist Party. Both support the PLO. The RCL supports the rejectionists within the PLO, and holds positions similar to those of the Sons of the Village movement. Matzpen gives a measure of support to the notion of a Palestinian State in the West Bank, since a state in the historical territory of Palestine seems not to be on. Matzpen talks of the need for a "de-zionification" of Israel. Both the RCL and Matzpen are fringe groups, although the RCL used to enjoy, and perhaps still enjoys, a significant influence among radical Palestinian nationalists in Israel. Both of these groups, agree with the Israeli Communist Party and the Palestinian groups in characterising Israel as a watchdog of American imperialism in the Middle East. They point out that the State is not eco-

nomically self-sufficient by any means, even when defence-expenditure is discounted, and that it survives economically thanks to massive American loans and outright grants. These loans and grants are a hidden wage for the political function Israel plays in the area.

We now come to the PLO, the bogeyman of the Israeli leadership. Israelis often get the impression that the PLO is a monolithic, unequivocally evil organisation, whose main aim is the physical extermination of the Jews in Israel. In point of fact, the PLO is the umbrella organisation for a number of movements, each of which is represented in the Palestinian National Council, a sort of parliament in exile. Some of the movements, notably Naif Hawatmeh's Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, have always recognised the right of Jews to live in Palestine, and have sought a "pact" between Jewish and Palestinian workers. The PDFLP, at least, rigorously distinguishes Zionism and the Jewish people living in Israel, and sees the latter as dupes of the Zionist movement, which is in turn the tool of American imperialism. The PDFLP now seeks the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank.

By the time that Lebanon was invaded last year, Al Fatah, the dominant component of the PLO was dominated by Palestinian moderates. The PLO representative in London a few years ago, Said Hammami, tragically murdered, was consciously engaged in dialogue with "non-Zionist" Israelis. His definition of "Zionism" was narrower than mine, and he accepted members of the Labour Party left as non-Zionists, and went out of his way to foster dialogue with them, and to open the roads to negotiations with the Israelis. His emphasis on diplomatic, rather than armed, struggle, came to be accepted as an aim by most of the Al Fatah leadership, including Yassir Arafat himself. Their aim was to negotiate the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank which could co-exist with the State of Israel. There were elements in the PLO which rejected this, notably the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, led by George Habash, and the split from Al Fatah (and later from the PLO) led by the pro-Iraqi Abu Nidal. It must be noted that the ideology of the PDFLP itself precludes any anti-semitism, although I do not doubt that there is anti-semitism among the rank-and-file of the movement. Habash's objections to a Palestinian state restricted to the West Bank are based on the fact that the USA was pushing in this direction under Carter, and that it was then seen as a means of defusing and controlling the Palestinian national movement. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, aimed as it was at the extermination of the PLO, was meant to absolutely crush any possibility of negotiations with the Palestinian leadership, and to destroy the possibility of reconciliation in that respect.

It would not be incorrect to say that Begin and Sharon saw the prospect of being forced to negotiate with the Palestinian leadership, and even worse, that the Israeli public should come to see the Palestinian leaders as peace-makers rather than as the monsters they are made out to be, as infinitely more dangerous to Zionist interests than any war and any number of Israeli corpses. Sadat's visit in 1977 proved that the Israeli public was indeed capable of coming to see someone previously depicted as a beast, as a peace-maker, and Begin and Sharon could not take the risk that this would come to pass with regard to the Palestinian leadership.

I mentioned Sadat's visit and the Camp David accords. Did this not represent a reconciliation? If just Israel and Egypt are considered in isolation, perhaps so. Given the fact that the catalyst of the conflict between Egypt and Israel was the fate of the Palestinians, it was simply a sell-out. The Camp David agreements did not make life any easier for the Palestinians. Indeed, Israel's first serious invasion of Lebanon took place soon after they were signed, and the aim of that thrust was to physically exterminate as much of the PLO as possible. It is difficult to believe that it was not agreed that Israel could seek to do so in a secret clause of the agreement with Egypt, since the very existence of Palestinian refugees and the PLO has long been an embarrassment to the oppressive Arab regimes of the area. The very existence of the PLO has always been a potential incentive for the oppressed masses of the Arab world to seize power, and it has been handled very gingerly indeed. Peace in the Middle East means, first and foremost, peace with the Palestinians, and anything that does not work towards that end does not truly make for reconciliation. The Camp David agreements were a step away from any lasting reconciliation in this sense.

Is there any hope for reconciliation in the Middle East? Has this rather amorphous analysis pointed out any factors which gravitate towards it? The more I think about it, the more I come to feel that the only reconciliation possible is a reconciliation in the Pauline sense — one that comes about at the end of time. Many Palestinians, and some Jews as well, see a socialist federation of the Arab East, including what is now known as Israel, as the only framework which can give justice to the Palestinians, guarantee the security and well-being of the Jewish population, and ensure that they too will not be deprived of national rights. It is doubtful that anything less can break the economic division of labour between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in Israel, and turn the Sephardim from the bearers of a despised cultural tradition into people who are not viewed as "inferior". Like so many ideal solutions, this solution is remote. There are elements which could perhaps contribute towards it — the very insecurity, economic and physical, of the Israelis; the

existence of the Peace Now movement; the fact that Labour Zionism is not closed to the possibility of negotiating the future of the West Bank, and that so many Palestinian hopes focus on the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank even at the cost of co-existence with a Zionist state. A few of the paradoxes generated by Zionism could also push towards a change in the status-quo which could tend towards our eschatological reconciliation. The fact that Sephardim are caused to be increasingly disenchanted by Euro-centrism in Israel, and the Zionist ideological edifice is definitely Euro-centric, is one such paradox which could conceivably be used to effect a rapport in time between Sephardis and Palestinians, however unlikely this may seem at the moment. The very dependence of Israeli industry on cheap Palestinian labour, opposed as it is to the notion of Jewish self-sufficiency enshrined in Zionist ideology, while it can be made into a case for Israeli territorial expansionism, could suggest to those unhappy with exploitation the possibility of the integration of what is now Israel into the economy of the region in a non-exploitative fashion, and without territorial aggrandizement. I am not suggesting by any means that migrant Palestinian labour is a good thing. The exploitation of Palestinian labour is wicked, as is the exploitation of any other type of labour. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to see whether the rate of inflation in Israel and the constant drop in the standard of living can induce Palestinian and Israeli workers in the same work-place to make common cause in taking industrial action against their employer. That would be interesting, and would represent a giant stride towards the almost eschatological and apparently unlikely reconciliation we have been thinking about.

## **The Emmaus Story: Necessity and Freedom**

**Timothy Radcliffe O P**

The Emmaus story, Luke 24:13-35, is a bifocal narrative. It pivots on two moments of disclosure and the puzzle is how they relate. The first is on the road, when Jesus interprets the Scriptures: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and so enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (v 26). The second is in Emmaus, when they recognise him in the breaking of bread, but Luke cleverly links it with the first by having the disciples immediately remember what happened on the road: "And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to