



Promise, Land, and Hope:
Jews and Christians Seeking Understanding to Enable
Constructive Dialogue about Israeli-Palestinian Issues

With additional support from:

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Center, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, USA • Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, USA •
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ICCJ Promise, Land, Hope Research Project Holds 2014 Consultation in Heidelberg

An ICCJ international and multi-year research project, "Promise, Land, and Hope: Jews and Christians Seeking Understanding to Enable Constructive Dialogue about Israeli-Palestinian Issues," recently concluded its third of a projected five consultations in Heidelberg, Germany. The project is also supported by the Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Center, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, USA; the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations of Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, USA; the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, USA; the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium; and Lund University, Lund, Sweden. The working session, which occurred from 23-25 June 2014, was hosted by Hochschule für Jüdische Studien in Heidelberg.

The consultation began with introductions by the faculty and staff of the Hochschule and by the Promise, Land, and Hope Research Team. The rector of the Hochschule, Johannes Heil, described the programs offered there and Philip Cunningham, ICCJ 2nd Vice-President, provided a summary of the work of the PLH project to date. Deborah Weissman, ICCJ President, and Anette Adelman, ICCJ General Secretary, extended greetings and welcomes to all, extending special thanks to the Hochschule, the supporting universities, and to Abi Pitum, ICCJ Treasurer and the Friends of the Martin Buber House for their additional financial support. The PLH Steering Committee added particular thanks to Anette Adelman for all her logistical and administrative work in making the 2014 consultation possible.

Continuing from the 2013 meeting (which had discussed such topics as Old and New Testament land texts, Christian Zionism, and liberation/post-colonial theologies), the first day began by exploring "A Theology of Belonging" in which John Pawlikowski considered how Jews, Christians, and Muslims might develop theologies of each other that would recognize and affirm their attachment to the same land. Raymond Cohen then discussed "The Document that Never Was: People, Land, and State after *Nostra Aetate*," describing how after the 1967 Six-Day War some Catholic leaders pondered whether the hand of God might be discerned in contemporary events. That afternoon Friedhelm Pieper and Jesper Svartvik each examined how classic Christian anti-Judaism can find new expression in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The second day was devoted to a "tool" or "map" that people in dialogue groups around the world could use to understand how different people use authoritative texts to come to conflicting positions about the Middle East. Adam Gregerman first presented an analysis of three statements from Protestant Christians about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All three exhibited in varying degrees an interest in

distinguishing theology from politics but nevertheless went on to describe the responsibilities of the State of Israel in Christian theological terms.

This led to Peter Pettit's introduction of a draft analytical tool prepared by a sub-committee of Philip Cunningham, Adam Gregerman, and himself. The eventual tool is intended to be used by readers or dialogue groups in their consideration of specific documents, statements, or essays on the Israeli-Palestine conflict. After lunch, the team divided into small groups consisting of at least one Catholic, one Protestant, and one Jew to "field test" the analytic tool by applying it to assigned sample writings.

After several hours of small group work and discussion, the main conclusions were that the draft tool was admirably multifaceted but needed streamlining for use by dialogue groups. All agreed that the user-friendliness of the tool is key. The sub-committee, joined by Reimund Beiringer and Ruth Langer, will prepare a second draft of the analytic tool. Ideally, this could be field tested in multiple locales before the next PLH consultation.

The final session of the Heidelberg consultation focused on next steps. It was agreed to meet in August 2015 in Jerusalem, hosted by the Swedish Theological Institute and Lund University. Palestinian Christians and Israeli Jews will be among those invited to participate in that consultation in various ways.

There was also general agreement that the project should aim to compose a book, envisioned to be in two parts: (1) the analytic tool to help dialogue groups converse about volatile topics, accompanied by full explanations and conclusions; (2) thematic essays on relevant topics, including some discussed and refined in our consultations. An online version, especially of the tool, is also an option. All team members were encouraged to write papers for possible inclusion in the eventual book that could be presented and discussed in Jerusalem.

The consultation ended with renewed thanks for the wonderful hospitality of the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien.



Philip Cunningham, John Pawlikowski, Deborah Weissman, and Anette Adelman during the 2014 PLH consultation.