

# Israel, Christianity, and Islam: The Challenge of the Future

Bat Ye'or

Unlike most wars, solving the conflict in the Middle East does not only depend on the cession of land, since Israel is also the focus of age-old religious hatreds. The bigotries involved are so appalling that one avoids mentioning them, yet they still underlie the struggle.

From its beginnings, the Arab-Israeli conflict involved not only the region of the Middle East but also Europe and the Church. It was hardly on account of its wealth and territorial extent that the Holy Land became a land of hostilities, but rather because it was the place where theological extremisms confronted one another. Only there, in their ancient homeland, could the Jewish people be freed from the curse with which Christianity had afflicted them. This malediction, which had been transmitted through Christian channels to Islam, was henceforth combined within the context of *jihad* and associated Jews and Christians in the same condemnation. Thus, the principle of a divine curse against the Jews as a people, first conceived by the early Church Fathers in patristic writings, was later adopted and reinterpreted through Islamic dogma against both Jews and Christians.

Despite the Islamic persecutions of Christians, judeophobia — common to both Christianity and Islam — has sealed the tight alliance between the Church and Islam in favor of the Palestinian cause. Thus, in the Land of Israel, the Jewish people have been confronted not only by prejudices arising from Christian doctrine but also by those arising from Islamic doctrine. The suppression of these Muslim prejudices against Jews that are generated by *jihad* doctrine would also imply the abolition of these same Muslim prejudices against Christians. The restoration of Israel's rights in its Biblical homeland is opposed to a concept of allegedly accursed peoples, hated by God — condemned to humiliation for eternity until they convert.

Peace in the Middle East means equality among religions. Therefore, their historical zones of confrontation and interaction should be examined in order to understand their modern expressions.

## Characteristics of the Conflict

The Israeli-Arab conflict is only one regional, limited aspect of the traditional, worldwide struggle engendered

BAT YE'OR, [website [www.dhimmi.org](http://www.dhimmi.org)] is a pioneer researcher on dhimmis and "dhimmitude," a name she coined in 1983. Her books include *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, and *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude*. Her forthcoming book, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide*, will be published in October 2001 by Associated University Presses.

by the ideology of *jihad*. For over a millennium, Muslims had conquered and held lands populated by Christians and Jews on three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. In East Asia, they also colonized and Islamized Buddhist and Hindu empires. Caliphs and sultans administered this multitude of peoples through a juridic-political system based on interpretations of the Qur'an and the *hadiths*,<sup>1</sup> which integrated the pre-Islamic laws and customs of the vanquished peoples into an Islamic conceptual structure. This system of governing subjected populations, which I have called "dhimmitude,"<sup>2</sup> determined the demographic, religious, and ethnic changes in the countries absorbed by *jihad*. The term "dhimmitude" encompasses all the aspects and complexities of a political system, whereas the word "tolerance" implies a subjective opinion. The system of dhimmitude includes the notion of tolerance, but this latter term cannot express all the interactions of political, religious, and juridical factors that, over the centuries, shaped the civilization of dhimmitude.

The *jihad* ideology requires that the *shari'a* — the law that governs the Islamic domain — be applied over all the *jihad*-conquered lands. In this context, the Jews formed a small minority among the non-Muslim populations, all to be targeted by the *jihad* ideology. Islamic law confers an identical status on Jews and Christians as the People of the Book (the Bible), while Zoroastrians and others, considered pagans, were relegated to a far worse situation and subjected to more severe oppression.

In the Islamic-Christian context, the *jihad*-wars of Islamization, unleashed from the seventh century and sustained for over a millennium, have again — in the last decades — ignited *jihad* fires in Lebanon, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Armenia, Sudan, Nigeria, Kashmir, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The Israeli-Arab conflict is only a recent and small component of the age-old geographic struggle that emerged from this *jihad* ideology. From the Islamic point of view, the position of the Jews, as with the Christians, comprises two aspects: as Jews, and as Israelis. The first concerns their legal situation as a tolerated, *dhimmi* religious minority in an Islamic country. The second is rooted in the complex issues involved in a *dhimmi* people liberating its country from the laws of *jihad*, a system that imposes dhimmitude.

This process of liberation was manifested in all the Christian countries, where — from Portugal to the Caucasus — the laws of dhimmitude imposed by invading *jihad* armies on indigenous non-Muslim populations were progressively abolished. It is this common ground that imparts to these east European states, and to Israel, cer-

tain similar factors that are superimposed over different characteristics. In fact, these similarities do not result from any European backing of Israel, but rather these links emerge from the Islamic doctrine that binds together Jews and Christians.

### Common Traits

Without going into historical detail, one may recall that those European Christian lands Islamized by *jihad* were liberated only after centuries of bloody struggle. The process of de-Islamization began in the Middle Ages, first in Spain, Portugal, and the Mediterranean Islands; it then continued in the 18th century and throughout the whole of the 19th century in the Balkans. In Central Europe, Islamized territories had reached up to southern Poland and Hungary; in the 19th century they still encompassed Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and the semi-autonomous Romanian principalities. These wars of national liberation continued up to World War I; the recent bloody, unfinished conflicts in the Balkans are a reminder.

From the standpoint of Muslim dogma and law, Israel's situation today is not very much different from these 19th century Balkan wars of liberation. Like the Israelis, those peoples also were threatened with annihilation by a *jihad*-war that challenged their right to separate from the *dar al-Islam*. As with Palestine, the Balkan territories conquered by *jihad* constituted a *waqf* in Islamic law — also called a *fay* land, the booty granted by Allah to the Islamic community collectively — to be managed by the caliph.

Moreover, the *waqf* principle is not limited to territories conquered by *jihad*. According to this dogma, the whole world constitutes a *waqf*, promised by Allah to the Muslims; it is a religious duty to occupy it at an appropriate time and rule it by the *shari'a* law. It is this duty that imposes upon the Muslims the obligation of *jihad*, by which these lands — still illegally held by the infidels — “revert” to the Muslims. There lies the origin, the justification and the ideological driving force behind the *jihad*-wars of conquest. It is incorrect to assert that this injunction to achieve world conquest is a modern extremist interpretation by Islamist fanatics, as some contemporary political commentators assert. This interpretation has in fact constituted the basis of *jihad* since its principles were first elaborated by Muslim jurists and theologians in the 8th and 9th centuries. In this context, the principle of *waqf*land applied to Israel constitutes a tiny part of a universal, geopolitical concept. If Israel — whatever its size — is viewed as illegally established on “Arab-Muslim lands,” then also Spain, Portugal, the Balkan states, etc. may be considered as occupying former “Muslim lands”; and, likewise, all non-Muslim states are “illegal,” since they are situated on potential Muslim *waqf*land.

The 19th century wars of liberation restored national territorial sovereignty to east European peoples, in the same way as the Jewish people recovered a part of their Land of Israel (Palestine) in 1948. This process allowed the free development of their culture and their legal system. The rebirth of those Christian states led to the dramatic flight to Anatolia, Syria, and Palestine of millions of Muslims, whose laws had subjected the indigenous non-

Muslims to the dehumanizing system of dhimmitude. It would be an absurdity in the 21st century to claim that the descendants of those populations suffered an “injustice” and had a “right of return” to Spain, Portugal, Sicily, the Balkans, and elsewhere. It would destabilize the descendants of those peoples who had suffered over the centuries under the yoke of dhimmitude.

The wars that abolished the system of dhimmitude suppressed an injustice, which any return to the previous situation would reimpose. As with these European examples, the “right of return” to the State of Israel for Palestinian Arabs — the embodiment of *jihad* values — would restore those same conditions leading to dhimmitude for the Jews. It should be stressed that dhimmitude implies the expropriation of indigenous people, who are relegated to *dhimmi* status after their land has become a Muslim *waqf* for the sole benefit of the Muslim community (*umma*). Jews and Christians are only tolerated as *dhimmis*, provided they submit to restrictive rules that include prohibition on land ownership in their own country.

To sum up, it may be affirmed that from an Islamic doctrinal viewpoint, Israel's situation is identical to that of those European populations from Portugal to the Crimea, passing through Sicily and the Balkans of the Ottoman Empire, who managed to free themselves from the laws of dhimmitude — laws imposed as a result of a *jihad*-war and the application of the *shari'a*. The abolition of those laws enabled these populations to restore their national independence and their rights. The clash here is between the liberation of *dhimmi* people against their subjugation and death in the grip of dhimmitude.

### Contrasting Aspects

Geographically speaking, Israel's situation differs from that of the Balkan peoples, since Israel — like Lebanon, Georgia, and Armenia — is wedged into a wholly Muslim region. In other respects, even though the condition of the Jews and Christians as *dhimmis* is identical from the Islamic point of view, there are important differences on the theological and the political level.

**Theology:** On the doctrinal plane, there is convergence and fusion between the Christian doctrine that alleges a divine condemnation of the Jews to exile and degradation and the Muslim doctrine that retains the divine condemnation of the Jews to humiliation but applies it also to the Christians. For Jews, the Islamic position represented an improvement compared to Christian theology, which isolated them from the rest of humanity in a unique, demonized category. For the Christians, to be placed on the same level as the people who aroused their hate-filled contempt was severely felt by them as a further deliberate humiliation imposed on them by Islam. This resentful attitude on the part of the Christians was one factor contributing for so long to the obfuscation of the history of dhimmitude, which was the common juridical and theological condition for both Jews and Christians.

Christianity developed from Judaism. The breach of this close symbiosis was accompanied by a hostile rejection of the mother-religion. It is important to stress that the conflict between the early Byzantine church and

Palestinian Jewry was fought most intensely in the Holy Land itself — where Judaism had been central since the second millennium BCE. When the Roman Empire was Christianized in the early 4th century, the patriarchate could then reimpose the Emperor Hadrian's ban on Jews living in Jerusalem (135 CE), which, it seems, had lapsed. In the 5th century, the alliance between a church, strongly influenced by paganism, and the Byzantine state, institutionalized in law and policy the Church Fathers' anti-Jewish dogma. It was in 5th-century North Africa that St. Augustine (d. 430), Bishop of Hippo — today Bône in Algeria — most clearly formulated the doctrine pertaining to the Jewish people: a "deicide people" condemned to exile and to wandering in servitude and degradation.

The dogma of supersession constituted the foundation of the Church's policy toward Judaism and the de-Judaization of Jerusalem. The responsibility for upholding this dogma fell upon the Church in the Holy Land. It was this church that supervised the exclusion of Jews from Jerusalem, their humiliation, and the implementation of their persecution. Only a few years before the Arab conquest, after the brief Persian occupation and at the instigation of the Patriarch Sophronius, the Emperor Heraclius decreed the first massacre of Jews in the Byzantine Empire. It was this same patriarch who later implored the Muslim conquerors to retain one basic principle of Christian dogma: the de-Judaization of Jerusalem. Thus, it was through local Christian channels that this policy was transmitted to Islam. Conscious of being the guardians of this doctrine, the churches in the Holy Land heaped humiliation and suffering on Palestinian Jewry and upon the few allowed back in Jerusalem by the Muslim authority.

In this Christian theological context, the Zionist movement and the Balfour Declaration of 1917 fed the frenetic antisemitism that provided a fertile ground in Christian Europe for the Shoah. The Christian doctrine that condemned the Jews to wandering and to degradation was maintained unchanged until Vatican II (1963-65). Revision of the doctrine aroused passionate opposition, particularly within the Eastern Arab *dhimmi* Churches, mouthpieces of their patrons, the Arab League states.

Despite the efforts of religious and lay Christians who felt close to Jews and Judaism, the results of Vatican II were rather ambiguous and marked the success of the antisemitic majority in the Catholic church. They maintained a policy of delegitimizing and demonizing the State of Israel, and supported its replacement by a State of Palestine. In other words, the principle of "wandering" remained a decisive goal. Besides, the condemnation of antisemitism was not accompanied by a total rehabilitation of the Jews. This ambiguity allowed Christians to pity the misfortunes of the Jews, allegedly brought about by their own malevolent natures.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the ambiguity allowed Christians in subsequent decades to reconcile compassion for Jews with the most virulent hostility toward Israelis. The transfer of the malevolent nature of the Jews to the State of Israel was steadily sustained by a tireless activism from the Palestinian church leaders allied to the PLO.

This whole process of demonizing the State of Israel was conceived of, elaborated upon, and transmitted to Europe by these Palestinian *dhimmi* Arab churches. The liberation of Jerusalem in 1967 exacerbated that tendency; ever since, the European populations have been flooded in the media by anti-Israeli indoctrination.<sup>4</sup> It is true that the proclamations of national councils of bishops in Europe expressed different, more positive opinions. Yet the anti-Zionist phobia — culminating in the 1975 antisemitic UN General Assembly's resolution 3379 ("Determines that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination") — only began to abate when this resolution was rescinded in December 1991, after the Gulf War. When, in December 1993, the Vatican recognized Israel, it almost simultaneously recognized the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). This step left the unpleasant impression that the belated establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel needed to be balanced by recognition of the PNA.

This situation resulted from the weight of the antisemitic and pro-Islamic tendencies representing a sizeable sector of the Church. Those same currents had succeeded in imposing on Vatican II in 1965 a perfectly symmetrical position on the part of the Church in regard to both Jews and Muslims. But this symmetry caught the Church in a trap, since the relation of Christianity to the Jews was totally asymmetrical to the Church's position toward Muslims — even being in contrast to it. The Christian dogma of supersession concerns the Jews — but not Muslims. Conversely, Islam applied this dogma to Judaism *and* Christianity, both of which religions, according to Islamic doctrine, were *preceded and completed* by Islam. The Biblical personalities mentioned in the Qur'an, who barely resemble the originals — Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus, and others — are considered Muslims. The absence of such reasoning in Judaism concerning Christianity creates a false symmetry between Judaism and Islam.

Likewise, on an historical plane, no Christian country was ever conquered by the Jews, but Christian lands were Islamized on three continents — Africa, Asia, and Europe — and governed by the *shari'a*. Moreover, from its beginning, Islamic jurisprudence established and perfected a mandatory Christian status, based on theology. Hence, there is an absolute absence of symmetry in the theological, juridical, political, and historical domains between Islam and Judaism in relation to the Christians. The Christian refusal to acknowledge the radical asymmetry between Judeo-Christian and Muslim-Christian relations creates confusion on the path to reconciliation. Moreover, this symmetry, which allegedly represents "justice," does injustice to the Jews, because it denies the obvious differences between Judaism and Islam.

Despite many high-quality works by Christian theologians and thinkers — and their tireless efforts supporting a Judeo-Christian *rapprochement* — anti-Judaism and anti-Zionism still remain dominant forces throughout Europe. In addition, the pro-Islamic lobbies use the Jewish tragedy of the Shoah to invent a European guilt toward Palestinian Arabs and Muslim immigrants in Europe, as allegedly symmetrical to Europe's guilt for the Shoah. Thus, not only

has the Shoah been taken over for the benefit of those who otherwise deny it and want to pursue a policy for Israel's demise, but the unjustified exaggeration of Christian guilt toward Islam — based on a false connection to the Jewish tragedy in Europe — reinforces anti-semitism. This tactic is widespread among certain clerical groups in both the Eastern and Western "Islamized" Churches, especially in their wide support for a free Muslim immigration policy into the European Union.

**Political Aspects:** Generally speaking, since the 1970s, the policy of various European governments toward Israel has been manifested by hostility. This policy has combined the economic and political interests of these states with their rivalries to obtain markets in the Arab world, especially for sales of military weapons. This cynical policy has not been burdened by any scruples and has hidden its purposes under cover of "humanitarian causes" — particularly that of the Palestinian Arabs.

In this context, Israel is treated like those Christian peoples whose claims hindered the interests of the major European powers in the 19th century. State interests took precedence over any solidarity regarding humanitarian principles. In the 19th century, only public opinion obliged the powers to intervene belatedly to curtail the massacres of Christians during the course of the many rebellious struggles in the Balkans. Later in the century, the Armenians were abandoned, since no European power, even Russia, had an interest in destabilizing Turkey.

After World War I, France and Great Britain sacrificed the claims of the Armenians and the Assyro-Chaldeans (in Iraq) in favor of a pro-Muslim policy. Half a century later, the destruction of the Christian political structures in Lebanon by the Muslim-Palestinian alliance left Europe and America generally indifferent. This Christian tragedy earned no more than shameful silence from most European intellectuals and in the media — particularly from all those who showed compassion for the Arab Palestinians, day after day, for decades. This observation applies equally to the victims in East Timor and the Moluccas as well as to the Sudanese African Christians and animists, who for years have undergone a *jihad*-war and enslavement by northern Arab Muslims without much protest from the European Union. This silence was all the more striking in that it contrasted with the massive media campaign on behalf of the Muslims in Bosnia, in Kosovo, and later in Chechnya. Today, the genocide of Christians in Indonesia is hardly mentioned in the press.

Furthermore, the various forms of discrimination suffered more and more by Christians in Muslim countries have rarely aroused a media campaign or consistent interest from major humanitarian organizations. One could therefore place Europe's anti-Zionist option in the category of general political cynicism. This raises the question of what political criteria determine the media's "selection" of information — is it criteria operating either through omission, disinformation, systematic neglect (Algeria, Sudan, Nigeria, East Timor, the Moluccas, the Philippines, etc.), and/or directly related to economic and geostrategic interests?

Hence, in its relations with the Muslim world, the West applies a similar policy to Christians and Jews alike. One

should also stress — and it is of major importance — the totally different policy of the Turks from that of the Arabs toward former *dhimmi* populations. The Ottomans in the 19th century and Turkey in the 20th century received and settled millions of Muslim refugees, and both made peace with their former subjugated peoples. With the exception of Jordan (77 percent of the former League of Nations Palestine Mandate), 20 states comprising the Arab League, despite covering immense territories — 10 percent of the earth's surface — refused to welcome, settle, and grant citizenship to their Palestinian Arab kin; only Egypt and Jordan have recognized Israel's *de jure* existence.

### The Short-Term Policy of Economic Interests

European democracies are governed by parties whose representatives dispose of little time to apply their policies, which are based mainly on economic and social improvement. As a rule, the aims of democracies are short-term issues. This situation does not exist in Third World dictatorships — like Syria, Iraq, and Libya, for example — whose dictators-for-life plan long-term ideological policies. Experts usually claim that economic development is an essential factor toward achieving peace and the suppression of hatred and prejudice. This claim is belied by the situation in Saudi Arabia, one of the richest countries in the world, where the prejudices toward women and non-Muslims have barely changed over the centuries. Moreover, such generalizations neglect significant civilizational differences, whereby some societies bestow prestige on a religious-inspired warlike strategy of world conquest over any current economic considerations. In the *jihad*-civilization, peace is only an interval between a continuation of hostilities.

The overlapping of the two domains, the economic and the political, has fostered Europe's — especially France's — Arab policy; in the years ahead, this policy will develop significant political and cultural changes in Europe. In particular, one may point to wide divergences concerning the status of women, polygamy, and the integration of some *shari'a* rules into the European juridical system, as demanded by millions of the recent Muslims immigrants to Europe. The European Union's Arab policy is rooted in a planned political project, which aims at creating a Euro-Arab economic and geostrategic continent conceived as a counterbalance to American influence. It implies the fusion of North-South populations and the intensification of European economic interests in the Arab and Muslim world. Since the 1960s, a European immigration policy has been developed within this economic-strategic context.

This Euro-Mediterranean, North-South project had as its utopian model the "Andalusian paradise" of a perfect Muslim-Christian symbiosis. This foundation myth served to consolidate the Euro-Arab alliance and to project the responsibility for the current discrimination undergone by Christians in Muslim countries onto Israel's intransigence. The European Union refuses to denounce Islamic religious prejudices, preferring to expiate its impotent frustration on Israel. Yet it is obvious that the discrimination in question is rooted in the laws of the *shari'a*. This

mythical Andalusian paradise would be reborn — it is often claimed since the 1970s — if only a democratic Arab Palestine were to replace Israel. Here it is important to point out that this Andalusian multicultural paradise is a political myth. In reality, female Christian slaves taken in continuous border raids filled the Andalusian harems, and the Muslim state's power was based on armed forces made up of thousands of Islamized Christian male slaves, while all non-Muslims remained *dhimmi*s. They were governed by rulers who enforced the rigorous Malikite Islamic rite. Andalusia — a typical example of a *ji*had-oriented country — was constantly agitated by Christian insurrections, while all traces of Christianity in Muslim-conquered Spain were eliminated from the 13th century until the Reconquista in the 16th century.

### **Palestinianism: the *Dhimmi***

#### **Palestinian-Christian Contribution in the Context of the Euro-Israel-Arab Relationship**

The contribution of the Palestinian Arab Christians in this context is considerable in three areas of policy: (1) Muslim immigration into Europe; (2) the ongoing destruction of Christianity in the Arab and the larger Muslim world; (3) growing European anti-Zionism.

The theme of Muslim-Christian symbiosis, a "golden age" preceding the advent of "Sin" — personified by the State of Israel — replaced history by myth. This theme, which forms one of the principles of Arab nationalism, was propagated especially after the 1920s. It embodied in the Levant, and especially in Mandatory Palestine, a policy of Muslim-Christian collaboration against Zionism. After 1948, this myth formed the weapon justifying the elimination of the Jewish state.<sup>5</sup> It provided a strategy absolving the Arab world of any guilt, Israel being held responsible for the sufferings of the Christians in the region. This connivance allowed trade between the West and the Arab-Muslim world without hindrance. It reinforced the anti-Zionist campaign and curbed the Judeo-Christian *rapprochement*.<sup>6</sup> However, this policy, as practiced by Palestinian Arab Christians, both lay and clergy, does not represent all Christian opinions. The success of this propaganda in Europe since the 1960s — totally disproportionate to the demographic importance of the Palestinian Arab Christians, well under 5 percent of the total Palestinian Arab population — results from alliance with antisemitic lobbies. Today, these same Christians are faced with the progress of the Hamas movement in the areas now under Arafat's administration.

Arab immigration into Europe had been planned and encouraged from the early 1960s on by European politicians and their Arabist advisors. It continued the pro-Arab, pro-Muslim policy maintained by European powers and Church hierarchies since the beginning of the century. In the 1960s, the overtures to other religions announced after Vatican II represented a generous innovation that broke with the prejudices of the past. Concerning the Jews, however, the policy of *rapprochement* with Judaism was counterbalanced by anti-Zionism, and the defense of Palestinian interests. Thus, the condemnation of antisemitism went hand-in-hand with the

propagation of anti-Zionism. The unilateral commitment of the Vatican and many Protestant churches to the advocacy of the Palestinian-Arab cause sustained the Christian theology of supersession that had delegitimized the State of Israel.

After Vatican II, and at the instigation of the Palestinian churches, Catholic and Protestant theological bodies reinforced their dialogue with Islam.<sup>7</sup> *Rapprochement* with Judaism was overshadowed by Christian interests in the Muslim world and the adamant opposition of Arab churches. These *dhimmi* churches function solely within the conceptual universe of dhimmitude, which they have perpetuated for 13 centuries. Their survival is linked to their promotion of Muslim interests, the "service" of the *dhimmi*s to Islam.

"Palestinianism" has sidelined the history of dhimmitude and prevented its critical examination. The knowledge of these realities would have encouraged the desacralization of the traditional Muslim prejudices concerning the People of the Book. Such a step would have led to a Muslim *aggiornamento*. But the Muslim-Christian symbiosis, which was to be accomplished in a future democratic Palestine — on Israel's demise — became a dogmatic axiom. It prevented any knowledge of the history and of critical reflection about Muslim-Christian relations in the context of *ji*had and dhimmitude — the concepts that were at the very foundation of these relations. The prohibition on challenging this Muslim-Christian symbiosis imposed a taboo on the deteriorating conditions of Christian communities in Muslim countries.<sup>8</sup> As Israel was labeled the "Evil" in order to maintain the Euro-Muslim alliance, this general silence also contributed to a worsening of their own situation, inducing an irreversible Christian movement of conversion to Islam and a massive emigration from Arab-Muslim countries to the West.<sup>9</sup>

For both commercial and theological motives, holding Israel guilty for the deterioration of the condition of the Christians in the Arab world is still a common practice. This response forms part of a continuing tradition of triangular relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the context of dhimmitude. In the past, persecuted by Muslims and powerless to avenge themselves upon their persecutors, Christians often took out their frustration by attacking Jews. The persecution of Jews in medieval Europe was often a Christian reaction to Muslim persecutions suffered by Christians in Spain and the Levant. The modern indictment of the State of Israel forms part of this tradition. Not daring to confront the Arab world, for fear of losing their markets, European politicians take revenge on Israel for their own impotence. However, it is obvious that it is the *shari'a* laws, unrelated to Israel, that limit the rights of Christians in Arab countries, and the discrimination and attacks they suffer there express traditional Islamic prejudices.

The Palestinian Arab cause was an essential and fundamental element in Europe's anti-Zionism. The Christian dogma of the Jews as a "deicide people" was often revitalized by the presentation of a Muslim-Christian Palestine "crucified" by the Jewish state. As recently as 11 December

2000 — two weeks before the Christmas Jubilee — a new Palestinian daily, *Intifada*, displayed on half of its front page a provocative caricature showing a crucified young woman with the name “Palestine” above her head. Blood spurts from her martyred body onto a trio of caricatured Jews looking up at the crucified woman meant to represent Jesus/Palestine. Three days later, *Intifada* provided another message in the design of a massive cross, this time without the crucifixion scene, but with a prayer addressed to “My Lord the Betrayed — betrayed by the contemptible treasonable kiss,” and ending: “O Son of the Virgin, they cannot overcome you twice.”<sup>10</sup>

Pressed by the Arab states, the Palestinian *dhimmi* churches torpedoed the Judeo-Christian *rapprochement* in Europe. As the heirs and guardians of an age-old tradition of debasing, even of murdering, Jews in their homeland, they loudly justified the PLO’s international campaign of terrorism. The political struggle against Israel prolonged and updated the theological struggle.

This phenomenon is unrelated to legitimate criticism of some aspects of Israeli policy, as is normal for any state. Rather, it derives from the compulsive urge to hate and defame. Deicidal allusions, ritual murder and world conspiracy accusations, supersessionist theology, and negationism of the Shoah are constantly recycled in the Muslim-Christian media of the Middle East, including the Palestinian, while the European Union continues to finance the PNA’s educational system, which even omits Israel’s existence on maps.

Thus, as Europeans become reconciled with the Jewish communities in the EU countries — negligible populations that survived a European genocide — anti-Zionism projects all its traditional prejudices onto the State of Israel, which has come to embody the malevolent nature of Judaism itself. It is true that the religious catechisms have been expurgated, but every day the teaching of contempt echoes in another register. The more antisemitism is condemned, the more anti-Zionism is unleashed by a sort of mimicry. This recycling of old hatreds projects onto the victims the crimes of their oppressors. The more Israel’s Christian friends try to modify Church doctrine, the more support for Palestinianism and Palestinian-Arab supersessionism is reinforced. Arab-Palestine is seen as the heir to Biblical Israel and the root of Christianity itself. The negation of Israel’s identity and history has enhanced the purity of the replacement theology.

It is not by coincidence that anti-Zionism has grown to such proportions in Europe, in that same continent where the Shoah was perpetrated. For decades, in some countries, Nazi collaborators and sympathizers were to be found in senior places of power within the state, high finance, and the media. Efforts to judge those responsible have often been blocked. Only Germany, under an international obligation to do so, has courageously undertaken a critical examination of its own past. By championing the Palestinian Arab cause, European antisemitism has absolved itself, removing the stain of guilt and projecting it, with a vengeance, onto the Jews by demonizing and “nazifying” Israel.

It is not easy to estimate the strength of political European antisemitism today, bearing in mind the objections to publish pro-Zionist opinions in the national presses. Indeed, it is certain that the success of anti-Zionism can only be explained by the occult, or overtly political, support it receives at the highest political and religious level. Nonetheless, the Catholic encyclical *Nostra Aetate* (1965), the tireless struggle against antisemitism by many Catholic and Protestant theologians, the Vatican’s recognition of Israel, and the desire to deepen and maintain the Judeo-Christian *rapprochement* — as exemplified by Pope John Paul II’s pilgrimage to Israel in March 2000 — have created new forms of behavior. The secularization of Western societies and increasing individualism have developed the most varied range of opinions among all sectors of the population. Without a constant media-pounding as in recent years — strengthened from October 2000 with the second intifada — it would be difficult to discern a consensus of European public opinion, although the tendencies and policies of the European Union are clear. Some indicators for the future trends may be seen in: (1) the violently hostile reactions to the 1996 election of Binyamin Netanyahu as prime minister; (2) the explicit boycott by the European Community of the third millennium Jerusalem celebration (a denial of its Jewish Biblical history); (3) the refusal to recognize West Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel (a symbolic reminder of the prohibition of Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem); (4) praise for Ehud Barak so long as Palestinian demands were constantly satisfied in the “peace process”; (5) the anti-Israeli war propaganda in the media after Arafat launched Intifada II; (6) the almost universal hostility to Ariel Sharon’s election; (7) the growing tendency to root Christianity in Arab Palestinianism.

### The end of Judeo-Christianity?

Is the road toward “Palestinian Liberation Theology” leading to a total divorce between the two religions? The rejection of its Jewish roots has constituted a permanent movement in the Church. This problem appears clearly at two levels. The first has led to the elimination of the Jews, justified by their demonization. As many Christians have so well understood, the Shoah and the Nazi return to paganism sounded Christianity’s death knell. In other words, the executioner perishes spiritually in the death of his victim.

The second level appears in a process of de-Christianization, through hatred of a Jewish essence and spirituality structuring and sustaining Christian thought. The total expulsion of Judaism from the Christian consciousness is taking place through the elaboration of a theology seeking to de-Judaize the Bible, including the New Testament. It has already been expressed in Europe through the “Palestinization” of the Bible — that is, in its de-Judaization.<sup>11</sup>

Palestinian Liberation Theology thus forms part of this historical movement to eliminate Judaism from Christianity. Jesus is no longer considered to be a Jew born in Judea but an Arab from Palestine — so too his mother, his family, his disciples, and the apostles. This travesty would seem childish if it did not actually express



an implicit desire to expel Judaism totally from Christianity and to usurp its heritage through Muslim-Christian Palestinianism.

The de-Judaization of Christianity proceeds from a self-destructive dynamic and an impossibility to reconcile the hatred for Jews with the Jewish origin of Christianity. This hatred is particularly virulent in the historic Palestinian paganized churches — in the Land of Israel itself — and explains this new avatar of the theology of supersession. The filial relationship between Judaism and Christianity is unacceptable and scandalous for Christian Arabs steeped in anti-Judaism. It is out of this conflict between a Christianity born of Judaism and its rejection of Judaism that arise “the Bible problems” of the Palestinian Christians. The current attempts to detach the New Testament from the First by de-Judaizing Jesus, and his disciples and apostles (through their Palestinization, Arabization, or even Islamization), fall within the scope of this controversy.

Yet the positive change in Vatican policy toward Israel as well as the Judeo-Christian *rapprochement* undermine the traditional judeophobic dogmas of the Syrian-Palestinian churches. These churches are now confronted by a revision of theology that removes them from the role of Israel’s victims, which they enjoyed and widely proclaimed throughout the world, and places them in the role of persecutors of the Jewish people in its ancient homeland for nearly two millennia. And this role — for which they have not yet atoned — excludes them from assuming the position of the arbiters of “justice” in relation to the Jews and Israel.

The de-Judaization of the Gospels, and of all the Biblical texts, indicates an incapacity to reconcile Judaism with Christianity in a church that first endeavored to bring Jewish ethics to the pagan world. The pagan deviation — represented by judeophobia as manifested in Communism and Nazism — became the greatest digger of Christianity’s grave. Today, this same judeophobic tendency is reappearing in the Arabization of the Gospels, and a drift toward Islamizing Christian theology. It is difficult to know whether this step results from judeophobia itself or from the intolerance of the Islamic environment (which rejects Judaism and Christianity in the same way, hence the Islamization of the Arab *dhimmi* churches in their quest for toleration). Be that as it may, this trend, which is currently being relentlessly propagated in Europe by a pro-Islamic, judeophobic, Christian clergy, forms part of those constant surrenders arising out of the *dhimmi* mentality.

Making due allowance for historical differences, the situation after the Shoah is somewhat reminiscent of that which prevailed in the Orient on the eve of Islam’s rise in the 7th century and the subsequent collapse of empires. The massacres of Jews by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius at the instigation of the Palestinian clergy was followed a few years later by the Arab conquest and the Islamization of large areas of Eastern Christendom. The latter was facilitated by virulent anti-Judaism and bloody doctrinal conflicts among the churches, an alliance between the Christians and the Muslims against the Jews and against each

other, a spiritual void, and corruption among the leaders of both Church and State.

### History — Why Bother?

One often hears that history is superfluous. The truth is that history becomes a snare for those who forget it and for those who get bogged down in it and try to revive it today at all costs. The liberating dimension of history can only develop through the relativization of conflicting truths and through the resolve not to revive history but to invent a future. Yet, a knowledge of history is essential for inventing the future. Forgetting history leads one to fall fatally into its pitfalls.

The tragic developments in Lebanon since the mid-1970s may well have been programmed by the political options that were adopted at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the restoration of the State of Israel represented the outcome of a long process. Europe in 20 or 30 years will have been transformed by policies that were decided in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus history constantly projects itself into the future; it is not an insignificant element of the past but an active catalyst of our present and our future.

History ought to lead us to reflect upon the ways out of history in order to resolve conflicts through policies of peace and reconciliation. Such policies deal with strategic aspects: territories and borders — but with ideologies too. The peace that seemed to be taking shape between Israel and its Arab neighbors, including the Palestinian Arabs, implied a total modification of mentalities. Yet, the Arabization of Biblical geography and history perpetuates within the Palestinian *dhimmi* churches the old theology of supersession; they seem condemned either to endless hostility or to an Islamization that underlies the self-proclaimed Palestinian Arabness of their origins.

But peace also means recognizing the Other in respect of his being. Peace must put an end to negationist substitutions, perverse forms of a fundamental rejection of human diversity. For Palestinian Arabs, peace means accepting Israel’s legitimacy — *de jure*, and not by tolerance — as well as Israel’s history in its ancestral homeland. And for Israel, peace also means recognizing that Christianity and Islam are universal religions, whose contributions to civilization are fundamental. Peace means accepting and respecting their legitimacy within the State of Israel. The liberation of the Jews in the Land of Israel from the Christian theological curse and from Islamic *dhimmitude* would abolish for all peoples the concept of divine hatred and divine condemnation.

Ending this history of conflict means approaching one another with equal respect. Then peace among religions, peace among men and women, can radiate from Israel and the Middle East throughout the world, eliminating the darkness of fanaticism. For the restoration of the State of Israel — its acceptance by the Nations with its capital Jerusalem — rejects the concept of a people, collectively cursed, excluded from divine love, and dispossessed by replacement theologies. In that way, the atonement for this greatest injustice also bears within it the reconciliation between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. •

Notes:

1. Sayings or acts attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that are considered normative and obligatory. Compiled in manuals of Islamic jurisprudence, they form — with the Qur'an — the foundation of Islamic law, the *shari'a*. According to Muslim doctrine, the Qur'an, *hadith* and the *shari'a* are expressions of the divine will, hence their character as a sacred norm that cannot be violated.
2. "Dhimmitude": from the word *dhimmi* — the condition attributed by the Islamic conquerors to the non-Muslim populations vanquished by *jihād*. It means "protected," since these indigenous, non-Muslim peoples were theoretically protected from death or slavery if they submitted to Islamic rules. For an historical overview, see *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam. From Jihad to Dhimmitude*. Dhimmitude permeates Muslim religious perceptions of Jews and Christians, and some of its rules are still applicable today, either mildly or strictly, in several Muslim countries. For an analysis of what I call the "civilizations of dhimmitude," see my forthcoming book, *Islam and Dhimmitude. Where Civilizations Collide*. Translated by Miriam Kochan and David Littman. Cranbury, NJ/London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/Associated University Presses, 2001.
3. The late Abbé Youakim Moubarac, a Syrian Catholic priest, and Secretary-General of the Council of Catholic Patriarchs of the Orient, became the most virulent protagonist of this thesis. See his, *L'Islam et le Dialogue Islamo-Chrétien. Pentalogie Islamo-Chrétienne*, 5 vols. Beyrouth: Edition du Cénacle Libanais, 1972-1973, vol. 3 (*L'Islam et le Dialogue Islamo-Chrétien*), pp. 155-170. Father Moubarac's theses are described in my new book, as well as those of Canon Naim Stifan Ateek and Bishop Kenneth Cragg, a former Anglican Deputy Bishop of Jerusalem.
4. Within a week of the beginning of the al-Aqsa intifada in October 2000, under the auspices of the Jerusalem Patriarch Michael Sabbah, the Chancellor of the Latin Patriarchate, Father Raed Awad Abusahlia, seized the occasion to begin a pernicious anti-Israel campaign by the publication of 12-page "messages" twice a week, through his Olive Branch from Jerusalem. They aimed at persuading Western churches and groups to influence their governments in favor of the Palestinian cause, and to exert maximum pressure on Israel. This "service" is discussed in the conclusion to *Islam and Dhimmitude*.
5. For this symbiosis, see Robert Brenton Betts in *Christians in the Arab World. A Political Study*. London: SPCK, 1979, pp. 226-227. This "golden age" myth was regularly expressed by Arab politicians and clergymen; e.g., by Moubarac, who quotes the then Syrian Patriarch Sayegh, in his *Pentalogie*, vol. 4 (*Les Chrétiens et le monde arabe*), p. 64, and vol. 5 (*Palestine et Arabité*), p. 139.
6. The Arab League strongly opposed the movement for Jewish-Christian reconciliation by insisting — through the Eastern *dhimmi* churches — on maintaining the "decide people" accusation.
7. Moubarac gives details in his *Pentalogie*, vol. 5, p. 28.
8. Michel Hayek, a Lebanese Maronite priest declared: "Why not admit clearly — so as to break a taboo and a political proscription — what is so resented in the flesh and in the Christian conscience: that Islam has been the most dreadful torment that ever befell the Church. Christian sensibility has remained traumatized to this day." (In "Nouvelles approches de l'Islam," *Les Conférences du Cénacle*, Beyrouth, 1968, n. 970, XXII année; English translation from Bat Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude*.)
9. See *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 2001. The entire issue is devoted to "Disappearing Christians of the Middle East."
10. A long spear transfixes the woman's body and the cross, its protruding point embossed with a star of David, and an American flag at the shaft end. (*Palestinian Media Watch*, pmw@netvision.net.il, 13 and 15 Dec. 2000) At Easter 1997, in a mock Passion Play, three Arab Palestinians had themselves bound to crosses at Har Homa overlooking Jerusalem, with the inscription: "The Crucifixion of the Peace Process, of Jerusalem, and of Bethlehem." The Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish — probably assisted by Christians — often exploits the traditional Christological anti-Jewish themes of the crucifixion.
11. Moubarac proposes to "débiblioniser" ("de-Bible-ize") the Bible, in his *Pentalogie*, vol. 3, pp. 124-25. This theme is discussed in *Islam and Dhimmitude*.
12. Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism. The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance*. Boulder, Co./London: Lynne Rienner, 1995.