Stellenbosch Theological Journal 2024, Vol 10, No 1, 1–17
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2024.v10n1.m1
Online ISSN 2413-9467 | Print ISSN 2413-9459

Protestantism, post-colonialism and Israel – 1948–1967

Gert J. van Klinken
Protestant Theological University, The Netherlands
gjvanklinken@pthu.nl

Abstract

In this contribution, Protestant interaction with the State of Israel is analysed within the framework of the aftermath of Modern Imperialism between 1850 and 1950. It was the time when Western European nations expanded into areas previously inhabited by others, where they established white settlers' communities as the political and economic dominant in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and elsewhere. The genesis of the State of Israel in 1948 can be seen as a late example of the same phenomenon.

Very soon after 1948 however, most Protestant churches would become aware of the importance of post-colonialism and a new global world order, where the West was no longer dominant and issues of land ownership in the former (semi-)colonies became important. This implied an overhaul of the idea, still current among Protestants in the 1950s, that the population exchanges in former Palestine in 1948 needed to be accepted both as a cultural advance and as an outcome of Bible exegesis.

Keywords

migration; slavery; holocaust; State of Israel; Western Protestantism

Introduction: perceptions of population exchange

Westerners settled all over the world, moving to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and in lesser numbers to Rhodesia and South Africa. Unlike most migrants of the present day, many of them did so as colonialists: taking the best land and aiming at both political domination and demographic preponderance. This migration away from Europe belongs to a relatively recent history. Unlike the "classic" forms of colonial

expansion (like the Spanish takeover of the Inca and Aztec empires in the 16th centuries, with the attendant bloodshed and brutality) or the histories of Slavery and the Holocaust, this more recent transfer of populations is still mainly appreciated for its positive effects. Viewed from the perspective of Western culture in general, as reflected in popular culture, the general emphasis is still on the benefits for the poor and the rejected of the Old World. Freedom to live by their convictions, economic opportunity, potential for self-betterment and (quite literally) room for further deployment could all be found in a measure that Europe was unable or unwilling to provide. Less explicit, but still taken for granted in many cases, is the assumption that even the original inhabitants of the land (the 'first people') benefited from the encounter. European rule provided an end to internal strife, allowed for agricultural and industrial expansion, and constitutional representative bodies. If a massive transfer of land and of political authority were needed to make this possible, it could still be said that this was for the advancement of happiness for more people than in the situation preceding the European takeover. The effect is described by Nathaniel Philbrick, in his study of America's Puritan "Pilgrim Fathers" as "romantic nostalgia toward America's native population" – but always based on the assumption that the native story was now encapsulated in the quest of the Pilgrims from the West.[1] The Western takeover was framed in terms of a "manifest destiny" to bring both material progress and an enlightened version of the Biblical message to areas that had previously been underdeveloped or even considered as barbarous.[2]

It follows from these assumptions that the drastic measure of a transfer of population, as a means to make room for the newcomers, can be reaffirmed in hindsight. Even if it is admitted that the original inhabitants of the area (before the Westerners took control) suffered from dispossession and a second-rate citizenship in the new order of things, these phenomena are conceptualized within a framework of necessary evils. Necessary, in the sense that the ever-awkward story of a forced takeover is justified in terms of a higher good: a better future for those who had suffered so much in

1 Philbrick, *Mayflower. A story of courage, community and war*, 355.

2 Cozzens, *The Earth is Weeping. The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West*, 15.

their troubled European past, the introduction of constitutional forms of representative government, and technological advancement based on Western technology and education. Considered as a whole, the importance attached to these improvements is so strong that even the dispossessed are counted among those who are benefiting from the general effect of the transition. They will have education, health care, (limited) democratic representation and job opportunities in ways that were not available to their ancestors. That is to say: only if the natives are reacting in a "rational" way. In order to reap the benefits of Western takeover, it is imperative that the pre-existing population accepts the land transfer, the establishment of a political sovereignty, and a general minority status. A refusal to do so would imply a propensity to pre-modern rules of conduct: that is to say, to violence, unruly behaviour or even terrorism. The effect on Western law enforcement has often been reflected in a tendency to push the original dispossession a step further: even more of the land is taken in order to safeguard the new order against the perceived threat of "native unrest." The native finds himself in the position of a stranger, an anomaly that needs to be contained.[3]

The case of Western Protestantism and the establishment of the State of Israel

A comparatively late example of this phenomenon is the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. For Western settlers in America and Australia, it had been obvious from the beginning that the building of their new nations depended on a massive transfer of land for their own uses and on the settler-community becoming a demographic and political majority. This was the reasoning behind the Indian Land Removal Act in the United States of America, introduced by President Andrew Jackson. During the 19th century, there was a common belief that this policy had been for a higher good, and there is little evidence that this view had been altered in mainstream Protestantism by the mid-20th century. In fact, one of the main characteristics of the appraisal of Israel in the fifties is a general willingness among Western Protestants to accept the fact that the new

3 Field and Hook, *Forts of the American Frontier 1820–91. Central and Northern Plains.*

nation had only become possible through a forced removal of major parts of the population that had been living in the area until 1948. Given the affinity to America, this was only to be expected. There was considerable support for this fascinating young State among Protestants in the West, and not just as a way to deal with the moral legacy of the Holocaust in Europe. Israel also seemed to offer a much-needed vindication of the Western democratic identity (shared between Christians and Ashkenazi Jews) against the background of a perceived backwardness of the Arab majority who lived in Palestine until their removal in 1948. Israel was admired as an inspiring example of the fighting spirit, that according to many, had been lacking in European countries like Holland and France in 1940. For Protestants it also opened up the vista of rediscovering the Jewish roots of both the Old and the New Testament, and a potential of providing an invigorated Biblical moral foundation based on that discovery. This was the view of young German theologians such as Friedrich Marquardt and Heinz Kremers. The evangelicals in the United States of America also strongly believed that Israel offered a living proof of prophecy being fulfilled.

The result of these factors joined together was a positive appreciation of Israel, that emphatically included the insight that this new state had been made possible by the removal of a majority of the previous inhabitants of the land. From a present-day perspective, it can be seen that this phenomenon was accepted by a majority of mainstream Protestant periodicals in Germany and Holland in the fifties and sixties, and perhaps (though the picture of American Protestantism in general is far from complete) in the United States as well. This positive appreciation went further than a mere acceptance of "facts on the ground."

Removal of the Arabs had been necessary to make Israel possible, explained Dutch Reformed Church theologian Theo Vriezen:

> The transition from Arab to Jew implies a transition from an Eastern to a Western form of life, affecting the rhythm of life. There is a feverish urge to work hard. (…) We can positively affirm that great things have been achieved (…). No more whining and begging kids, or filth and stench, no more sleeping Arabs, and invalids in the

> streets, with all their signs of poverty, no more slums – much has changed for the good.[4]

A monument in Tiberias in the form of a mortar or *davidka*, that had been used to shell the Arab quarter, was popular among Western tourists. In Tiberias the Arab community had been evicted almost in its entirety. The plaque that commemorated this event carried the text of Psalm 2:8–9:

> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.
> You shall break them with a rod of iron,
> And dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

A liberated land?

The French Protestant periodical *L'Ami d'Israël* stated that the times of former Jewish Mission were definitively over. A new future beaconed: of dialogue between Christianity and Judaism, and a build-up of their enemies.[5] The *Guide Bleu Israel*, Paris edition 1955, noted that the land had been liberated from the ravages of foreign suppression. Like Europe after the downfall of Hitler, the land was blossoming again now that the rightful owners had returned: "Les marécages que les successives occupations étrangères ont laissé subsister par incurie ont été asséchés et le sol a été rendu à l'agriculture."[6]

Faded photographs in the Scottish Presbyterian Hospital in Tiberias showed pictures of Muslims, Jews, and Christians. In contrast to such scenes from a bygone world, the al-Zaydani mosque[7], in front of the Scotti, now served as a slaughterhouse for poultry. Children were oblivious of the recent past, says Ria Snoek, whose father had been posted in Israel by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. "It was just the way it was."[8] According to Ria's father, redundant files of former Arab patients had

4 Vriezen, *Palestina en Israël,* 193. Vriezen would modify his views during later years.

5 Muller-Duvernoy, "Retour d'Israël", *L'Ami d'Israël*, 77-78.

6 Finbert, *Les Guides Bleus Israel*, 179.

7 Referred to as *cami el-bahr*, "mosque by the lake."

8 Telephone conversation Ria Snoek by author, Leiderdorp 10 October 2013.

been cleared out. Any of their remaining holdings had been nationalized in 1950 in accordance with the Absentees' Property Law. Registered as an "absentee" was anyone "who – at any time from when the State was founded until then – was outside the area under Israel's rule, fled his home or was a resident of a neighbouring Arab state."[9] Properties administrated by a Custodian of Absentee Property could be legally sold off or leased out.[10] "Travelling through the country, ruins of Arab villages are everywhere," Walpot remarked. He studied theology in Groningen and had hitchhiked his way to Israel. He blamed the British for what had happened here:

> A small road, now overgrown by weeds, provided access to the hill: overgrown remnants of walls were everywhere; a single house even carried a roof. I was reminded of the suffering here, a suffering for which the Western countries are to blame (…). The English carry a major burden of responsibility. It was they who left too soon, leaving chaos in their wake. The Jews had to fight for their lives against superior Arab numbers (…).[11]

Ria Snoek's father recalled an outing in the countryside:

> Fifteen kilometres or so to the West of Tiberias is a crossroads. We came to a halt, climbing to a cactus hedgerow and a dilapidated wall. We came to pick grapes, planted by the former residents of the place.[12]

"They could not coexist"

In the aftermath of the Second World War, people searched for a new beginning, rather than looking back. "That memory shaped our perception, not 1948," Johan Snoek would say. Traces of previous habitation in fresh woodland plantations were also noted by Ellen Tuyt. "Those ruins had no place in any intended dialogue of Christians and Jews. One had to choose

---

9 Kislev, "Land expropriations," in *New Outlook. Middle East Monthly,* 23. Massawi, *Palestine and the law,* 185-187.

10 Pedahzur, *The triumph of Israel's Radical Right*, xii.

11 Walpot, "Arabieren in isolement", *Leeuwarder Courant* 18 October 1958.

12 Interview J.M. Snoek by author, Rotterdam 27 January 2012. The story refers to the Lubiya village. Since 1949 the grounds belong to kibbutz Lavi. Martin Gilbert, Israel. A history263.

between Israeli and Arab friendship, that was how we felt. They could not coexist."[13]

Mennonite Frits Kuiper in the Netherlands was a colourful man, an admirer of Lenin and Barth who also supported Israel. Having witnessed the deportations from Amsterdam, he felt that support for Israel was an imperative moral duty for any Christian in the post-war world.[14] Kuiper affirmed the Arab expulsion in 1948 as unavoidable, if the Jewish people were to be reborn in their promised homeland.[15] Israel demonstrated basic principles of the Torah in the context of the modern world, in opposition to a petrified and autocratic Islam. In the 17th century *Staten*-translation, the Book of Nehemiah counts "Arabs" among the enemies of Israel. Taking his lead from this text, Kuiper argued as follows:

> An Arab is perfectly religious, in his own eyes. But he rejects the special calling of Israel. (…) He believes, but (…) in material force and in the ultimate invisible power of fate. Nehemiah says of him, that he will have no memory in Jerusalem. History is not being made by this kind of people.[16]

Lenin's dealings with the *kulaks* provided an example of how to deal with feudal landowners like the former Arab sheikhs, even though this time the aim had been attained by more humane means.

Colonialism as perceived improvement

In hindsight it seems hard to explain why Protestants had little difficulty disassociating themselves with the indigenous Arabs, which included Christian Arabs. There was a tendency to portray them as backward at best and as evil (new Nazis) at worst. The consequence of either assessment was that the forced removal of a majority of the former population of Israel in 1948 was widely accepted. One of the possible explanations is that the land

---

13 Interview Ellen Schoneveld-Tuyt by author, Rijswijk 17 September 2014.

14 F. Kuiper to K. Barth, Amsterdam 28 January 1948. Alle G. Hoekema and Pieter Post (eds.), *Kuiper (1898–1974) doopsgezind theoloog. Voordrachten en getuigenissen over Kuiper en een selectie van zijn brieven,* 240-241.

15 Kuiper, *Israël en de Gojiem,* 105 and 177.

16 Kuiper, *Wij en ons erfdeel*, 20.

was perceived as neglected and almost empty, before the arrival of colonists from the West, both Christian and Jewish. Flavius Josephus, well known to the Protestant audience, had described the area as a densely populated part of the world, but that was long ago. Zionist authors portrayed the area as barren and underdeveloped, at least until their arrival. It is not immediately clear why they portrayed it in this manner, as maps prepared by Napoleon and the Palestine Exploration Society showed otherwise. It was a well cultivated region, according to French sources.[17] The American author Eliza Rogers (1828-1910) mentioned cereals, lentils, tobacco, cotton and sesame seeds, the major obstacle to prosperity being caused by heavy Ottoman taxation. The fellahin lacked the means for further development: 'If the plain of Akka were cultivated with skill and energy, it would yield abundantly.'[18] This rather condescending view was reflected in proposals to "improve" the area by European or American colonization. That idea, though also attractive to the Zionists, originated with the Christians. German geographer Carl Ritter (1779–1859) had advocated a takeover of the coastal plain by European farmers, as the soil was excellent, and the port of Haifa was nearby. In his plan, the natives would be pushed off to the hills, in the same manner as the Indians in America had been relocated to reservations.[19] For the time being, the idea was dropped. The *Baedecker* edition of 1894 had to admit: "The land is richly cultivated."[20]

An uncommonly detailed description appeared in Germany in 1910. Married to an Arab wife, Julius Jost had a keen eye for the environment. He distinguished between intensive and extensive zones of cultivation. The former zone was found near villages such as ez-Zib (Achziw), Mazra'a and al-Sumayriyya with their gardens and orchards protected by cactus hedges. The latter was an open field system. This dichotomy in the landscape could be explained by the fact that the extensive zones were also used by the Bedouin. Farming techniques were modernizing, though hampered by a lack of capital.[21]

---

17 Lortet, *La Syrie d'aujourd'hui.*

18 Rogers, *Domestic life in Palestine* (1862), 141–142.

19 Ritter, *The comparative geography of Palestine and the Sinaite Peninsula*, 367–368.

20 Socin and Benziger, *Palestine and Syria*, 269.

21 Julius Jost, *Ein Frühlingsritt durch Syrien. Ungelehrte Reisegedanken*, 57–75.

Dutch Zionist Jacobus Henricus Kann admired the "fertile plain of Acre" primarily for its potential for Westerners. "Eretz Israel, the Jewish Land, in ancient times known as Canaan, that is Lowland or Holland," seemed both exotic and familiar. "Indeed, the plain reminds of the Dutch coastal landscape."[22] He was not alone in perceiving similarities of this kind. The low-lying rocks at the beaches near al-Sumayriyya had reminded Samuel Colcord Bartlett in 1874 of Maine in the United States. "The rocky coast, incessantly pounded by the waves, was familiar-looking." There was a potential for development here, under Western supervision of course. Repairing the road to Tyr for example, "built by the Romans, now neglected for more than a thousand years."[23]

Arabs in Israel

Following the Law on Israeli Nationality (1952), Israeli Arabs obtained the right to vote, though still under military surveillance. In Western Galilee they were "concentrated" in medieval Akko and in Mazra'a, with the alternative of being resettled in Kafr Yasif or Abu Sinan. Arab "present absentees" lost any claims to their former homes or lands. Druzes found it disturbing that they were registered as Arabs. Numbers of both groups expanded rapidly, and villages were unable to provide full employment. "The old quasi-feudal structure breaks down," according to a British observer.[24] Travel guides blissfully referred to "villages druzes et arabes très pittoresques."[25] Simha Flapan, head of Arab affairs of the left-wing Mapam-party, reported a very different reality:

> The lands of many villages have been cut down to a minimum to make possible the establishment of new settlements around them. As a result, many of the villages have become a reservoir of landless peasants or

22 Kann, *Erets Israël. Het Joodsche land*, vi.

23 Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine, through Sinai, the Wilderness and the South Country. Observations of a journey made with special reference to the history of the Israelites*, 519.

24 Norman Lewis to E.A. Chapman-Andrews (British ambassador Beirut), 1018/84.

25 Finbert, *Les Guides Bleus Israël*, 180.

> smallholders who must make a living as hired workers outside the village.[26]

Noting that agricultural land of good quality had become a scarce commodity, the Knesset accepted the Land Acquisition Act in 1953. Owners of land earmarked for expropriation would receive compensation, based on nominal value in January 1950.[27]

An alternative Protestant view: Nazareth

A different perception came from the Protestant community located in the one remaining major Arab community in Israel: Nazareth. Walpot came to stay there in 1958 and was very impressed by the staff of the overcrowded hospital.[28] Swiss surgeon Hans Bernath, a member of the Free Evangelical Churches (FEC), had worked for the Red Cross in the appalling conditions of the refugee camps Akaba and el-Auja near Jericho.[29] The FEC had roots in Anabaptism. Bernath would respect worldly authority, but strongly believed that autonomous Christian communities should never identify with any State that carried the sword. The refugee camps had confronted him with the harsh reality of human power politics. Their effects were noticeable in Nazareth as well: "Restrictions on movement imposed by military rule, absence of means of travel and the general depressed mood of the people."[30] Tourist guides used to warn unsuspecting Westerners about the squalor and pushy street vendors. A short visit to the holy places was advised, then to be off again as soon as possible.[31] Walpot was taught by Hans and Madeleine Bernath to look at the situation differently. "The Israeli government seems oblivious to the troubles of these people, who are living as minorities on their home soil."[32] Celebrations for Independence

---

26 Flapan, "Integrating the Arab village", *New Outlook. Middle East Monthly,* 5-3, 24-25.

27 Kislev, "Land Expropriations," 26.

28 Interview I.J. Walpot by author, Deventer 30 January 2014.

29 Farah, *What shall I do with my life? The exciting story of a Swiss couple in Nazareth,* 75.

30 Srouji, *Cyclamens from Galilee. Memoirs of a physician from Nazareth*, 182.

31 Lüth, *Israel. Heimat für Juden und Araber*, 31-32.

32 Walpot, "Arabieren in isolement," *Leeuwarder Courant*.

Day, 1 May 1958, ended in local disturbances.[33] It fell to the EMMS hospital to treat the wounded.

The position of Hans Bernath was that of principled neutrality. He lived and worked in Nazareth, where there was a strong element of ill feeling against Israel. He felt that it was his duty to contact Jews as well, in a setting of practical cooperation. As a consequence, he became engaged in a plan to build a Protestant kibbutz as a contribution to the development of the State of Israel. His only condition was that it would not be built on confiscated property, rented out by Keren Kayemet LeYisrael (KKL)[34] or assigned by Israeli authorities from available "abandoned lands."[35]

The Western dialogue of "Church and Israel" is commonly treated as the dawn of a new era. However, Bernath soon found out that Protestant perceptions of Israel remained indebted to the preceding age of Modern Imperialism between 1840 and 1940.

Christian neutrality

The resettling of "present absentees" after 1948 pushed the percentage of Muslims to 60 percent. A rapidly expanding population had to make do with less space than before, as the Eastern part of the city had been taken over by Nazareth Illit (Higher Nazareth). Acting on emergency regulations, the land had been expropriated in 1954 and building began in 1957. Arab Nazarenes had fallen on hard times. They "found themselves cut off from jobs in Haifa, Acre and Jaffa, largely due to travel restrictions as well as to their replacement by Jews. Farmers and laborers, predominantly Muslims, were uprooted (…). Unemployment soared."[36] The Arab city was controlled from the police station in al-Mascowbia, formerly a property of the Russian Orthodox Church.[37] Industrial plants developed not in the old city but

33 Kassis (ed.), *Palestine & Palestinians. Guidebook,* 331–340.

34 Jewish National Fund. "The Hebrew name, *Keren Kayemet Le'Yisrael*, came from a Talmudic dictum about good deeds: their fruits enjoyed in this world, while the capital abides [*ha'keren kayemet*] in the world to come" (Martin Gilbert, Israel, 19).

35 Sand, *The invention of the Land of Israel. From Holy Land to Homeland*, 226–227.

36 Sennott, *The Body and the Blood. The Middle East's vanishing Christians and the possibility for peace*, 87.

37 Said, *Out of place. A memoir*, 114.

around Migdal HaEmek, a Jewish town on former lands of al-Mujaydil.[38] Old Nazareth became a reception area for impoverished people. Many voted communist.[39]

The Arab population soared from 16,000 in 1948 to 25,000 in 1960. According to alderman Abdul Aziz Z'Ubi, they were a penniless community with few prospects.[40] "Nearly a third of the town's area is owned by the churches, monasteries and missions, who are exempt from any rates and taxes, including payment for public services supplied by the municipality. On the other hand, nearly a third of the town's inhabitants are landless refugees."[41] Freedom of movement was restricted, as was the economic traffic flow:

Regulation 109 which permitted the arrest of a person for being in a prohibited area; Regulation 110 which allowed police supervision over a person for up to one year; Regulation 111 which provided the legal basis for administrative detention by military commanders; Regulation 124 which provided for house arrest; and Regulation 125 which permitted military commanders to declare certain areas closed, persons entering or leaving which had to possess a special permit.[42]

The Nazareth hospital of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society had been founded by Pacradooni Kaloost Vartan (1835–1908). As head of the department of surgery,[43] Hans Bernath cooperated with X-ray specialist George Abdo, Basil Bashlawi, Edmund Sabbagh, Saleem Nassar, Runa Mackay and others.[44] They emphasized the principle of neutrality for

38 Pappé, *The forgotten Palestinians. A history of the Palestinians in Israel*, 74.

39 Landau, *The Arabs in Israel. A political study*, 83.

40 'Abd al-'Azīz Zu'bī belonged to the Mapam Party. Following graduation from the Arab college in Jerusalem, he became secretary of the Government Workers' Union in Nazareth and, later, deputy mayor of this town and an active promoter of Arab culture in Israel (Jacob M. Landau, *The Arabs in Israel,* 142). Mapam adhered to Socialist principles of Hashomer Hatzair.

41 'Abd al-'Azīz Zu'bī, "Nazareth looks for the future," in *New Outlook. Middle East Monthly*, 33.

42 Gilbert, *Israel. A history,* 345.

43 Wmw.nazarethtrust.org.

44 In memoriam for Baker by rev. Ibrahim Sim'an, www.baptist.org.il. Cf. Edward Said, *Out of place,* 76.

a doctor. However, as Runa Mackay remarked, sympathy for the Arab plight ran deep: "As ninety-nine percent of the patients and local staff were Palestinian Arabs, one absorbed the history, the culture and the ethos."[45] Mackay, a Presbyterian from Hull, remembered in 2015:

> Female participation was essential for the proper functioning of the EMMS Hospital, as most Arab and Druze families would only allow their mothers, wives and daughters being treated by a woman. The hospital was poor, we asked a vinery in Safed for alcohol to clean shot wounds. My interest was not very political, I did not understand half of what was going on. Most people refrained from referring to their personal past. That was a common attitude, we were all so busy. I did all the obstetrics, caesarean sections, and so on. Which was fine, I felt that I was needed. (…) The Jews had been through the Holocaust, the Arabs through the Naqba (to use the modern description). In the fifties, people would not talk about it. The Arabs were frightened that, if they said something "wrong", someone might report them to the Israeli police.[46]

Hans and Madeleine Bernath

Bernath had been trained as a soldier in the Alps, despite his Pacifist inclinations. He said it improved his skills in improvisation. When they were boys, Hans and his brother Jacob had enjoyed tending their parents' fields: "It was understood that food on the table, though a gift of God, would not turn up by itself without someone to plant and someone to harvest. So why should they not be partners in the process?"[47] Madeleine Bernath-Perret had been raised in Romania. She taught in French, English, German and Arab.[48] Mackay wondered why they intended to join a Western kibbutz project that was intended primarily for the Jews. Israel was perceived as the cause of many problems in Nazareth:

---

45 Mackay, *Exile in Israel. A personal journey with the Palestinians*, 15-17.

46 Interview doctor Runa Mackay by author, Edinburgh 12 January 2015.

47 Farah, *What shall I do with my life?* 49–50.

48 Ibidem.

> Getting to work in Haifa required a permit, every day. If a man failed to obtain that piece of paper, he would be put off from the bus. There were no industries. Most of the educated had left in 1948. There was censorship. It was hard, if not impossible, to hear from your family in a refugee camp in Lebanon or in Syria. You could not simply make a telephone call, or even send a letter.[49]

Paramount for Hans and Madeleine Bernath was a Christian ethos of reaching out to all others, without discrimination. Since they were living and working among the Arabs, they felt it their moral duty to cooperate with the Jews as well. The general idea was to work for the common good, and to demonstrate the substance of Christian faith during the process. There was no doubt about their stamina.[50]

The effort to work together with the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland in Germany did not work out. The Germans and Dutch feared that Bernath was still more committed to Christian witness than to dialogue and that he was unwilling to sever any ties to Christian Jews. A most important consideration in the heightened atmosphere before the outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967 was his connection to the Arab community. Israeli authorities were informed and Bernath was forced to step down. The Six-Day War showed an insurmountable difference between the prevailing Protestant views in Holland and Germany, where a God-given victory was celebrated, and the Swiss group in Nazareth, where the events were perceived as a disastrous outcome of neo-colonialist policy and land acquisition by the force of arms. All they could do was to continue in their job: "They worked for the EMMS Hospital with all their heart, and by doing so helped ensure that it still exists today. They believed in the practical example of a Christian life."[51] Hans became director, succeeded after his retirement by the Mennonite Bob Martin.[52] There were few grudges. The deepest regret for Hans and Madeleine Bernath was that their ideal of political neutrality had failed. Living and working among the Arabs, they

49 Interview Runa Mackay by author, Edinburgh 12 January 2015.

50 J.J. Pilon to Ch. Kranhouse, Tiberias 3 October 1959, Archive Johan Pilon, Haarlem.

51 Interview Elisabeth Roost by author, Thayngen 30 April 2014.

52 Interview Cor van der Spek by author, Broek op Langedijk 29 October 2015.

had tried to extend a hand of friendship to the Jews. For some reason or other, it had not worked. In the coming years Madeleine would increasingly speak up for the Christian Palestinian point of view. Hans Bernath tried to preserve neutrality until the end, as a Christian and a representative of the Red Cross.[53]

Perspectives for the future

It is important to recall this story, for the very fact that it is so easily forgotten. The tendency in our days is to widen a dialogue of Jews and Christians from the West to an encounter that includes Muslims and Christian Arabs. In the Protestant Church in the Netherlands there seems to be a tendency to believe that we simply can make a new start – reach out to the Arab community in Nazareth, on the supposition that they need our charitable help and that we are welcome there. In fact, this may not be so easy, as PThU student Wilma Blaak already found out during her research stay in Nazareth.[54] The memory of dominant Western Protestant attitudes in the fifties and sixties in these quarters is strongly connected to a form of neo-colonialism, and not easily forgotten. The only way forward is to address these aspects of the past in a discussion between equal partners, free to speak out. Views that were formerly treated as marginal, such as those of Hans Bernath, deserve our attention.

Bibliography

L'Ami d'Israël (retrieved via Zürcher Lehrhaus, Zurich).

Bartlett, S.C. 1879. *From Egypt to Palestine, through Sinai, the Wilderness and the South Country. Observations of a journey made with special reference to the history of the Israelites.* Harper: New York.

Cozzens, Peter 2018. *The Earth is Weeping. The Epic Story of the Indian wars for the American West.* Atlantic Books: London.

53 Filmed conversation with Hans and Madeleine Bernath, in *Al-Sabbar*.

54 Wilma Blaak, personal conversation March 2018.

Farah, Shafik 1995. *What shall I do with my life? The exciting story of a Swiss couple in Nazareth*. Lynton Reed: North York (Ontario).

Ron Field and Adam Hook 2008. *Forts of the American Frontier 1820–91. Central and Northern Plains.* Osprey: Oxford.

Finbert, Elian 1955. *Les Guides Bleus Israel*. Hachette: Paris.

Simha, Flapan 1962. Integrating the Arab village. *New Outlook. Middle East Monthly,* 5(3):24-25.

Hoekema, Alle G. and Pieter Post (eds.) 2016. *Frits Kuiper (1898-1974) doopsgezind theoloog. Voordrachten en getuigenissen over Kuiper en een selectie van zijn brieven.* Verloren: Hilversum.

Kann, Jacobus Henricus 2008. *Erets Israël. Het Joodsche land*. Brill: Leiden.

Kassis, Rami (ed.) 2008. *Palestine & Palestinians. Guidebook.* Alternative Tourism Group: Ramallah.

Kislev, Ran 1976. Land expropriations. In *New Outlook. Middle East Monthly,* September/October 1976:23.

Landau, Jacob M. 1970. *The Arabs in Israel. A political study.* University Press: Oxford.

Leeuwarder Courant (retrieved via: Tresoar, Leeuwarden).

Lüth, Erich 1958. *Israel. Heimat für Juden und Araber.* Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit in Hamburg: Hamburg.

Mackay, Runa 1995. *Exile in Israel. A personal journey with the Palestinians.* Wild Goose: Glasgow.

Massawi, Musa E. 1997. *Palestine and the law.* Reading: Ithaca Press.

Muller-Duvernoy, Claude1957. Retour d'Israël", *L'Ami d'Israël*, 77–78.

New Outlook. Middle East Monthly (retrieved via Library Leiden University).

Pappé, Ilan 2013. *The forgotten Palestinians. A history of the Palestinians in Israel*. Yale University Press: New Haven/London.

Pedahzur, Ami 2012. *The triumph of Israel's Radical Right.* University Press: Oxford.

Philbrick, Nathaniel 2006. *Mayflower. A story of courage, community and war.* New York: Viking.

Said, Edward 1999. *Out of place. A memoir.* Vintage: London.

Sand, Shlomo 2012. *The Invention of the Land of Israel. From Holy Land to Homeland.* Verso: London/New York.

Sennott, Charles M. 2003. *The Body and the Blood. The Middle East's vanishing Christians and the possibility for peace.* Public Affairs: New York.

Srouji, Elias S. 2003. *Cyclamens from Galilee. Memoirs of a physician from Nazareth.* iUniverse: New York/Lincoln/Shanghai.

Vriezen, Th.C. 1951. *Palestina en Israël.* Veenman: Wageningen.

Walpot, I.J. 1958. "Arabieren in isolement", in *Leeuwarder Courant,* 18 October 1958.

Zu'bī, 'Abd al-'Azīz 1960. Nazareth looks for the future. *New Outlook. Middle East Monthly,* October 1960:33.