

## Elusive Neutrality: Christian Humanitarianism and the Question of Palestine, 1948–1967

Writing at the end of World War II, the veteran British aid worker Francesca Wilson, whose long career on behalf of the Quakers had already spanned three decades, foresaw a momentous change in the course of the humanitarian movement. Although religious organizations remained key actors in the delivery of emergency help to millions of war refugees in Europe, she believed that a “non-proselytising impulse” was now ushering humanitarianism into a distinctively secular phase.<sup>1</sup> Wilson took notice of this transformation as an employee of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in occupied Germany: the gospel spread by the mammoth agency created in Atlantic City in November 1943 to assist European civilians dislocated by the war was that of “rehabilitation,” a concept closer to New Deal welfare philosophy than traditional Christian charity. Indeed, as recent scholarship has shown, humanitarianism took a secular turn during World War II and its immediate aftermath. “Increasingly planning-minded and influenced by states and their interests,” the new humanitarianism born out of the war blurred many of the traditional differences separating confessional and secular aid agencies.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, large religious relief organizations continued to fulfill vital responsibilities in postwar Germany. A survey conducted in 1953 revealed that 90 percent of the assistance provided to refugees in the Federal Republic emanated from Catholic and Protestant aid agencies.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the onset of the Cold War prompted new American evangelical organizations such as World Vision, founded in 1950 to help displaced Korean children, to enter the fray of humanitarianism in order to contain the antireligious threat posed by communism worldwide. Yet even when they aligned themselves with American Cold War strategy, faith-based aid agencies followed a path identical to that of their secular counterparts: extending their activities beyond the realm of medical or material relief, both types turned to “development,” the leitmotif of Western foreign aid in the Third World from the 1950s to the 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

Covering the three decades following the end of World War II, this secularization narrative eludes a unique Christian moment in the trajectory of the humanitarian movement after 1945. Like the so-called human rights revolution of the late 1940s, postwar humanitarianism was also greatly influenced by Christian humanist thought and activism.<sup>5</sup> The World Council of Churches (WCC), the large ecumenical and overwhelmingly Protestant umbrella organization created in August 1948, is a case in point. Regrouping 147 non-Roman Christian churches around the world at the time

of its birth, the WCC unified various Protestant denominations across the globe, even if North American and European affiliates vastly outnumbered others. Described as the “most comprehensive fellowship of churches that has yet to be seen,” its founding conference, held in Amsterdam between late August and early September 1948, brought together 351 participants from 44 different countries.<sup>6</sup> Capping several decades of efforts toward Christian unity, the WCC embodied a new activist Christianity claiming a stake in the shaping of the postwar order.

Humanitarianism ranked particularly high in the list of Protestant ecumenical concerns. The WCC was formed as a fellowship of churches, but its most immediate preoccupation was to respond to humanitarian need. The greatest challenge posed to the Christian conscience, stated the WCC expert on refugee questions Elfan Rees, were the uprooted peoples of Europe and Asia, whose number was dramatically higher in 1948 than at the close of the war.<sup>7</sup> Budgetary priority was accordingly given to “work for the material and spiritual welfare of refugees,” with the plight of ethnic German expellees especially in mind. This particular sensitivity to the dismal predicament of millions of fellow Christians in the Federal Republic of Germany did not prevent the WCC from urging the international recognition of all “refugees and expelled of whatever nationality,” a clear acknowledgment of the global and no longer exclusively European refugee crisis at the end of the 1940s. “We face today as grave a trespass on the common rights of man as the world has ever witnessed,” summarized one WCC official in 1949, “and a unique responsibility rests on the Christian Church to respond to the claim of mercy and compassion.”<sup>8</sup> According to Protestant leaders, this challenge was already courageously met at the beginning of the 1950s: “In our international age, we are apt to think that world organizations do the work of the world. But in Europe it is the Church in its national and local forms that is carrying the burden. In the Near East and Korea, it is the slender framework of the local church and the overworked staff of mission agencies which has to undertake the super-human tasks.”<sup>9</sup> Although after 1945 United Nations refugee agencies became the chief orchestrators of aid interventions, transnational Protestantism portrayed itself as the flag-bearer of humanitarian compassion.

This self-congratulatory tone was not unjustified. In and around one of the most emblematic refugee theaters of the postwar years, Christian humanitarian mobilization preceded the deployment of United Nations resources and personnel by two crucial years. During the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, Protestant churches acted as first responders to the Palestinian refugee crisis before the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) entered into action in May 1950. “Christian agencies,” boasted the WCC, “were, apart from the local Arab governments, almost the only bodies which took the refugee problem seriously.”<sup>10</sup> This statement failed to mention the emergency operations conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Arab Palestine (East Jerusalem and West Transjordan, the future West Bank) as well as the care provided to swelling numbers of refugees by the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) in the Gaza strip, where a quarter million refugees added themselves to a prewar population of eighty thousand inhabitants.<sup>11</sup> It also ignored the stopgap contributions in food, tents, and blankets made by UNICEF and the International Refugee Organization at the end of 1948, as well as the establishment of a Pontifical Mission

for Palestine by the Vatican in June 1949.<sup>12</sup> But the WCC was indeed the first Western humanitarian body to simultaneously address the plight of displaced persons in Europe and the Middle East. Convened four months after the end of the British Mandate in Palestine, the Amsterdam conference noted with “especially deep concern the recent extension of the refugee problem to the Middle East by the flight from their homes in the Holy Land of not less than three hundred fifty thousand Arab and other refugees.”<sup>13</sup> For Elfan Rees, the situation of Palestinians at that time was by far “more pathetic” than the European refugee crisis. In the same vein, the Dutch Reformed churchman and WCC general secretary Wim A. Visser ’t Hooft wrote to the *Times* in September 1948 that while “the needs of the millions of refugees in Europe were a constant concern of the WCC,” the fate of Palestinians was much worse: between them and starvation stood nothing “but the desert in all its arid unfriendliness.”<sup>14</sup> At a time when the idea of “displaced persons” chiefly referred to Jewish and non-Jewish Eastern European refugees lingering in camps scattered around Germany and Austria, WCC spokesmen linked the question of refugees in Europe to that of Palestine. As one of them wrote, “There is a vital, or rather a mortal connection between events of this generation in Europe and contemporary conditions in and around Palestine.”<sup>15</sup>

Although central at the time for the “Christian conscience,” Protestant humanitarianism in Israel/Palestine has received scant scholarly attention.<sup>16</sup> Understandably, most studies of humanitarianism in the Palestinian context have focused on UNWRA, the leading provider of food, medical services, and education in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon since May 1950. Despite its earlier arrival in the field, Christian assistance undeniably paled in comparison to the massive resources deployed, to this day, by the United Nations in the region.<sup>17</sup> Yet even if more limited, the Protestant mobilization in favor of displaced Palestinians in 1948 and after constitutes a key milestone in the evolution of modern humanitarianism. This experience did not only open a new chapter in the history of Anglo-American evangelicalism in the Levant, during which missionaries-turned-humanitarians relinquished proselytism in favor of nonconfessional assistance and the secular language of human rights.<sup>18</sup> Unfolding soon after the Jewish displaced persons crisis of 1945–48, this episode also represents a unique instance of split humanitarian personality: the philo-Semitic turn of the postwar years shaped the boundaries of Christian perceptions of Palestinian refugees. Deeply concerned with Arab suffering, Protestant churches organized under the WCC were also theologically committed to a new “Christian approach to the Jews” in the aftermath of the Holocaust, an introspective effort that entailed the acknowledgment, if not the embrace, of Zionism and the state of Israel. From 1948 to the late 1950s, the WCC and its affiliates tried to reconcile this conflicting empathy by framing the Palestinian refugee problem as a humanitarian tragedy and a religious call to action.

To be sure, the distinction between “humanitarian” and “political” refugees was not peculiar to Christian thought: after World War II, it was crystallized in human rights law with the passing of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Then only applicable to European asylum seekers, the label “political refugee” connoted fascist or communist persecution, heroism, and escape, whereas non-European refugees,

most of them left outside the scope of the international refugee regime, were perceived as hapless victims of territorial partition, revolution, and war. The “humanitarianization” of Palestinians was also the product of UNWRA food and welfare programs often resented by their recipients for their careful avoidance of politics. In the 1950s and 1960s, refugees called for the “burning of UNWRA ration cards” to precisely challenge their classification as humanitarian victims.<sup>19</sup> Yet as this essay shows, the reduction of the Palestinian question to an exclusively humanitarian crisis was also a direct consequence of Christian attempts at neutrality regarding the respective claims of Arabs and Jews. “On the political aspects of the Palestine problem and the complex conflict of ‘rights’ involved,” stated a resolution issued by the newborn WCC in August 1948, “we do not undertake to express a judgment.” In 1956, Elfan Rees reiterated this longstanding view in front of representatives of Christian refugee agencies and missionaries: “The Church comes in because no one else can, or will . . . and dare not take sides in what is after all an issue between the Muslim and the Jew.”<sup>20</sup> Commitment to neutrality, however, could not keep politics at bay. Indeed, the hallmark of Protestant humanitarianism in the Middle East from 1948 to 1967 was a permanent struggle between claims of justice and impartial benevolence, universal human rights and Christian Zionism, empathy for Palestinian victimhood and identification with Jews as symbols of historical injustice. At the dawn of the postwar era, the Palestinian refugee crisis challenged the vision of a neutral humanitarian space shaped by Red Cross relief interventions prior to 1945.

#### **Christian Reactions to Expulsions: Lydda and Ramle, July 11–12, 1948**

The founding conference of the World Council of Churches opened on August 22, 1948, in the midst of the “Second Truce” of the Arab-Israeli war. While punctuated by eruptions of violence, this lull in the fighting concluded a period of brief but decisive military activity (the so-called Ten Days of July 8–18) during which large-scale Israeli offensives in lower Galilee, the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv corridor, and the central front tilted the conflict in favor of the Jewish side while enlarging Israel’s territory beyond the boundaries of the UN Partition Plan adopted on November 29, 1947. With Arab armies and Palestinian combatants now stalled in defensive positions, the Ten Days clearly demonstrated Israel’s military superiority. The Israeli upper hand was also made visible by the mass flight and forcible eviction of approximately 400,000 civilians from conquered villages and towns since the start of hostilities. On July 11–12, the capture of Lydda and Ramle, part of an Israeli plan to wrest control of the Jerusalem road from the Transjordanian Arab Legion, significantly increased the number of refugees. The rapid Israeli seizure of these two strategic towns threw to the roads between 50,000 and 70,000 Arab civilians toward the hills under Transjordan control. While most Ramle inhabitants were bused out, Lydda residents carrying children and few belongings were forced to march six to ten kilometers east with barely any water or food. For the Israeli army, clogging the roads with a multitude of destitute refugees served a strategic purpose. Indeed, the exodus of Lydda and Ramle townspeople, the largest expulsion carried out during the 1948 war, was in part designed to thwart an Arab Legion offensive toward Tel Aviv by placing numerous civilians in its way. The depopulation of the two towns also deprived Transjordan

troops and irregular combatants of two vital operational strongholds and allowed the Israeli army to ram a contiguous wedge to Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup>

But as elsewhere in Palestine since March 1948, the eviction of Arab civilians and the wholesale destruction of their localities did not merely occur “in the context of heavy fighting and unexpected military circumstances,” as some historians prefer to maintain.<sup>22</sup> Seen by the Jewish side as an unavoidable part of its struggle for survival, expulsions undoubtedly sought to precipitate Arab military collapse and prevent the formation of fifth columns within the future boundaries of the state. But as Israeli “New Historians” and before them Arab scholars have solidly documented, forcible evictions also intentionally triggered flight from neighboring villages and urban districts, secured Israel’s ethnic homogeneity, and paved the way for prompt Jewish settlement in emptied areas.<sup>23</sup> During the Second Truce, this sudden transformation of Palestine’s demographic and geographic landscape took a more permanent character when Israeli forces systematically fired at refugees trying to come back to their homes and fields. As the first Israeli prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, had already warned in June 1948, “Those who declared war upon us have to bear the consequences after they have been defeated.”<sup>24</sup>

Contained across demarcation lines, Palestinian refugees experienced severe hardships. In August 1948, British, American, and Red Cross reports from Transjordan-held territories and Gaza described catastrophic sanitary conditions, as well as dire shortages in food, tents, and medical supplies.<sup>25</sup> Touring the country throughout the summer, the Red Cross representative in Palestine, Jacques de Reynier, noted that in Arab-held areas refugees “invaded all available spaces, in towns as in the countryside.” At a time when Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN Mediator for Palestine and himself an International Red Cross official, was only beginning to coordinate the first international effort to address the crisis, the only assistance offered to refugees still within the borders of Mandatory Palestine was the hospitality extended to them by inhabitants of unconquered areas, the bread occasionally distributed by the Transjordan government and Arab Legion soldiers, or the negligible resources put at their disposal by Egyptian military authorities in the Gaza area.<sup>26</sup>

The gravity of the refugee situation in the aftermath of the Lydda and Ramle expulsions immediately caught the attention of Christian representatives in Palestine. In a cable sent on July 21 to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (the large ecumenical organization renamed National Council of Churches in 1950), four American biblical scholars and missionaries alerted fellow Christians in the United States to the “appalling facts of the Palestine Arab refugee problem.” Dispatched at the start of the Second Truce, the telegram informed American churchmen of the midsummer crisis, namely, that “half of the non-combatant Arabs of Palestine have become displaced persons, houses wrecked and whole communities reduced to destitution.” Prospects of return to normal life were grim, for “if a truce ends in a final peace, they will go home to bare fields, looted houses and a shattered economy. If the truce ends in a renewal of war, their miseries will be multiplied.”<sup>27</sup> The signatories of this wire were indeed keen observers of the conflict. John D. Whiting, the administrator of the American Colony in Jerusalem, oversaw the delivery of medical aid to wounded Arab soldiers and civilians who came to this historic

Christian community for help. Ovid P. Sellers, the head of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, witnessed the pandemonium in the refugee-filled Old City. A. Willard Jones, the principal of Friends Boys School in Ramallah, hosted in this institution hapless refugees from Lydda and Ramle driven out just a few days earlier. From four thousand inhabitants, Ramallah's population reached sixty thousand by the end of July 1948. Israeli aerial raids against Arab Legion positions at the edge of the town only worsened the chaos. "With so many refugees living in the open," wrote Willard Jones's wife in her diary, "it is misery compounded."<sup>28</sup>

A response to their plea came back nine days later. Headed by the Ohio Republican politician Charles P. Taft, the son of former U.S. president William H. Taft and an Episcopal lay leader, the Federal Council of Churches swiftly set into motion. Within days, collected clothes and a "quantity of vitamins" stood ready for shipment. In addition, Taft obtained clearance from the U.S. State Department to start relief operations in the Middle East under the aegis of Church World Service, the cooperative ministry of thirty-seven Christian denominations created in 1946. This prompt solicitude masked, however, profound divisions among postwar American Protestants on the question of Palestine and Zionism. Energized by the creation of Israel, premillennial dispensationalists saw the return of Jews to Palestine as a sign of Christ's second coming and believed that the Arabs' removal from Palestine was biblically ordained. In 1948, however, this messianic mindset was only characteristic of a growing yet still peripheral circle of preachers for whom the founding of the Jewish state was the "greatest piece of prophetic news that we have had in the 20th century."<sup>29</sup> Until the 1967 June war and the surge of fundamentalist Christian Zionism, the Cold War took precedence over the Arab-Israeli conflict in Christian eschatology. Conservative Christians such as Southern Baptists, for their part, similarly thought that the birth of Israel proved the reliability of prophetic scripture. Yet contrary to evangelical fundamentalists committed to a literal interpretation of holy texts, they did not see the Arab refugee exodus as biblical inevitability and frowned upon the secular character of the new Jewish state.<sup>30</sup>

Vigorous opposition to Zionism came from American missionary boards. In September 1945, a platform issued by the Foreign Missions Conference of North America indirectly equated Jewish nationalism to "racism" but recognized the "legitimate expectations of Arabs and Jews alike" and supported the establishment of an independent state in Palestine "consisting of several autonomous communities."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, spokesmen for the missionary movement in the United States firmly stood against the partition of Mandatory Palestine. They did not object to a "purely religious and cultural Jewish home-center of limited proportions" but claimed that the imposition of a Jewish state was unjust to the native Arab population.<sup>32</sup> This standpoint echoed the voice of Arab Christians in Palestine, who in a joint ecumenical statement issued in March 1948 denounced partition as "a violation of sacredness of the Holy Land . . . and an encroachment on the natural rights of the Arabs, the people, and the country."<sup>33</sup> The denunciation of Jewish nationalist aspirations by American missionary officials, however, also stemmed from pragmatic reasons. Partition was objectionable because Arabs fiercely opposed it, claimed Bayard Dodge, the president of the American University in Beirut between the years 1923 and 1948.

Unwisely backed by the United States, it also jeopardized the standing of the whole missionary endeavor and its educational institutions in the Arab world.<sup>34</sup> Protestant unfriendliness to Zionism was equally noticeable among theologically liberal leaders such as Henry Sloane Coffin, a former president of Union Theological Seminary in New York, for whom the prophetic promise of Palestine to the Jews only appealed to “Biblical literalists, and to ignorant ones at that.”<sup>35</sup> Like other Protestant churchmen affiliated with the Committee for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land (an antipartition lobbying group created at the start of 1948), Coffin argued that Jewish nationhood came at the expense of Arabs, threatened American lives and interests in the Middle East, and was likely to provoke a fierce anti-Semitic backlash against American Jews. The Presbyterian churchman Henry Van Dusen, who like Coffin belonged to the editorial board of the theologically liberal publication *Christianity and Crisis*, concurred with this prediction. The establishment of a Jewish state, he wrote in February 1948, “might be fuel for the always smoldering fires of anti-Semitism.”<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, however, a radical transformation in mainstream Protestant sensibilities was underway: Christian guilt for the “abandonment of the Jews” during the Holocaust and sympathy for Jewish displaced persons in Europe elicited a liberal Protestant consensus in favor of Israel. The wartime writings of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who in the midst of the genocide in Europe solemnly relinquished the goal of converting Jews to Christianity and championed the Zionist cause—as well as the effective lobbying of the American Christian Palestine Committee encompassing 20,000 Christian leaders—greatly weighed on the endorsement of the state of Israel by the mainline Protestant public. Although a vocal liberal contingent criticized Zionism in the pages of *Christian Century* or the more balanced *Christianity and Crisis*, it took back seat to nonevangelical sympathizers of Israel, the leading Christian Zionist constituency in the United States until the surge of pro-Israel fundamentalism after 1967.<sup>37</sup> Given this diversity of views, therefore, the charitable mobilization of American churches in the summer of 1948 reflected a sincere concern for the suffering of Palestinians but should not be taken for a unanimous political pronouncement in their favor.

By contrast, the founders of the WCC gathered in Amsterdam were directly asked to take a political and moral stand on the Palestinian question. In a second telegram sent to Visser ’t Hooft on August 9, 1948, a group of Jerusalem clergymen urged the WCC conference to examine the Palestine problem “in light of principles of Christian justice.” As leaders of Lutheran, Presbyterian, Scottish, and Anglican churches, they first warned that the “total missionary enterprise was imperiled by the widely prevailing view that the Christian world has not made an impartial study of the question.” But the main purpose of their plea was to prod WCC delegates to publicly “recommend the rectification of obvious wrongs” committed against the Palestinian population.<sup>38</sup> Acknowledging their appeal “with an urgent sense of its Christian duty,” the Protestant ecumenical leadership in Amsterdam was pulled in two different directions. On one hand, it called for “the return of refugees to their homes at as early a date as possible” and remarkably sought the help of “Jewish authorities throughout the world” to achieve this goal, even if Jewish philanthropic organizations were at that time committed to the emigration of Holocaust survivors to Israel. Yet if the birth of

the new state in May 1948 added “a political dimension to the Christian approach to the Jews,” judgments of a political nature were strongly discouraged: “Whatever position . . . may be taken on the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of Jews and Arabs, of Hebrew Christians and Arab Christians involved, the churches are in duty bound to pray and work for an order in Palestine as just as may be in the midst of our human disorder.”<sup>39</sup>

This cautious tone derived in part from a dearth of precise information on the exodus of Palestinian townspeople and villagers. While foreign press correspondents amply covered the operational aspects of the war, they generally ignored the conditions experienced by Arab refugees. Reports from Lydda and Ramle published by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, or the *Times* described the swift military conquest of the towns without any further mention of expulsions.<sup>40</sup> Like several other prominent news outlets, the *New York Times* stressed the urgency of the midsummer refugee crisis but put faith in official Israeli statements when it informed its readers that Arabs were “free to return to their vineyards and orange groves as long as they respect Israeli hospitality.”<sup>41</sup> Should these returnees find their homes or villages destroyed, the “orange groves, however, are still there and Arab peasants are not exacting on dwelling conditions.” More accurate assessments of Palestinian displacement appeared only at the end of the war. As the renowned *New York Times* correspondent Anne O’Hare McCormick noted in January 1949, “It was very hard to know what happened in this conflict until the action was over.” Only then was she able to simultaneously write that Israel was “born out of agony and the dream of the Jews from many nations” and “at the expense of another people now fated to join the ragged ranks of the displaced.”<sup>42</sup> In August 1948, however, basic facts about Arab refugees still remained unknown to the Western public. The participants in the Amsterdam conference had therefore enough reasons to err on the side of caution and neutrality. Despite the alarming telegrams from Jerusalem, news from the war was not always tragic: the recent capture of Nazareth by Israeli forces, for instance, had left both the holy sites intact and the local Christian Arab population in place. “All things considered,” carefully concluded the WCC, “the plight of the Palestinian refugees and the establishment of enduring peace are matters that should engage the prayerful concern of the Christian community throughout the world.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Between Philo-Semitism and Commitment to the Palestinian Cause**

This neutral and spiritual mindset also reflected the nonalignment of the WCC in the early phase of the Cold War. The Amsterdam conference, assured Visser ’t Hooft, “resisted all attempts to draw it into the field of power politics.”<sup>44</sup> While the WCC rejected “political totalitarianism,” explained the Reverend John C. Bennett, a key American figure in the Christian unity movement, it refrained from “the self-righteous condemnation of Communism that is always the temptation of the church.” This reluctance to turn the Cold War into a religious crusade indeed set the WCC apart from the staunch anticommunism of American evangelicals or that of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>45</sup> Christian humanitarianism, however, did not uniformly abide by this vow of political silence. As opposed to the Israeli-Arab scene, Christian compassion in the European context overtly entailed the passing of political judgments. Protesting the terms of the Potsdam Agreement and the expulsion of ethnic

Germans from East Central Europe, Elfan Rees did not hesitate to claim that “Allied Nations have created a substantially larger refugee problem than they inherited from Hitler.” Indeed, and contrary to the International Refugee Organization only assisting non-German displaced persons in Europe, the WCC championed the cause of German expellees and advocated their recognition as refugees equal to other victims of persecution: “In terms of human misery and of deprivation of human rights, this problem is one of the most serious in post-war Europe.”<sup>46</sup> Spokesmen for German expellees praised this attitude: “The Protestant churches were the first to call attention to the sorrows and needs of the uprooted people in Germany . . . and to break through the remarkably unanimous conspiracy of silence which is covering the plight of the German refugees.”<sup>47</sup>

This political identification with refugees such as German expellees, and soon Eastern European anticommunist “escapees,” was not replicated with the same intensity in Israel/Palestine. Sharp divisions among Christian humanitarians hindered this possibility. A. Willard Jones was among the first to acknowledge this polarization: “Some can see only the hand of God in the setting up of the State of Israel. Others are blind except for the sufferings of the Arabs. There is an almost complete dearth of constructive Christian thinking on the issues involved.”<sup>48</sup> The war of 1948 indeed caught the Protestant ecumenical movement at an important juncture: while Protestant theologians reappraised their attitude toward Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust, American and British evangelical missionaries in the Middle East identified with Arab national claims in Palestine. A correspondent of *Christian Century* reported from the region in January 1948, “There is a remarkable bias toward the Arab side—a bias which sometimes indeed does not even recognize merits of any kind in Zionism.”<sup>49</sup> Helen Martin, a Presbyterian educator in Cairo, wrote in May 1948 to her mission board in Philadelphia that “the great majority of American residents in this part of the world” equated the cause of Palestine’s Arabs to the struggle of “our revolutionary fathers” in colonial America.<sup>50</sup> British missionaries were more divided on this question. Anglican clergymen in Palestine traditionally opposed Zionism and aligned themselves with the views harbored by the small but politically vibrant Arab-Anglican community educated in their schools. But Church of Scotland missionaries sent to the Holy Land to convert Jews to Christianity adopted a strictly neutral position toward the Arab-Jewish antagonism. Overall, however, Christian evangelicals in Palestine remained predominantly opposed to the idea of a sovereign Jewish state. As a survey commissioned by a pro-Zionist American foundation confirmed in 1947, “The missionaries and the resident clergy are all devoted to the Arabs.”<sup>51</sup>

Their stance did not, however, translate into full support for Arab nationalism. Writing in early 1947 after three years spent in Jerusalem, the Anglican scholar of Islam William Montgomery Watt observed with satisfaction “a growth of brotherhood between Christian and Muslim as a result of the growth of Arab nationalism,” especially in Palestine.<sup>52</sup> Yet longstanding frustration with Islam, the result of fruitless attempts at converting significant numbers of Muslims to Christianity, stood in the way of unqualified evangelical identification with the Arab national movement. Stanley A. Morrison, the representative of the Church Missionary Society in Egypt

and a future coordinator of Christian relief operations, is a fitting example of a higher-echelon missionary divided between measured sympathy for Arab nationalist aspirations and misgivings about Islam. In an article published in 1948, Morrison doubted the ability of Arab nationalists to shy away from “Islamic totalitarianism” and abandon “the common Moslem conception of the superiority of the ‘believer’ to the people of the book.” Keen on preserving missionaries’ interests in the Middle East, Morrison made his support for post-1945 Arab nationalism conditional upon “a new conception of religious freedom, not merely freedom of worship, which is already conceded, but also freedom to preach and freedom to change belief.”<sup>53</sup> Yet if it did not fully soften the traditionally negative evangelical conception of Islam, the prospect of partition in Palestine seriously dented the “zeal for Zion” expressed by various segments of the missionary movement in the Levant prior to 1947.<sup>54</sup>

Alford Carleton, an American Congregationalist missionary and president of Aleppo College in Syria, exemplified this transformation. Advising the U.S. delegation at the United Nations before the fateful vote of November 29, 1947, Carleton bemoaned the nefarious evolution of once harmless Zionist ideals: “Hitler and all he stood for changed Zionism from an altruistic labor of love . . . into a grim struggle for refuge and survival. What had been a clear and pleasant stream, watering a green meadow, became a fierce torrent overflowing fields and undermining houses.” In line with the view held by the international missionary movement on this question, Carleton defended the right of a Jewish minority in Palestine to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” but argued that the imposition of a Jewish state by force was akin to “imperialism and aggression.” For this scholar of the Middle East living in the region since 1924, the “ludicrous” allocation of “Judea to the Arab and Philistia to the Jew” did not realize any biblical prophecy: the UN Partition Plan was first and foremost a “mutilation plan” foreboding violent Arab arousal against it.<sup>55</sup> To be sure, the proclamation of the Jewish state did not put an end to missionary Christian Zionism: it in fact instilled new energy in it. Galvanized by the events of 1948, the American Mission Board to the Jews, the largest Christian mission proselytizing to Jews in the United States, extended its evangelical activities to the state of Israel itself. Similarly, Southern Baptists reoriented their conversion efforts toward Israeli Jews and became the largest mission operating in Israel during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>56</sup> Both groups ascribed to the Jewish state direct divine agency, even if the Southern Baptist leader Duke K. McCall, touring the new country in 1950, called the establishment of Israel an “immoral miracle.”<sup>57</sup> However, these millennialist and conservative endeavors found themselves at odds with evangelicals more prosaically committed to refugee assistance. While messianic Christians pinned their hopes on Jewish conversion to accelerate the coming of apocalyptic events, Anglo-American missionaries in the Middle East attended to the travails of Arab refugees.<sup>58</sup>

In Europe, Christian ecumenical empathy was primarily directed toward Jews. As Protestant churches tortuously confronted the theological challenges posed by the Holocaust, the elevation of the place of “spiritual Israel” in postwar Christian theology involved the critical examination of supersessionism, the doctrine holding that Jews had been replaced as God’s people after the founding of the Church. The revision of

Christian eschatology was also accompanied by a penitent examination of a long anti-Judaic past, the affirmation of Judaism as the cornerstone of the Christian faith, and the building of a new partnership with Jews through various initiatives. The founding of the WCC in August 1948 capped off this early postwar philo-Semitic moment. While early expressions of guilt by German churches only blamed the Protestant clergy for failing to adequately teach the Gospel, the Darmstadt Statement of August 1947 initiated by the theologian Karl Barth was a more candid admission of ideological complicity with Nazism.<sup>59</sup> That same month, the “Address to the Churches” issued in the Swiss village of Seelisberg by the International Council of Christians and Jews was the first statement to lay blame at the door of Christianity for encouraging anti-Jewish hatred.<sup>60</sup> In April 1948, the Darmstadt “Message Concerning the Jewish Question,” issued by the Brotherhood of the Evangelical Church in Germany, recognized that “retribution is being meted out to us for what we did to the Jews,” although the declaration still explained the suffering of Jews by their disloyal rejection of Christ.<sup>61</sup> Four months later, the “Christian approach to the Jews” adopted at the WCC assembly finally called for a “special solidarity linking our destinies together in His design.” Proclaimed two decades before the appearance of Holocaust-centered memories of World War II in the West, this new relationship was already grounded on atonement for “the extermination of six million Jews” and the historic responsibility of the Church in fostering “an image of the Jews as the sole enemies of Christ.” Although they inaugurated a new era of Christian-Jewish dialogue, these apologetic public pronouncements were not disinterested. Showing to Jews that “we seek for them the common rights and dignities which God wills for His children” did not preclude their conversion, a goal not abandoned by the International Missionary Council, an autonomous body within the WCC until the fusion of the two organizations in 1961. Indeed, the Holocaust did not relieve the church from the obligation to preach the Gospel to Jews. “No serious Christian thinker,” wrote the Hebrew Christian theologian Jakob Jocz in July 1947, “will feel the need for an apologetic approach to Jewish missions.”<sup>62</sup> For proponents of the evangelization of Jews, such as the clergymen affiliated with the *Judenmission* in West Germany, the creation of the state of Israel was both prophetic and theologically displeasing. Although epoch-making, the return of Jews to a sovereign territory was regrettably achieved through diplomatic and military means, not through the saving work of Christ.<sup>63</sup>

Despite missionary reservations about the nonmessianic origins of Jewish self-determination, the leaders of the Protestant ecumenical movement radically challenged a core tenet of Christian doctrine: no longer treated as a victim of divine condemnation, the Jew was now the lovable symbol of injustice and violence in the world. Revealingly, the advent of philo-Semitic Protestant theology after 1945 was preceded by concrete acts of empathy and courage. Several founders of the WCC, such as the French pastor Marc Boegner and the philosopher Jacques Ellul, had distinguished themselves during the occupation of their country by saving Jews from the Nazis. Karl Barth, the keynote speaker at the WCC conference, spent the war years at the University of Basel, where he publicly spoke out in favor of persecuted Jews. In 1943, the leader of the WCC in formation, Willem Visser 't Hooft, was the sole Christian representative to join forces with the World Jewish Congress in a somber

statement delivered to allied governments. “The campaign of deliberate extermination of the Jews organized by the Nazi officials in nearly all countries of Europe,” warned the two organizations, “is now at its climax.”<sup>64</sup> These multiple expressions of solidarity with Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe served as a reference for Christian humanitarian interventions after 1945. “It is part of our history,” later opined Elfan Rees, “and I think we’d lose pride in it ourselves if we did not do for the Arabs in their need what we once did . . . for the Jews in theirs.”<sup>65</sup> Establishing a moral continuity between the rescue of endangered Jews during the Holocaust and compassion for Palestinian refugees required, however, a withdrawal into impartial humanitarianism. Torn between philo-Semitism and unease with “political Israel,” the WCC assembly framed the delivery of help to Arab refugees as a “moral and spiritual obligation that touches a nerve center of the world’s religions.”<sup>66</sup>

### **1948–51: The Emergence of Christian Humanitarian Operations in the Middle East**

This wording did not reassure Protestant missionaries witnessing the influx of refugees into rapidly shrinking Arab Palestine. They thought that the WCC basked “in the glow of ecumenism” and the beauty of the Dutch capital but failed to grasp the severity of the crisis.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the signatories to the Jerusalem telegrams entered into action by forming an International Christian Committee regrouping evangelicals established in Palestine and across the region. One of them was the British missionary teacher Winifred Coate (1893–1977), sent by the Church Missionary Society to the Holy Land in 1920, where she later became principal of Jerusalem Girls College.<sup>68</sup> The war of 1948 marked a turning point in her missionary career. At the behest of the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, Weston Stewart, the fifty-five-year-old Coate left Jerusalem in late July 1948 for Amman, where she saw former Lydda and Ramle inhabitants “lying on old sacks and rags,” and among them undernourished children and babies. Twenty miles north of the Transjordan capital, she witnessed starvation and disease in Zarka, the site of a future UNWRA refugee camp, where she served as welfare worker, teacher, and self-taught irrigation specialist during the next three decades.<sup>69</sup> Between August 1948 and May 1950, other pioneering Christian initiatives filled a critical void in humanitarian assistance. “Missionary and educational groups,” observed the American Quaker Channing B. Richardson, “were now carrying the burden of the effort to get food to the swarms of refugees camping under trees, along the sides of roads, and in the deserts.”<sup>70</sup> In Gaza, the Committee of the Egyptian Inter-Mission, led by Stanley A. Morrison, channeled donations from Egypt to overwhelmed American Friends volunteers in the strip. In Lebanon, the surrogate home of approximately 100,000 refugees at the end of the war, Congregationalists in Tyre and the American Presbyterian Mission in Beirut opened their elementary schools to displaced children. The Lebanese capital also became the headquarters of Christian refugee relief in the region. In Beirut, the Unitary Missionary Council, headed by the Presbyterian Bible scholar W. G. Greenslade, administered funds and supplies received from American and British churches.<sup>71</sup>

The bulk of the Christian effort, however, took place in East Jerusalem and West Transjordan, where the largest number of refugees arrived in the course of the war. In the Old City, reported Nabihah Said, the president of the Anglican Arab Women’s

Relief Society in Jerusalem, “the sights are heart rending. Faces I had known before confronted me, now pale and feeble.” Active in interfaith charities in both Egypt and Palestine, Said spent a month in the Old City delivering collected clothes and a small amount of money to refugees from West Jerusalem and its surroundings. Having frequently left their home “in house slippers and only the clothes they had on,” destitute families filled every available space, including convents and churches but also street corners and catacombs: “no words can express the state the people of the Old City are in.”<sup>72</sup> Sympathetic to Said’s concerns, the Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem took responsibility for relief operations in the Arab part of the city. In West Jordan, local committees relying on churchmen, doctors, teachers, and social workers opened milk centers and clinics or provided educational services. They also offered help to the inhabitants of 111 frontier villages divided by the armistice lines drawn in April 1949 between the Jordanian kingdom and the Jewish state. Unable to harvest crops from fields now located on the Israeli side, approximately 180,000 farmers and their families helplessly watched the expansion of Israeli agricultural communities on their former land across the border. Later deemed “economic refugees” by UNWRA and as such excluded from food rations programs, the residents of frontier villages were not technically displaced but nonetheless received precious assistance from Christian charitable societies. And “as the church of the West came to appreciate more fully the poignancy in the Near East,” an increasing number of Christian voluntary agencies participated in relief efforts in the West Bank and Jerusalem, but also in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel itself.<sup>73</sup>

The rapid constitution of a Christian humanitarian field in the Middle East prompted the WCC to launch a thorough investigation of the situation of Arab refugees outside the borders of Israel. In October and November 1949, Elfan Rees traveled to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, Jordan, and Iraq. Circulated within the WCC less than a year after the end of the war, Rees’s lengthy report was more optimistic than the first Western journalistic reportage on Arab refugees published in 1949, one piece describing the scene in Jordan as “a chaos of filth and neglect.”<sup>74</sup> Although, according to Rees, refugee camps were “wholly unsatisfactory and dehumanizing,” they were in some cases “better than the so-called standard camps for German expellees in Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein” and surely far superior to “Bedawi [Bedui] camps.”<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the reasonable food rations distributed by the United Nations gave camp inhabitants “a clear advantage over natives,” in the poverty-stricken Jordanian kingdom in particular. Rees also claimed that only 20 percent of the 820,000 refugees officially counted in November 1949 lived in camps, the rest being “billeted in the larger towns or are free living in the villages.” Indeed, the Welsh churchman visited the region at a time when refugees with some means could still afford independent dwelling, although most “free living” refugees fended for themselves in mosques and churches, olive tree groves, abandoned buildings, or caves. Moreover, Rees’s itinerary did not include the Gaza strip and its numerous tent encampments “arranged higgledy-piggledy” along the seashore of the Egyptian-ruled coastal territory.<sup>76</sup> For the WCC envoy in the Middle East, the refugee camp remained emblematic of displacement in postwar Europe but did not fully typify the Arab refugee experience.

The unique feature of the Palestinian problem was instead psychological: the refugees' tenuous insistence "that repatriation alone will solve their problem and their consequent refusal to think in terms of resettlement." Rees's emphasis on a deficient Arab refugee mindset came in lieu of political explanation: the stubborn refusal of uprooted Palestinians to consider work schemes or integration in Arab countries had primarily psychological and cultural grounds. To be sure, "the pathetic longing of these people for their homes, their hills and their flocks" was moving and commendable. But like other Western humanitarian officials, Rees did not interpret their opposition to relocation as a political demand for rights or redress. The Canadian army officer Herbert Kennedy, the first director of UNWRA, offered a similar insight into the peculiar psychology of the displaced. The Arab refugee, he told the UN General Assembly in 1950, was above all a "confirmed individualist" devoid of political consciousness. "The real trouble-makers," he added, "are confined to a very small proportion of the total number of refugees."<sup>77</sup> The emergence of a purely humanitarian vision of displaced Palestinians coincided with the collapse of indirect Arab-Israeli talks on repatriation and compensation held in Lausanne from April to September 1949. "The fundamental disabilities peculiar to the refugee," Rees concluded, "were to be found in matters of employment, clothing and educational facilities." These hardships presented daunting challenges, but with enough good will and resources they could be solved through local reintegration and vast public works projects across the Middle East. His findings also offered proof that resettlement and development could produce satisfactory outcomes. While conditions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank remained appalling, "in Transjordan the refugee is already showing signs of becoming a positive asset."

To the satisfaction of later pro-Zionist commentators, "world Protestantism's foremost authority on the Arab refugee problem" also provided the first comprehensive survey of the status of Jews in Arab countries.<sup>78</sup> With the exception of tolerant Lebanon, he reported, "Jews are living through a time of unusual stress and tension." The life of Syrian Jews belonging to the rapidly dwindling Jewish communities of Aleppo and Damascus was "uncertain, restricted and subject to petty persecution and blackmail." In Iraq, still the home of 130,000 Jews in late 1949, the situation was much worse. Since the beginning of hostilities, "Iraqi Jews have suffered persecution of a varying character." With Zionism proscribed as a crime against the state, Jews lived under permanent threat and were prohibited from leaving the country.<sup>79</sup> Rees nonetheless opposed the idea of a population exchange between Arab Palestinians and Iraqi Jews, claimed by Israel to be part of a symmetrical peace settlement with its neighbors. He noticed indeed an encouraging tendency to distinguish between a "Zionist traitor and an Iraqi Jew" and believed in the possibility for "loyal Jews" to continue to live in "moderate security." Moreover, and with the exception of the "younger Zionists," he argued that the Jewish community had every desire "of attempting to live on in Iraq." But even though he blamed the "Israeli propaganda machine" for exaggerating the dangers faced by Jews in the Middle East, his report painted a depressing picture of discrimination and insecurity.

Rees was particularly shocked, however, by the lack of communion between "our Christian leaders in these countries" and Jews in Arab countries. While he

commended Christian missionaries and field workers for carrying the burden of Palestinian refugee relief, he also complained that their sympathy for the Arab cause came “in forms of a very positive anti-Semitism.” Local Arab clergymen shared with them the same bias, a sin only forgivable through “repentance and a change of heart.” Rees therefore concluded his inquiry with a somber acknowledgment of a schism between the “understanding of our Churches in Britain and America of the Jewish problem and the general attitude of our brethren in the Middle East.” In his mind, the Arab-Israeli conflict had revealed a profound rift between Western Protestants and clergymen in the Middle East over the question of Israel and Palestinian refugees.

### **Who Is to Blame? Christian Interpretations of the Palestinian Catastrophe**

In the United States, however, anti-Zionist liberal Protestant writers continued to voice their opposition to the Jewish state, even if they reluctantly resigned themselves to its existence. “For the present,” admitted Henry Sloane Coffin in February 1949, “we can do nothing but accept the fact of this new nation.”<sup>80</sup> The editors of *Christian Century*, for their part, vigorously challenged the ethical legitimacy of Israel. They admitted that the departure of large numbers of Arabs was a godsend for the new state, but “good fortune gained at such a price may not, in time, turn out to be so fortunate. There is a moral law.”<sup>81</sup> They also discredited Israeli claims concerning Arab responsibility for the flight of refugees. Reverting to analogy with Nazi war crimes, they opposed oral testimony collected by Christian humanitarian workers in the Middle East to the Israeli-propagated notion that Arabs had voluntarily fled their homes, countering that “without exception, [the refugees] say they fled in terror, especially after the massacre at Deir Yassin. That was a horror worse than Lidice, for in Lidice only the men and boys were slaughtered.”<sup>82</sup> Writing from Cairo, Stanley A. Morrison did not have to invoke the martyred Czech village to state his belief: “There is no reasonable doubt that the Israeli military forces deliberately acted in a way which encouraged the Arabs to leave their homes.”<sup>83</sup> In a “plea to American Christians from an American Christian who is profoundly disturbed by what has been happening in Palestine,” the Yale professor of theology Millar Burrows similarly claimed that “a terrible wrong has been done to the native people of the country.” Mary J. Campbell, a former Presbyterian missionary in India and Palestine, also accused Israel of flagrant misconduct. Returning from a visit with Christian refugees in Bethlehem, she recognized that “not all of them had had a loaded rifle pointed at them” and that many had “fled through fright, leaving everything behind them.” She nonetheless denounced their “savagely treatment” at the hands of Israeli forces and called for greater Christian solidarity with their cause. Like its Protestant counterpart, the American Catholic press, initially neutral toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, harbored a similar attitude. Throughout the year 1949, its main journals commonly used phrases such as “driven out,” “forced to flee,” or “brutally uprooted” in reference to the displacement of Arab Palestinians.<sup>84</sup> Based on Protestant and Catholic reactions in the United States alone, therefore, Elfan Rees’s vision of a Western Christianity uniformly sympathetic to Jewish sovereignty in Palestine ignored a deep fracture between critics of Zionism and early advocates of the State of Israel.

The WCC spokesman on refugee affairs nonetheless sensed an important development. In the United States in particular, postwar Protestant philo-Semitism was more than a theological or spiritual phenomenon. For Christian Zionists, it also involved full identification with Israel's foundational narrative. The "study tours" of the new state organized by the American Christian Palestine Committee (ACPC) illustrate the uncritical acceptance of the official Israeli line by Protestant religious and lay leaders. Organized in collaboration with Israeli authorities, the first of these visits took place in May 1949. One of its goals was to educate participants on the causes of the Arab refugee problem. "Everywhere we tried to find out the truth as to why the Arabs left in frightened droves," reported a tour member from Iowa. Her sojourn in Israel helped her form a definitive opinion: "One thing is certain: the Arabs were neither driven nor expelled from their homes." In fact, from the onset of hostilities, "the Jews practically went down on their knees to beg the Arabs to stay."<sup>85</sup> The Reverend Karl Baehr, executive secretary of the ACPC, confirmed this view. "In Israel the Arabs were never expelled," he contended in October 1949. In line with the official Israeli explanation of these events, he blamed instead Arab propagandists for ordering the population of Palestine to temporarily leave the country until the promised defeat of Jewish forces. Ruling out long-term territorial and demographic Israeli intentions, Baehr also explained that the destruction of hundreds of Arab villages was simply the result of the fighting, as "mud huts crumble easily under the force of modern explosives." The war also caused irremediable damage to the "old Arab economy": in addition to destroyed homes, refugees had no realistic prospect of a decent livelihood. "In view of such economic realities," he concluded, "the logical or simple solution can not be mass repatriation." Finally, Baehr commended the Israeli benevolence toward the remaining Arab population and even claimed to witness among it enthusiasm for the Jewish state. In one of the Arab localities included on his tour, "the people welcomed the Israeli army with shouts of Shalom and with the waving of Israeli flags."<sup>86</sup> Such laudatory reports forced the editors of *Christian Century* to question the objectivity of Protestant travelers to Israel: "Few remain abroad long enough to learn why American missionaries and U.N. personnel who live in the Near East almost unanimously come to believe that justice demands that the Arab side of the story be given a great deal more weight than it has so far received in American consideration."<sup>87</sup>

Protestant visitors to the new state were not the only Christian Zionists defending official Israeli statements concerning Palestine's refugees. Leading theologians of philo-Semitism, such as the British Anglican churchman James Parkes, similarly exonerated the Jewish state of responsibility. A staunch critic of Christian anti-Semitism and abusive missionary zeal toward the Jews, Parkes pioneered interfaith dialogue in England and was one of the founders of the Council of Christians and Jews. In the summer of 1950, Parkes published a twenty-six-page document in defense of the historical legitimacy of Zionism.<sup>88</sup> In a study conducted for the WCC, Parkes also researched the reasons behind the mass flight of Palestinian Arabs in 1948. Although "Jewish military commanders were clearly responsible for some expulsions," he believed that it was "quite inaccurate to blame any one cause for all the fugitives." Parkes nonetheless identified a single overarching factor explaining these events. In

traditional Arab warfare, he argued, “the weaker party never stayed to fight. It ‘retired,’ knowing that the raid would soon be over and then it would be possible to return and rebuild.” Thus the “inexplicably foolish” mistake committed by Arab combatants in Palestine was their failure to realize that “those on whom they had declared war in November 1947 were not bedouin who intended to go back with their loot to the desert.”<sup>89</sup> The propensity of Christian Zionist commentators to blame the displaced for their fate did not, however, preclude sympathy for their hardships. Although “Israel was not the chief cause of their refugee status,” wrote a Congregationalist minister who visited the Jewish state in the spring of 1951, the “abject misery” of dislocated Palestinians begged for immediate alleviation.<sup>90</sup> But three years after the creation of the WCC, bitter antagonism over Israel’s role in the birth of the Arab refugee problem dampened the image of ecumenism displayed in Amsterdam in August 1948.

### **From Humanitarianism to Human Rights? The Beirut Conference of May 1951**

The May 1951 conference of experts on Palestinian refugees, held under the auspices of the WCC and the International Missionary Council at the American University in Beirut, sought to overcome these ideological divisions by reverting to pragmatic humanitarian action. Its purpose was to “study on the spot the most critical needs” and to remind the Western churches of “the continuing urgency of the matter.” Faithful to his neutral stance, the WCC leader Visser ’t Hooft insisted that it was not “a political conference although in the last resort the problem can only be solved in the realm of politics.” The seventy-three participants, including twenty-three churchmen from the United States and Great Britain, thirty-one missionaries stationed in the Middle East, and nineteen members of Arab non-Roman clergies, were therefore convened “to deal with the refugee problem as a humanitarian problem.” Although Christian relief workers in the region doubted the usefulness of such an initiative, the Beirut conference did not merely result in pious appeals for funds and donations. It also provided its Western participants with the opportunity to visit several camps in Lebanon and West Jordan, hold conversations with refugees, and have their minds “brought sharply back to the tragic chain of events which has caused this situation.”<sup>91</sup> One of them, a YMCA leader from the United States, was shocked by this experience: “I expected to find misery among these Arab refugees,” wrote Eugene R. Barnett, “and what I saw has haunted me ever since.”<sup>92</sup> Although UNWRA had been in operation for a year, this American visitor discovered families still surviving in the open in the Jordan Valley and directly exposed to the brutal heat of the Dead Sea area. “After meeting face to face with these people,” he acknowledged, “it is impossible to think of them as so many statistics—just mouths to be fed and disposed of.” In Dehsheih and Aida, two camps located in and near Bethlehem, refugees presented Barnett and his colleagues with vehement grievances against UNWRA “works programs,” which in their mind prevented their return home. “We don’t want your relief, we don’t want to be resettled,” they repeatedly told their hosts. Not all Palestinian refugees, however, displayed such political vigor. In Zarka, noted Winifred Coate in March 1951, collective demands for repatriation dwindled over time, as “all realize that for most of them return to Palestine is out of the question

and with the bitterness of this realization comes despair.”<sup>93</sup> The experts convened by the WCC also learned that in Beirut, Christian refugees privately expressed a desire to emigrate to North America or Australia. In a letter transmitted to the Reverend Farid Audeh, head of the Supreme Council of Evangelical Churches in Syria and Lebanon, refugees of several Christian denominations claimed that “the petty bourgeoisie and laborers have given up returning to Palestine, although they fear or have not the moral courage to say so to their fellow country-men.” Audeh subsequently informed the WCC that “in Lebanon it is the Christian refugee who is most ready for resettlement.”<sup>94</sup> These conflicting reports on the intent of refugees to uphold or abandon the idea of return did not alter the overall impression gained by WCC-affiliated churchmen touring the area: more than mere humanitarian clients, Palestinians claimed a common history of dispossession and injustice.

The Beirut conference marked an evolution in Christian perceptions of the Palestinian refugee crisis. Departing from its impartial humanitarian empathy, the WCC ventured for the first time into the realm of human rights rhetoric. The conference’s final declaration stated that Palestinians were the “victims of a catastrophe for which they themselves are not responsible, . . . a measure of suffering they never deserved.” This recognition of Palestinian victimhood was also accompanied by atonement: “In so far as Christians by their action, or inaction, have failed to influence in the right course the policy and decisions of their governments and of the United Nations, they too are guilty.”<sup>95</sup> Christian Zionists, however, urged the attendees to consider “the Middle East refugee problem in its entirety, not limiting it to Arab refugees alone.” As the Memphis minister Marshall Wingfield wrote in *Christianity and Crisis*, “Frozen bank accounts of Jews in Iraq, I discovered, can be as unhappy a circumstance as frozen bank accounts of Arabs in Israel.”<sup>96</sup> Both sides, however, agreed on the irreversibility of refugee movements, whether Jewish or Arab. While Christian Zionists asserted that “no good is accomplished by refighting the Arab-Israeli war,” the WCC recognized that “nowhere in the world today can the claims of absolute justice be enforced.” At the Beirut conference, the Christian humanitarian leadership championed “the rights of refugees to their own homes or property, whether they returned or not” and called for “just and generous” compensation for the displaced. But it also admitted that absent a political settlement, most Palestinians were bound to resettle outside of Israel. “Wrong cannot be righted,” realized Winifred Coate, “by trying to put the clock back three years.”<sup>97</sup> Although it began to understand the Palestinian refugee problem in human rights terms, the WCC remained solidly entrenched within the bounds of humanitarian action.

The Beirut assembly resulted indeed in the creation of the Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work (NECCCRW), an umbrella refugee agency reporting to the WCC and exclusively committed to the coordination of nutritional, educational, and agricultural projects in West Jordan, Gaza, Israel, and host countries. Its first executive director, the missionary Stanley A. Morrison, was, however, critical of purely technocratic welfare programs “based on the fallacy that the refugee problem can be separated from the political problem of Palestine.” Morrison tried instead to advance the possibility of a political settlement between Israel and its neighbors that

would permit the repatriation of at least a portion of the dislocated refugees. In talks with interlocutors in West Jerusalem and Amman, Morrison publicly advocated the creation of a federal Palestine divided into autonomous Arab and Jewish cantons, with Jerusalem as an internationalized capital. Ahead of his time, he also entertained the idea of a “two-state solution” with a Jewish-Arab capital in Jerusalem. But his activism drew the ire of the Jordanian authorities wary of losing control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, formally annexed to the kingdom in April 1950. The Lebanese and Syrian governments also virulently attacked Morrison for his support of Jewish sovereignty in parts of Palestine. For their part, the WCC leadership, as well as Anglican and Lutheran members of the NECCCRW, condemned Morrison’s “expression of political ideas” and pressed for his removal.<sup>98</sup> Yet his successor, A. Willard Jones, who headed the NECCCRW from 1953 to 1962, continued to object to the enforcement of a strict separation between humanitarianism and politics. In his mind, the refugees’ opposition to resettlement was not indicative of a “purely negative outlook,” as humanitarian officials such as Elfan Rees complained. Instead of obstructionism, the Palestinian rejection of reintegration expressed the “legitimate claim of the refugees to maintain their identity as a political community.” While conscious of their limited options, A. Willard Jones identified with their demands for political, and not merely humanitarian, recognition: “They cannot see, any more than I can, how on any grounds of justice the price of the establishment of Israel should be the wiping of Palestine off the map.”<sup>99</sup>

Such an assertive political tone, approvingly noted the Anglican bishop and scholar-missionary of Islam Kenneth Cragg, “staked a claim of active comradeship in the Arab future.” One of the main promoters of theological understanding between Christians and Muslims in the postwar era, Cragg boldly claimed that “it was the Arabs who have paid the human price for the fulfillment of history’s atonement to the Jews.” But the British theologian also frankly reminded the missionary community that the repatriation of refugees was a “self-frustrating objective.” Taking his cue from self-critical Arab political commentators such as Constantin Zurayk and Musa Alami, Cragg saw instead the Palestinian crisis as a symptom of deeper issues confronting the contemporary Arab world. He therefore conceived of Protestant humanitarianism as an opportunity for Christians to repay a debt to Arab societies by helping them surmount their “emotional, political and material” problems. The “Christian debtor,” in Cragg’s mind, felt deep “sympathy for the exacting situation in which the Arabs find themselves.” Yet it was first and foremost an agent of modernization, striving through “the invincible spirit of Jesus the Lord” toward reform and collective self-examination in the Arab world, an environment in which Islamic hegemony would no longer hamper voluntary conversions to Christianity.<sup>100</sup> Cragg’s manifesto revealed indeed how missionaries otherwise sympathetic to the Palestinian cause could still think of refugee aid as an extension of Christian ministry. It was also indicative of the growing appeal of “development” for Christian charitable organizations, an agenda in which societal transformation took precedence over emergency relief and human rights advocacy.<sup>101</sup>

### **Toward the June 1967 War: “Humanitarianization” or Political Solidarity?**

If evangelicalism experienced some success, “development” remained, however, a purely theoretical idea. Despite a “situation of acute hardship and discouragement,” Protestant welfare workers reported in 1954 that “the missionary enterprise continues to take a sympathetic and constructive part in ministering to them.”<sup>102</sup> But plagued by financial difficulties, WCC activities on behalf of Palestinians never evolved into a “relief and development” endeavor. In fact, the twenty-five Christian charities regrouped under the NECCCRW barely coped with the rapid demographic growth of the displaced Palestinian population and the “deteriorating mental and spiritual health of the refugees.” Convened once again in Beirut in May 1956, WCC representatives painted a depressing picture, lamenting how “five more years have passed in which the situation has gravely worsened.” But Elfan Rees used this opportunity to raise an “unpalatable” question, namely, “Why should we go on giving relief . . . to people for whose problem a solution can be found even if it is not the solution that they most desire?” The WCC refugee expert could not comprehend why “out of 40 million homeless people today” only Palestinians received costly international assistance: permanent resettlement with the full support of host countries would at once render relief “unnecessary.”<sup>103</sup> Rees used the second Beirut conference to launch a one-man campaign for the immediate absorption of refugees in Arab countries. “By faith, by language, by race and by social organization,” he wrote in 1957, “[the refugees] are indistinguishable from their fellows of their host countries.”<sup>104</sup> Rees also entered into talks with Israeli officials understandably interested in the permanent dissemination of the 1948 refugees across the region. In a meeting in New York with foreign minister Golda Meir, Rees presented his views on reintegration but also asked the Israeli government to commit to a massive compensation package. His private diplomacy, however, came to a halt in 1959. Israeli representatives refused to commit to financial reparations if mentions of repatriation were not entirely eliminated from the proposed scheme. Christian ecumenical leaders, wary of deteriorating relations with the Arab world, had indeed inserted into Rees’s plan a reference to the Palestinians’ “moral right” to repatriation. And with the support of missionaries and Arab clergymen, the WCC pledged in August 1959 “to safeguard at all costs the continuation of relief” and pleaded for the renewal of UNWRA’s mandate.<sup>105</sup> While the maintenance of welfare services for Palestinians was intended to buy time until the achievement of a final political settlement, it also remained in line with the core tenet of Protestant relief efforts since 1948. The Reverend Edgar Chandler, an American minister in charge of the WCC Refugee Service in Geneva, reaffirmed the main purpose of Christian aid operations: “We of the World Council are Samaritans, not politicians, and we can look at the Middle East’s needs only as humanitarians and as a group of religious bodies devoted to helping.”<sup>106</sup> In the eyes of Palestinian nationalists, however, this ethos was complicit with Zionist tactics. For the Nablus-born Izzat Tannous, who served in the late 1950s as an unofficial Palestinian representative in the United States, such a stance colluded with the Israeli preference “to speak of the refugee problem from the humanitarian aspect and so develop an Israeli-Arab States conflict as a substitute.”<sup>107</sup>

The World Refugee Year organized under the aegis of the United Nations between 1959 and 1960 further emphasized the purely humanitarian dimension of the Palestinian refugee crisis. Conceived as an international campaign to raise awareness and funds for displaced persons worldwide, the first United Nations thematic year drew attention to the situation of refugees beyond Europe and directed donor countries to humanitarian theaters in North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.<sup>108</sup> The global scope of World Refugee Year, however, now prompted Christian officials to question the necessity of vast expenditures for Palestinians. Frank L. Hutchinson, a spokesman for Church World Service, observed in 1962, “Even a cursory look at refugee situations in Calcutta, Algeria, and Hong Kong reveals at once that the men, women and children in the other three areas are infinitely worse off.” But a change of tone was nonetheless noticeable at the start of the 1960s. “As Christians we affirm that the Arab refugee need is not charity but expiation,” reported Hutchinson upon his return from the Middle East. Penitence did not entail full support for repatriation but imposed on Christians the duty to secure for Palestinians “sufficient restitution, reparation, psychological and spiritual satisfaction to erase the memory of past tragedy.” It also required that American churches, as well as U.S. foreign policy, embrace “both people, both needs, and both causes” instead of giving “outright support to Israel against the Arabs.”<sup>109</sup> Institutional changes within the NECCCRW also affected the tenor of Christian humanitarianism. By 1964, the Beirut-based committee was predominantly composed of Arab clergymen of various denominations who replaced the Anglo-American Protestant missionaries at the helm of this organization. Its executive secretary, J. Richard Butler, hailed from the United States but did not hesitate to acknowledge the historical significance of the newly created Palestine Liberation Organization: “The West has not been realistic in recognizing the existence of a Palestinian nationalism,” he wrote in 1966, “which has not and will not see itself swept under the rug, even a Hashemite rug.”<sup>110</sup>

A year later, the Israeli conquest of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza during the June 1967 war marked a pivotal moment in Christian attitudes toward the Palestinian question. Following a visit to the West Bank in late June, Elfan Rees confidently reported that the Israeli government “is quite clearly determined to be a model Occupying Power.”<sup>111</sup> But if a WCC statement issued in Heraklion in August 1967 recognized the “fears of the people of Israel . . . to be threatened, at least by word, with expulsion from their new home,” it also condemned the annexation of territories by armed forces and supported the “right of return” of Palestinians displaced in the course of the recent war. Meeting in Canterbury in August 1969, the WCC Central Committee called for the respect of the “legitimate rights” of Palestinians and of the “territorial integrity of all nations in the area, including Israel.” At the urging of its member churches in the Middle East, the WCC also stressed the “rights of Palestinians to self-determination,” recognized the legitimacy of the “Palestinian Liberation Movement,” and for the first time since 1948 added a clear political component to its humanitarian mission. “All our work of compassion,” stated a declaration issued in Nicosia, “should be done in the context of the struggle for a just solution.”<sup>112</sup> Pro-Israel commentators see in this language an indication that the WCC sharply veered toward the Palestinian cause under the sway of Arab churches and

liberation theologians.<sup>113</sup> Yet for ecumenical Christianity, as for the Western political left, the Six-Day War provided above all the possibility of emancipation from constraints prevalent between 1948 and 1967. The advocacy of a “just and durable peace” through a two-state solution allowed for equal recognition of Arab and Jewish self-determination and softened the antagonism between philo-Semitism and compassion for the Palestinian tragedy. Moreover, the “occupied territories” now constituted a space in which human rights violations could be monitored or condemned without challenging the legitimacy of the existence of Israel. In this new context, Christian solidarity with the refugees could be safely expressed. “All our work,” now loudly announced a group of churchmen involved in refugee aid, “must be done not only *for* but *with* the Palestinians.”<sup>114</sup>

This evolution coincided with an important shift in the practice of non-governmental humanitarianism and its relationship to sovereign power. The Biafran crisis (1967–70) is commonly designated as the moment when, spearheaded by the French organization Médecins Sans Frontières, a new generation of activists sided with victims against the Nigerian state controlling them. As this essay has shown, however, the Palestinian refugee theater formed since 1948 a pioneering site of experimentation for humanitarian politics.<sup>115</sup> Witnessing, after all, belonged to the lexicon of Christian missiology much before *témoignage*, heralded by the “French doctors” as a countervailing response to political violence, became a pillar of humanitarian ethics. But as opposed to the ideological zeal of sixty-eighters eager to merge humanitarianism and the protection of human rights into a single experience, Christian refugee aid between 1948 and 1967 neither exposed the political roots of the emergency nor functioned as “a mechanism translating moral claims into political actions.”<sup>116</sup> Anglo-American missionaries generally viewed Palestinians as political victims, but the WCC leadership favored impartial humanitarianism over the apportioning of responsibility. This depoliticization process, however, was the product of specific historical conditions and not inherently inscribed into the practice of humanitarianism, as recent authors have argued.<sup>117</sup> Inspired by fresh memories of the Holocaust and theological innovations, Protestant philo-Semitism significantly curtailed the possibility of “speaking out” politically on behalf of Palestinians. Moreover, the limited resonance of the postwar “human rights revolution” prevented Christian humanitarians from effectively labeling the forcible deportation of noncombatant civilians, the prohibition of their return, and the confinement of remaining “Arab Israelis” to controlled military areas until 1966 as contraventions of international law. In this context, the “humanitarianization” of Palestinian refugees was an attempt to alleviate their suffering without ever challenging the political claims of Zionism. Ironically, this form of humanitarian neutrality can conversely be seen as political work: the WCC and its Western-affiliated churches ultimately endorsed Zionist state-making over Palestinian political demands. As such, the history of Christian humanitarianism in the post-1948 Middle East illuminates how the State of Israel rapidly gained broad legitimacy in the Western world. But it also magnifies the unique political and ethical challenges posed to this day by the question of Palestine to the practitioners of humanitarianism.

## NOTES

1. Francesca Wilson, *Advice to Relief Workers: Based on Personal Experiences in the Field* (London: John Murray and Friends Relief Services, 1945), 4.
2. Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 108.
3. J. Bruce Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance: Religion, Refugee Work and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 68.
4. Elizabeth Ferris, "Faith-Based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations," *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 858 (2005): 311–25.
5. Canon John Nurser, "The 'Ecumenical Movement,' Churches, 'Global Order' and Human Rights, 1938–1948," *Human Rights Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2003): 841–81; Samuel Moyn, "Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights," in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 85–106.
6. John C. Bennett, "East and West in Amsterdam," *Christianity and Crisis*, October 4, 1948, 122–23; Samuel McCrea Cavert, "Preview of Amsterdam," *International Review of Missions* 37, no. 147 (1948): 313–20.
7. Elfan Rees, *The Refugee Problem Today* (New York: Church World Service, 1948), 5. A former Welsh Air Force chaplain and a theologian, Rees became the principal WCC spokesman on refugee issues after the resignation of his predecessor, the German anti-Nazi pastor Adolf Freudenberg.
8. Henry Carter, *The Refugee Problem in Europe and the Middle East* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 35.
9. Roger C. Mackie, Director of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees, "The Outlook for Refugees," WCC Archives, box 425.02.025.
10. "A Program of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Palestine Refugees in the Near East" (1952), WCC Archives, box 425.1.047.
11. Catherine Rey-Schyr, "Le CICR et l'assistance aux réfugiés arabes palestiniens (1948–1950)," *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge* 83, no. 843 (2001): 739–61; American Friends Service Committee, *Quaker Work among Arab Refugees Undertaken for the United Nations* (New York: AFSC, 1950); Nancy Gallagher, *Quakers in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Dilemmas of NGO Humanitarianism* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007).
12. Livia Rokach, *The Catholic Church and the Question of Palestine* (London: Saqi Books, 1987), 44–46.
13. David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches: A Study of Its Background and History* (Peterborough, N.H.: Smith, 1966), 315.
14. Cited in Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees, 1956–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 64.
15. Carter, *Refugee Problem*, 8.
16. The only works on the subjects are official publications issued by Christian organizations. See Michael Christopher King, *The Palestinian and the Churches*, vol. 1, 1948–1956 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981); Larry Ekin, *Enduring Witnesses: The Churches and the Palestinians*, vol. 2 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985); Frank L. Hutchinson, *Refugees from Palestine: The Church's Continued Concern* (New York: National Council of Churches, 1962).

17. Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917–1967* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008); Benjamin N. Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation: UN Aid to Palestinians* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995); Edward H. Buehring, *The UN and the Palestinian Refugees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971).
18. John Stuart, “Beyond Sovereignty? Protestant Missions, Empire and Transnationalism, 1890–1950,” in *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880–1950*, ed. Kevin Grant et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 103–26.
19. Randa Farah, “The Marginalization of Palestinian Refugees,” in *Problems of Protection: The UNHCR, Refugees and Human Rights*, ed. Nicklaus Steiner et al. (London: Routledge, 2003), 155–74.
20. Cited in King, *Palestinians and the Churches*, 60.
21. Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 273–319; Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” *Middle East Journal* 40, no. 1 (1986): 82–109.
22. Alon Kadish and Avraham Sela, “Myths and Historiography of the 1948 Palestine War Revisited: The Case of Lydda,” *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 4 (2005): 617–34.
23. For a discussion of the New Historians’ “interpretative innovation,” see Benny Morris, “Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948,” in *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, ed. Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37–60.
24. Ben-Gurion’s declaration of June 16, 1948, is quoted in Ronny E. Gabbay, *A Political Study of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Arab Refugee Problem* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1959), 114–33.
25. Jacques de Reynier, *1948 à Jérusalem* (Neuchâtel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1969), 165–66, 172–75; Benny Morris, “The Initial Absorption of Palestinian Refugees in the Arab Host Countries, 1948–1949,” in *Refugees in the Age of Total War*, ed. Anna C. Bramwell (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 253–73.
26. Gabbay, *Political Study*, 114–33.
27. The text of this telegram is reproduced in Ekin, *Enduring Witness*, 1.
28. Christina H. Jones, *The Untempered Wind: Forty Years in Palestine* (London: Longman, 1975), 151.
29. Louis T. Talbot and William W. Orr, *The Nation of Israel and the Word of God!* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1948), 8, cited in Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-Map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 85; Yona Malachy, *American Fundamentalism and Israel* (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1978), 146–54.
30. Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 86.
31. “The Palestine Question, A Christian Position,” in *Palestine: A Jewish Homeland?* ed. Julia E. Johnsen (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1946), 53–60.
32. Reverend Leland S. Albright, spokesman for the Foreign Missions Conference, is cited in Hertzell Fishman, *American Protestantism and a Jewish State* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 90.
33. *Statement by the Committee of the Christian Union of Palestine (Jerusalem)*, March 3, 1948, WCC Archives, box 301.5694.1, folder 4.
34. Bayard George, “Peace or War in Palestine,” *Christianity and Crisis*, March 15, 1948, 27–30.
35. Henry Sloane Coffin, “Politics and Missions,” *Christianity and Crisis*, August 4, 1947, 5–6.

36. Henry Van Dusen, "Political Realities," *Christianity and Crisis*, February 2, 1948, 1–2.
37. Caitlin Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 59–79; Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 86–90; Carl Hermann Voss and David A. Rausch, "American Christians and Israel, 1948–1988," *American Jewish Archives* 40, no. 1 (1988): 41–81.
38. The text of the second telegram is reproduced in Christina H. Jones, *Ten Years of Service: The Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work* (Jerusalem, 1958), 1. See also Jones, *Friends in Palestine* (Dublin, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1981), 116–17.
39. Gaines, *World Council of Churches*, 312.
40. "Arab Encircled at Vital Highway, Surrender Lydda," *New York Times* (hereafter *NYT*), July 12, 1948; "Lydda and Ramle Fall to Jews in Biggest Victory," *Washington Post*, July 12, 1948; "Ramleh and Lydda Fall," *Times*, July 12, 1948. The *London Economist*, however, described how residents of Lydda and Ramle were "sent on their trek to the frontier." See Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 168.
41. "Arab Refugee Tide Burdens Economy," *NYT*, July 24, 1948.
42. "Israel Alters Levant Balance in Molding of a New Nation," *NYT*, January 10, 1949.
43. Gaines, *World Council of Churches*, 312.
44. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The World Council of Churches and the Struggle between East and West," *Christianity and Crisis*, July 25, 1949, 98–103.
45. John C. Bennett, "East and West in Amsterdam," *Christianity and Crisis*, October 4, 1948, 122–23.
46. Elfan Rees, *Refugee Problem Today*, 5.
47. Georg Federer, "The Plight of the German Expellees," *Christianity and Crisis*, June 13, 1949, 75–77.
48. A. Willard Jones, *First Circular Letter* (November 1953), Near Eastern Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work, WCC Archives, box 425.1.032.
49. Robert Root, "Whose Holy Land?" *Christian Century*, January 14, 1948, 45–48.
50. Cited in Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 186.
51. Seth J. Frantzman et al., "The Anglican Church in Palestine and Israel: Colonialism, Arabization and Land Ownership," *Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 1 (2011): 101–26; J. H. Proctor, "Scottish Missionaries and the Struggle for Palestine, 1917–48," *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 3 (1997): 613–29.
52. William Montgomery Watt, "The Missionary Task of the Church in Palestine and Syria," *International Review of Missions* 36, no. 142 (1947): 153–62.
53. S. A. Morrison, "Arab Nationalism and Islam," *Middle East Journal* 2, no. 2 (1948): 147–59.
54. Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews and the Idea of the Promised Land* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 137–62.
55. Alford Carleton, "Palestine: Fundamentals" (September 28, 1947), WCC Archives, box 425.1.032. See also Carleton's autobiography *Vagaries of a Missionary Career: Recollections and Reflections* (New York: United Church Board for World Ministries, 1983), 49–58.
56. Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 133; Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People:*

*Missions to the Jews in America, 1880–2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 148–49.

57. “Southern Baptist Leader Sees an ‘Immoral Miracle,’” *Christian Century*, December 6, 1950, 1445.

58. In 1948, a *Missionary and Philanthropic Directory of Arab Asia* listed sixty non-Roman Western missionary organizations in “Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, Arabia and Iraq.” See E. F. F. Bishop, “The Jerusalem That Now Is: Seen through Missionary Eyes,” *International Review of Missions* 37, no. 148 (1948): 427–36.

59. Matthew Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Susannah Heschel, “Confronting the Past: Post-1945 German Protestant Theology and the Fate of the Jews,” in *The Protestant-Jewish Conundrum*, ed. Jonathan Frankel and Ezra Mendelsohn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 46–71.

60. Christian Rutishauer, “The 1947 Seelisberg Conference: The Foundation of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 2, no. 2 (2007): 34–53.

61. World Council of Churches, *The Relationship of the Church to the Jewish People: Collection of Statements* (Geneva, 1964), 48–50.

62. Jakob Jocz, “The Theological Validity of Jewish Missions,” *International Review of Missions* 36, no. 143 (1947): 347–69.

63. Gerhard Gronauer, “Attitudes in West German Protestantism towards the State of Israel, 1948–1967,” in *The Social Dimension of Christian Missions in the Middle East*, ed. Norbert Friedrich et al. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2010), 205–29.

64. W. A. Visser ’t Hooft, *Memoirs* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 168.

65. Cited in Edgard S. H. Chandler, *The High Tower of Refuge* (New York: Praeger, 1959), 91.

66. World Council of Churches, *The Relationship of the Church to the Jewish People*, 15.

67. Jones, *Untempered Wind*, 150.

68. “Coate, Winifred Annie (1893–1977), Missionary Teacher and Relief Organizer,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66986> (accessed December 1, 2013).

69. Morris, *Operation Dani*, 99; Winifred A. Coate, “The Refugee Situation in East Jordan,” *International Review of Missions* 40, no. 160 (1951): 444–59.

70. Channing B. Richardson, “The United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees,” *International Organization* 4, no. 1 (1950): 44–54.

71. “The Near East and the Middle East,” *International Review of Missions* 39, no. 53 (1950): 32–33.

72. “My Visit to the Old City of Jerusalem from January 10th to February 10th” (1949), WCC Archives, box 425.1.047. Nabihah Said was Edward Said’s aunt.

73. “A Program of Inter-Church Aid and Services in the Near East” (1952), WCC Archives, box 425.1.047; Christina H. Jones, *The Y.M.C.A. Jerusalem in Jordan: The Story of a Tent* (Jerusalem, 1965).

74. “Who’ll Help the Refugee Arab?” *Picture Post* (UK), June 25, 1949, 12–17.

75. “Report of Elfan Rees to the Department of Inter-church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches, Middle East Mission, October–November 1949,” WCC Archives, Box 425.1.047.

76. American Friends Service Committee, *Quaker Work among Arab Refugees*, 9.

77. Interim Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works for Palestinians in the Near East, United Nations, General Assembly A/1451, October 19, 1950.
78. Fishman, *American Protestantism*, 135.
79. WCC, "Jewish Minorities in the Middle East," appendix to report of Elfan Rees, Middle East Mission, October-November 1949.
80. "Perils to America in the New Jewish State," *Christianity and Crisis*, February 21, 1949, 9–10.
81. "What's to Become of Arab Refugees?" *Christian Century*, February 2, 1949, 131.
82. "Israel and Judaism," *Christian Century*, March 16, 1949, 327–29.
83. S. A. Morrison, "Israel and the Middle East," *Christianity and Crisis*, July 11, 1949, 93–96.
84. Millar Burrows, *Palestine Is Our Business* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 11; Mary J. Campbell, "I Visited All Palestine," *Christian Century*, September 13, 1950, 1075–76; Esther Y. Feldblum, *The American Catholic Press and the Jewish State, 1917–1959* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1977), 75–86.
85. Louise S. Freese, "The Arab Exodus," in *A Christian Report on Israel* (New York: American Christian Palestine Committee, 1949), 21–23.
86. Karl Baehr, "The Arabs and Israel," *Christianity and Crisis*, October 3, 1949, 122–26.
87. "What Price a Free Ride?" *Christian Century*, April 5, 1950, 422–23.
88. Colin Richmond, *Campaigner against Antisemitism: The Reverend James Parkes, 1896–1981* (London: Mitchell, 2005), 206–8; Haim Chertok, *He Also Spoke as a Jew: The Life of James Parkes* (London: Mitchell, 2006), 386–91.
89. James Parkes, *Voyage of Discoveries* (London: Gollancz, 1969), 211–12.
90. Marshall Wingfield, "Arab and Israeli," *Christianity and Crisis*, October 29, 1951, 139–42.
91. "The Near East and the Middle East," *International Review of Missions* 39, no. 157 (1951): 31.
92. Eugene R. Barnett, "Beirut, Palestine, and the Middle East," *Christianity and Crisis*, August 6, 1951, 114–17.
93. "The Arab Refugee Relief Problem: As Viewed from Zerka," March 3, 1951, WCC Archives, folder 425.02.09.025/3.
94. "Letter from Khalil S. Khoury, House of Aziz Bassul, Ras Beirut," May 6, 1951, WCC Archives, folder 425.02.09.025/3.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Wingfield, *Arab and Israeli*, 140.
97. Coate, *Refugee Situation*, 449.
98. Stanley A. Morrison left East Jerusalem in early 1953 to join the missionary service in Kenya. Details of the "Morrison Affair" are in WCC Archives, box 425.1.047, file Op/G/10.
99. Jones, *First Circular Letter*, November 1953.
100. Kenneth Cragg, "The Arab World and the Christian Debt," *International Review of Missions* 42, no. 166 (1953): 151–56.
101. Brian E. Woolnough, "Christian NGOs for Relief and Development: One of the Church's Arms for Holistic Mission," *Transformation* 28, no. 3 (2011): 195–205.
102. "The Near East and the Middle East," *International Review of Missions* 43, no. 169 (1954): 34–35.
103. WCC, *A Report of a Conference on the Problem of Arab Refugees from Palestine, Held at Beirut, Lebanon, May 21–25, 1956*, 13.

104. Cited in Ekin, *Enduring Witness*, 18.
105. See the minutes of the WCC Central Committee Meeting in Rhodes, August 1959, reproduced in King, *Palestinians and the Churches*, 126–27.
106. Chandler, *High Tower of Refuge*, 90.
107. “Statement by Izzat Tannous on the Palestine Arab Refugees before the UN Special Political Committee, 20 February 1957,” WCC Archives, box 301.5694.1, folder 4.
108. Gatrell, *Free World*, 58–72.
109. Hutchinson, *Refugees from Palestine*, 94–102.
110. Ekin, *Enduring Witness*, 32.
111. *Ibid.*, 33.
112. See the statements on the Middle East adopted by the WCC in Heraklion (August 1967) and Canterbury (August 1969), reproduced in appendix in King, *Palestinians and the Churches*, 127–31.
113. Paul Charles Merkey, *Christian Attitudes towards the State of Israel* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2001), 32–33; Haim Genizzi, “The Attitude of the World Council of Churches (WCC) towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” in Frankel and Mendelsohn, eds., *Protestant-Jewish Conundrum*, 91–105.
114. “Consultation on the Palestine Refugee Problem, Nicosia, September-October 1969,” reproduced in appendix in King, *Palestinians and the Churches*, 130 (emphasis original).
115. In addition to Protestant evangelicals, other humanitarian workers in Palestinian refugee camps were similarly torn between politics and neutrality. See Ilana Feldman, “The Quaker Way: Ethical Labor and Humanitarian Relief,” *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (2007): 689–705; Feldman, “The Humanitarian Circuit: Relief Work, Development Assistance, and CARE in Gaza, 1955–67,” in *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics*, ed. Peter Redfield and Erica Bornstein (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2011), 203–27.
116. Michal Givoni, “Beyond the Humanitarian/Political Divide: Witnessing and the Making of Humanitarian Ethics,” *Journal of Human Rights* 10, no. 1 (2011): 55–75.
117. For a critical view of the oft-alleged depoliticizing effect of humanitarianism, see Nicolas Guilhot, “The Anthropologist as Witness: Humanitarianism between Ethnography and Critique,” *Humanity* 3, no. 1 (2012): 81–101.