



## Protestant Church/Jewish State

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**The United Church of Canada, Israel and the Palestinian refugees revisited.**

### **Protestant Church/Jewish State:**

#### **The United Church of Canada, Israel**

and the Palestinian Refugees Revisited

**by Gary A. Gaudin**

#### **Abstract**

*This essay re-examines the rift which developed between the United Church of Canada (UCC) and the Canadian Jewish community in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with significant attention given to the role of the United Church Observer. It places that rift within the context of a long-standing inability of the UCC community to evaluate the events of the Middle East through anything other than a political analysis. That inability not only produced a rift between the UCC and the Jewish community but also made it virtually impossible for the UCC to stand in solidarity with the Palestinians and the Jews. A call for the establishment of a critical solidarity through authentic theological dialogue is made.*

#### **Introduction<sup>(1)</sup>**

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, relations between the United Church of Canada (UCC)<sup>(2)</sup> and the Canadian Jewish community became greatly strained over the treatment accorded the Jewish State by the UCC's "official organ"—the *United Church Observer (Observer)* under the editorship of A.C. Forrest.<sup>(3)</sup> As Canadian Jewish thinker Emil L. Fackenheim formulated the problem:

the *United Church Observer* has shown an ever-increasing anti-Jewish bias, and United Church officials, while seeking refuge behind the editor's freedom of speech, have either themselves kept silent, or else used their own freedom of speech only to defend the policies of the editor, or even to attack, often vociferously, those who opposed these policies -- be they Jewish and, especially, should they be Christian. No official I know of has made use of his freedom of speech to oppose the anti-Jewish policies of the *Observer*.<sup>(4)</sup>

Such was the depth of feeling engendered that lawsuits were initiated, though these were later dropped after extensive dialogue. Much of that feeling remains within the two communities, and it is therefore appropriate, for two reasons, to revisit the relationship with a critical eye. First, as the largest Protestant body in Canada, the UCC bears a certain responsibility for the manner in which it has dealt with inter-faith issues. Second, while this essay focuses on the UCC, it must be

acknowledged that there is little significant difference between the statements concerning Israel and the Palestinian refugees issued by Protestant church bodies in Canada or the United States, or between the editorial positions favoured by the *Observer* and, e.g., the *Christian Century*.<sup>(5)</sup> This essay functions, then, as a case study of the struggle within mainline Protestantism to grasp, or be grasped by, the issues involved. I will argue that *both* the Jewish State and the Palestinian refugees were ill-served by the inability of the UCC and the *Observer* to address the matters *theologically*. This will be established through an analysis of the reactions of the church and the journal to four critical moments in Israeli and Palestinian history: a) the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948; b) the Six-Day War of 1967; c) the Yom Kippur War of 1973; and d) the Intifada of the last seven years.

## 1 The Founding of the Modern State of Israel (1948)

The General Council (GC)<sup>(6)</sup> of 1948 met as the period of the British mandate was ending, and included a discussion of "Canada and the Palestine Question" (*Record of Proceedings (RP) 1948*, 138ff.). Centred on three short statements (Jewish, Arab, and British) reprinted from the 15 May 1948 issue of the *United Nations Bulletin*, it was prefaced as follows: "In view of the rapid changes in Palestine, including armed strife between forces of the Arab States and the newly erected state of Israel, the committee decided it would be unwise to prepare a statement on the Palestine question for General Assembly" (138). Rather than take a stance on the implications of a Jewish State for post-*Shoah* Jewry and the Palestinian community living in the region, the GC deemed it appropriate to let the problem find its own course as a political issue.

The *Observer* quickly came to question the wisdom of establishing a Jewish state. An A.J. Wilson editorial, appearing in March of 1947, stated that Lent in Palestine had been

a time for rioting, underground Jewish outrages and murder. At the close of the war the Jewish people had the sympathy of the whole world. No race had suffered so much at the hands of the brutal and fanatical Nazis. They had been beaten, persecuted, starved. The world stood aghast at the revelations which came to light at the close of hostilities. Much of the sympathy for the Jews which was so general and so genuine has been lost by their action since the close of the war. Sometimes it seems as if the very insistence of the Zionists on the implementation of the Balfour Declaration in terms agreeable to their own aspirations and irrespective of the feelings of the Arabs, will not only create a new focal centre of anti-Semitism not alone in the Near East *but in the whole world*, and will alienate a vast amount of that very real sympathy for, and desire to understand, the Jews which their persecutions at the hands of the Nazis have brought them (9 [2] (1947/48): 4, italics added).

The questioning became fused with concern for a world gripped by the "fear of another world war" (9 [15]: 4), leading to a distrust of the U.N. partition plan:

A country little bigger than New Brunswick will be divided into three parts. The Arabs threaten civil war. Great Britain is due to withdraw her troops in the near future. What happens after that, unless an international military force is placed there to keep order is fraught with great danger *to the peace of the world*. In Palestine the decision to establish a sovereign state on the basis of religion is not without precedent. But the record of the Vatican in politics is hardly one that would give the student of history much hope for the future success of another Religio-political state (9 [20]: 8, italics added).

Unease with the U.N. process culminated in the following editorial comments published a few weeks before the state of Israel was proclaimed:

At a time when small nations are being absorbed into large national units, it seems contrary to

history processes that a new sovereign state should be set up for the Jews in Palestine. We have one politico-religious sovereign state in the world, and the Vatican has confused political and religious issues time and time again. Another in Palestine is bound to increase national and racial tensions. The Jews have done a phenomenal job in Palestine, building up the waste places and making the desert blossom as a rose. If they would be satisfied to live, and work, and to enjoy the prosperity they have wrested from the soil, without fanatically insisting on the status of a sovereign state, all would be well. *For the sake of the peace of the world*, the Jews should renounce their claims for an immediate sovereign state. Such a renunciation would do more than any single act to restore confidence in the essential goodness of human nature. Such a sacrifice would set an example, *the effects of which for peace and unity would be felt throughout the whole world* (10 [3] (1948/49): 4, italics added).

For both the GC and the *Observer* Palestine was perceived to be a political problem. One detects a deep-seated distrust of Zionism (later inherited by the Jewish State) and an ambivalence about the existence of that state as weighed against the possibility of increasing anti-Semitism, the welfare of thousands of refugees, and the threat of thermonuclear world war. The primary questions raised by the events in Palestine were not "How does this help the Jews?" or "How does this hurt the Palestinians?" but "How does this affect us? The world community? How might this play into the hands of the Soviets? How best can we achieve 'peace'?"

Given the aforementioned geo-political realities of the era, the almost complete lack of theological reflection upon the importance of "the land" to both Jew and Palestinian, while regrettable, is not surprising. Many Jewish thinkers, among them Fackenheim, acknowledge that it took some twenty years after the *Shoah* for Jewish thought to move beyond the need for Jewish political security so as to engage the theological significance of the Jewish state. That turning point can be dated with precision—June, 1967—to which we now turn.

## 2 The Six-Day War (1967)

While the secular media reported the increasingly bellicose declarations of Arab and Israeli leaders in the spring of 1967, and many acknowledged the very real threat posed to Jewish survival, no major Protestant body in Canada issued official statements decrying the war-ward momentum.<sup>[7]</sup> Jewish and Arab leaders in Canada asked that the churches support the rightness of their respective causes. Neither received it.

Though the Jewish fears of another *Shoah* were summarily set aside by the Israeli victory, many Jewish thinkers (particularly those committed to dialogue with Christian counterparts) were left with serious doubts about further dialogue:

For two long weeks in May the world-wide Jewish community perceived the spectre of a second Jewish holocaust in a single generation. For two weeks it listened to the same words emanating from Cairo and Damascus which had once emanated from Berlin. For two weeks it longed for Christian words of apprehension and concern. But whereas some such words came from secular sources from the churches there was little but silence. Once again, Jews were alone. This is the ultimate question, for it transcends all politics. Moreover, it stands between Jews and Christians even now, for when Jews ask why there was no moral Christian outcry against a second Auschwitz they are still widely misunderstood, as demanding of Christians that they side politically with Israel against the Arab states (Fackenheim 10).

And though the Arab anticipation of victory remained unfulfilled, the West was perceived to be uninterested in censuring Israel for the seizure of land in 1948, and, at the same time, quite ignorant of the Arab position(s). Nor did there seem to be an openness to serious dialogue on the part of Canadian ecclesial communities about Arab concerns. The churches seemed content,

rather, to issue general statements.

As the war began, the Moderator<sup>(8)</sup> of the UCC joined other denominational leaders in calling for prayer and a "...just and honourable peace" (Slonim 4) with little indication of the elements which would be required to make any peace just and honourable. The 1968 GC adopted a comprehensive policy statement on the Middle East which affirmed the need for: a) Arab and Israeli participation in a UN sponsored peace process; b) Arab recognition of the State of Israel; c) Israeli withdrawal to its pre-1967 borders; d) Israeli repatriation or compensation of refugees. It also expressed frustration at being caught between the Arabs and the Jews, deploring "...suggestions that those who criticize Israeli policies are necessarily anti-Semitic and that critics of Arab policies must be unsympathetic to the plight of the Arab people." It concluded:

There is deep fear among us that, if Arabs continue to refuse to recognize Israel and maintain a threatening posture; and if Israel continues to occupy the land she took and insist on unilateral arrangements with Arab nations without United Nations assistance; there is likely to be war again, with the result that a million and a half displaced persons—and more—will be condemned to exist indefinitely on charity, without homes and without hope (*RP 1968: 443f. Cf. pp. 53, 85f., 399f. and 442-444*).<sup>(9)</sup>

The GC received a solid report on the Middle East in 1971. Prepared by W.S. McCullough, "The Situation in the Near East" clearly affirms UN Resolution 242 (22 November 1967) as "the only basis" for a settlement, suggesting that Israel undertake to: a) give up the Arab territories occupied in June 1967 (Jerusalem is acknowledged to be a peculiar problem); b) compensate Palestinian refugees; and c) pledge that Palestinian Arabs possess the right to self-determination. McCullough also addressed the need for reciprocal Arab action directly:

{T]he Governments of Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria must be prepared to acknowledge the existence of the State of Israel and to accept its borders as they will be determined by negotiation. This is a most difficult question for the issue is charged with high emotion, and it involves a complete *volte-face* in the traditional Arab policy. The border lines agreed upon would have to be internationally guaranteed, both to guard Israel from the necessity of waging recurring defensive wars, and to allay Arab suspicions that Israel aims at territorial expansion. Furthermore, Egypt must assent to the right of passage for all ships through the Gulf of Aqaba and the Suez Canal. Finally, the Arab Governments concerned must be prepared to cooperate fully with whatever commission is set up to supervise the resettlement of refugees. As part of the refugee picture, those Jews previously domiciled in the Arab world, who became refugees after 1948 and many of whom settled in Israel, must be included among those for whom suitable compensation should be worked out (*RP 1971, 294ff.*).

While the report itself addressed the issues involved with a substantial degree of fairness/equity, the resolutions adopted by the GC chose to stress the problem of the Arab refugees and the need for a lasting resolution to the political limbo into which the conflicts had forced them (327f.).

The Middle East was once more a critical issue of the 1972 GC in Saskatoon. Emotionally charged as such debates within the UCC community always have been (and continue to be) the level of tension was greatly heightened by a libel lawsuit imbroglio: Forrest suing certain officers of B'nai B'rith of Canada, and B'nai B'rith suing Forrest, the *Observer* and the UCC. Once again McCullough was asked to prepare a report for discussion. Acknowledging that little had changed to move the region toward peace, he concluded:

the sad and depressing fact which emerges from all investigations is that they illustrate the gulf between the Arabs of the Middle East and the Palestinian Jews. When it is so obviously in the interest of both parties to reach a settlement, to reduce their costly military establishments, and to get on with the business of making the Middle East a peaceful homeland for all its citizens, that

they should persist in their traditional stances is but one example of the pride, selfishness and prejudice which continue to vex the children of men all over the world (*RP* 1972, 247ff.).

Three resolutions were adopted. The first restated the UCC support for UN Resolution 242, and/or any other proposals holding the promise of settlement. The second called for the Canadian government to increase its funding to UN refugee work. And the third questioned a \$100 million loan from the Canadian Export Development Corporation to Israel (262).

The nadir of the UCC/*Observer* relationship with the Canadian Jewish community may have been occasioned by the war, but the roots must be sought elsewhere. We have already encountered the ambivalent posture taken by A.J. Wilson, editor of the journal as the Jewish state was being reestablished. Within weeks of being named Editor, Forrest established his editorial perspective on the Middle East:

Strong and influential pressure is being brought to bear on the Canadian government to send arms to Israel. But we can't believe that those who advocate this want to see Canadian men follow Canadian guns. This is a great complex problem. All we have the space to say here is that there are two sides to it. But Canadians are hearing mostly one side. And we are in danger of becoming victims of a smooth propaganda campaign. We even forget that there are three times as many Christians in Egypt as there are Jews in Israel. We fail to understand that recent treatment of the Arabs has created more misunderstanding than anything the West has done since the days of the Crusades. To raise even a quiet voice to say, let us look at the other side of this hot situation which may lead to war, is to run the danger of being called anti-Semitic. But we are not discussing the aspirations of a great people, but the ambitions of a Secular state. Jews and Zionists should not be confused (17 [20] (1955): 6).

From that time to the 1967 conflict, almost fifty issues of the *Observer* carried articles, essays, and/or editorials concerning Israel, the Middle East, Jews or Judaism.<sup>(10)</sup> From time to time a Jewish contributor would be sought out to offer a different perspective, but it is clear that the *Observer* purposefully positioned itself to address those issues Forrest thought were under-represented in the Canadian context: those related to the plight of the Palestinian refugees. Even given this history, the editor was quite unprepared for the tremendous consternation caused by his sustained critique of the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians.<sup>(11)</sup> The resultant "barrage of innuendo and invective" (Forrest) elicited this observation in 1971: "I have found no way to criticize the policies of the state of Israel, or question the philosophy of political Zionism, or tell my readers what the facts of the Middle East are, and escape slander and libel from the Zionist-Israeli community" (Forrest 8).

Containing a feature article by J.N. Booth (34 [9] (1972): 24ff.), the March 1972 *Observer* further exacerbated the rupture. Entitled "How Zionists Manipulate Your News" it was directed against the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of the B'nai B'rith in the United States, which had been monitoring Booth's speeches and radio broadcasts for their anti-Jewish bias for some time. In the article, Booth accused Jews of fabricating anti-Semitism as a tool for maintaining community cohesion and as a weapon against those who opposed Jewish/Israeli policies, drawing upon Jean-Paul Sartre in support of his contention and describing the latter as a "French Jewish philosopher." Sartre was not Jewish and his writings contain some of this century's most powerful rebuttals to anti-Semitism.

No one can argue Forrest's right to champion the plight of Arab refugees. That necessary editorial freedom does not confer, however, the right to publish an article such as Booth's, replete with its errors of fact and implication.<sup>(12)</sup> The Booth article was simply an error in judgement, taken in the midst of a debate which occasionally devolved into the personal. The only apology for the Booth article appeared three months later: "We are sorry if the article in question has caused offense to B'nai B'rith Foundation of Canada..." (34 [12] (1972): 17).<sup>(13)</sup>



In summary, the GC called for a just solution to the problems of the Middle East while striving to avoid becoming captive to either side. The *Observer*, however, weighed the military might of the Israelis against the plight of thousands of refugees and opted for solidarity with the Palestinians. The official statements and editorial positions were once again greatly influenced by political concerns: i.e., the fear of super-power involvement and subsequent escalation into nuclear war, attitudes typical of the Cold War paranoia of the period. Since the impact of the churches upon political decisions was negligible, the locus of concern continued to be upon the suffering of the refugees. To a great extent the texts indicate a desire on the part of the Council to disengage the church from an ethical quagmire, that the parties directly involved (and *only* those parties!) might reach some kind of settlement. The theological foundations for any stance was left unexplored by both the institution and the journal. All discourse about the Middle East was dominated by the political agenda.

### 3 The Yom Kippur War (1973)

Throughout the period of overt conflict (6-24 October), Canadian Protestantism had very little to say. The UCC did issue a statement to the *Globe and Mail (GM)* (Toronto), however, through its Committee on the Church and International Affairs (CCIA).<sup>(14)</sup> Dated 30 October 1973, the statement was not occasioned by the conflict itself but by several public statements calling for the Canadian Christian community to stand in solidarity with Israel. Most particularly, the CCIA was responding to a 19 October *GM* plea which reflected the position of fourteen prominent Roman Catholic and Protestant members of the academic community in Toronto, who viewed the conflict as "...the tragic encounter of two peoples, over the same territory," one which saw Christians "involved on both sides of the encounter." The signatories nevertheless called for Christians to "...affirm Israel as the visible and tangible manifestation of both Jewish survival and security," noting that such affirmation would *not* serve to set Israel "...above the moral criteria derived from the canons of international justice and the conscience of rational man which apply to other nations." Christians were summoned to "...stand with Israel, and stand without equivocation." The plight of the refugees could not, in their view, justify the war.

The UCC CCIA statement distanced itself from the position adopted by the fourteen, carefully restating the UCC's support for U.N. Resolution 242, calling upon Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders, for "...the security of the Middle East must be founded in justice for all people." The effect of the argument as presented is to hold Israel accountable for the continuing injustice forced upon the refugees. This position is to be lamented in view of the May 1973 joint statement issued by the UCC and B'nai B'rith of Canada, attempting to point the way beyond the rift mentioned earlier. Calling for the eschewing of invective, it stated: "We recognize and appreciate the interests of Jews everywhere, *and of the United Church*, for the events in the Middle East and *in the survival of Israel*" (36 [12] (1973): 48f., italics added).<sup>(15)</sup> Within months, the survival of Israel was threatened, but the only statement officially issued by the UCC castigated Israel for refusing to pull back to its pre-1967 borders. Clearly little understanding had been achieved on the importance of Israel to either side of the "non-dialogue." Just as clearly, polarization was present within the UCC, and many of the other mainline traditions of Canada/North America. The gap between the official statements of the churches and those of some of its leading intellectuals renders such an assessment inevitable.

Following the war another GC meeting dealt with the hostilities, though not in such a way as to address either the renewed sense of "fragility" brought home to the Israelis or the dashed hopes of the refugees. The UCC reaffirmed its conviction that UN Resolution 242 offered a possible basis for a just settlement, specifically mentioning that the Palestinian people should be represented at any further peace talks (*RP 1974*, 79 and 329). It also found some slim signs of hope within the conflict itself, for "while the war of October 1973 was not an Arab victory on either of its two fronts, the Arab performance was such that Arabs could take pride that they did better than ever before

against Israel's armed forces. This has set the stage for a discussion between Arab and Israeli, as one between more or less equals" (329).

The *Observer* did not cover the Yom Kippur War with the same degree of intensity as the June 1967 conflict, having virtually nothing to say. It is difficult to assess the reasons for the lack of interest displayed by the *Observer*. It is clear that one trend has emerged and another has ended. Official UCC policy continued to evaluate the Middle East matrix of issues within a political/ethical framework. This led to "balanced" statements which leaned somewhat in the direction of the refugees while at the same time committing the UCC to little. The *Observer's* editorial support for the Palestinians virtually ended, a phenomenon which also extended (in varying degrees) to mainline journals such as the *Presbyterian Record* (Canadian), the *Christian Century* (U.S.A.) and *Christianity and Crisis* (U.S.A.).

#### 4 The Intifada (1987-)

As a slowly developing movement of resistance, the Intifada occasioned rather more critical reflection at the GC than the wars previously discussed. Addressed several times, the most representative is that of August 1990, which affirmed that "neither people can claim its human and political rights at the expense of the other" and "...that a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must recognize the rights and concerns of both parties" (*RP 1990*, 571). The resolution adopted, on the other hand, made no mention of these essential components, invoking instead the memory of Forrest and his championing of the Palestinian cause in support of a multi-part resolution which encouraged the UCC: a) to stand in solidarity with the churches and peoples of the Middle East; b) to foster dialogue among the faith traditions; and c) to prod the Canadian government toward more diligent efforts "for a just solution" (574f.). This is the most definitive indication that the GC considered dialogue among the traditions of Jerusalem to have a role to play in the Middle East. The sole occasion in which intensive dialogue seems to have been carried out, unfortunately, concerned the need for the UCC and the Jewish community to drop their respective lawsuits, resulting in the joint-statement of May 1973.

The *Observer* paid scant attention to the plight of the Palestinian refugees as the Intifada gained momentum.<sup>(16)</sup> It may be that the experience of the post-Six-Day War period simply rendered the issue too sensitive. Juxtaposed to this withdrawal of support, we find in the *Observer* greater attention being given to the positions adopted by the slowly maturing Canadian Council of Churches (CCC).<sup>(17)</sup> The *Observer* offered its readers a concise assessment of a CCC statement (developed in consultation with Jewish and Muslim organizations) on Middle East issues. The section dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict states unequivocally that the continued occupation of the territories gained in 1967 was in violation of international law. But perhaps the most noteworthy observation indicates that the "statement begins with a *theological rationale for the church taking a position on Middle East issues, something the United Church pushed for at the CCC*" (53 [6] (1989): 35, italics added). Though it occurs outside the UCC context, this is the first explicit mention of a recognized need for a theological foundation for a Christian perspective on the Middle East.

#### Conclusion: Toward the Possibility of a Theological Dialogue

As we have seen, there has been no sustained effort on the part of either the UCC or the *Observer* to foster explicit theological reflection upon the issues raised by the Jewish State and the Palestinian refugees. One might, to be sure, detect an *implicit* theological basis for much of the foregoing, but this does not seem to be anything other than a distant echo of the collapse of theology into ethics by theological liberalism. Both the *Observer* and the UCC GC pursued their deliberations as if the Jewish State and the Palestinian refugees were a matter of political policy, not a challenge to the UCC community's theological understanding. The repercussions upon the

UCC community's relationship with the Jews and Palestinians of Canada have been extensive.

If the Jewish state is indeed "...the litmus test for Christian solidarity with Jews" (Maduro vii), it is a test upon which the UCC has performed poorly. Yet the problem goes well beyond failure to stand in solidarity with Jews, and must be seen to include the failure to stand *with* the Jewish state *against* governmental shifts away from Ben-Gurion's 1948 Declaration:

*The State of Israel* will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion, will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; *will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all of its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations* (Rabinovich and Reinharz, 14f., italics added).

It therefore includes a failure to stand with the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination. Ultimately, then, the litmus test reveals, not simply a failure of the political will, but a paralysis of the theological acumen which has informed the hesitancy of the GC and the unnuanced positions of the *Observer*.

As Forrest noted in 1955, the situation in the Middle East is tremendously complex. Ethical complexity can lead toward: a) a reduction of the issues; b) a paralysis of decision-making; or c) an intentional dialogue to encourage mutual and self-understanding through an exploration of the complexities. Over the years and through several editors, the *Observer* pursued the first option, opting to see the Palestinians as "David" and the Israelis as "Goliath." Unable to nuance its position, or to adopt a wider perspective in which Israel is also a "David" to the Arab nations' "Goliath," the journal withdrew from the Middle East matrix, resulting in the loss to the Palestinian community of a respected voice. The GC chose the second route, embarking upon an "unrelenting search for balance" (Slonim 41) which has served to distance/disengage the UCC from the struggles of both the State and the refugees, although it does lean toward support of the Palestinian refugees.

The third option remains a possibility. Establishing intentional dialogue as a way of exploring complexities would seem to be the most appropriate expression of a theological tradition which is rooted in "God-with-us." For when the "us" is understood to comprise, in this instance, all the traditions of Jerusalem (the Jewish, the Christian and the Muslim) then we encounter the possibility of an authentic moment of dialogue, in which self-defense mechanisms fall a little. In such dialogue the hard questions will include both the theological *and* the political, for a tradition holding fast to the symbol of "God-with-us" cannot pursue disembodied theology: "Can the security of Israel be sought in such a way as to allow for the Palestinian people to seek their own course?" "Can the rights of the Palestinian people be protected in such a way as not to imperil Israeli security?" "What role do Canadian ecclesial communities have to play?" "What does 'the land' mean within Judaism, Christianity and Islam?" "What does 'the state' mean and how has the meaning developed within each tradition?" General Councils cannot answer these questions. Neither can the *Observer*. Both could, however, join in the call, extended to ecumenical partners and other faith communities, to the solidarity of authentic dialogue in which each participant is open to the critique of the others. This is the road, not over-used, which the dialogians of the traditions must travel together if the mistakes of the past are to remain in the past. There is an inherent risk in such dialogue. It may be that a theology forged within the crucible of authentic dialogue with the other traditions of Jerusalem will take its participants further than they want to journey. Yet it is certain the approach



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**Footnotes:**

1. This essay is based upon an address delivered at the Canadian Theological Society meeting at the Learned's, June 1994, in Calgary.
2. The UCC was formed in 1925 of the union of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, although one-third of the latter voted to remain out of the union. Largely Reformed in both polity and theological orientation, it is organized along the conciliar model. A biennial General Council, its highest court, determines national polity and legislates on matters of faith for the communion. Laypersons and clergy participate in its decisions in approximately equal numbers.
3. Forrest became Editor in 1955, and remained so until his sudden death in December, 1978.
4. From his 1972 Convocation Address at St. Andrew's College (Saskatoon), upon being presented with an honorary doctorate for his "contribution to theological and philosophical scholarship."
5. The *Christian Century* is perhaps the leading inter-denominational journal in the United States. Cf. Hertzfel Fishman, *American Protestantism and the Jewish State* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973).
6. The GC of the UCC is both a biennial meeting and the senior layer of ecclesiastical bureaucracy. Between the meetings, the work of the church at the national level is carried out by five distinct administrative divisions. Unless otherwise indicated, GC in this essay always refers to a meeting.
7. This is not to indicate that individual Protestants refrained from all activity. N. Bruce McLeod, e.g., led a drive to secure the signatures of some four hundred people representing eight denominations and twenty-five local congregations in the Hamilton (Ontario) area expressing concern for the survival of the Jewish state (Slonim 4). There was, however, little concerted effort on the part of ecclesiastical bodies. The president of the National Council of Churches (U.S.A.) did send a telegram to President Johnson (6

June 1967), linking the refugee issue with Israel's right to exist. Cf. J.H. Banki, *Christian Reactions to the Middle East Crisis* (NY: The American Jewish Committee, 1968): 3. Cf. Alice L. and A. Roy Eckardt, "Again, Silence in the Churches," *Christian Century* 84 (1967): 970-973 and 992-995.

8. The Moderator is the titular head of the UCC, being elected at one GC meeting to serve until the next. S/he may be lay or ordained.
9. The statement was brought to the GC meeting by the GC Executive and subsequently sent to a committee, which included A.C. Forrest among its members, for consideration.
10. D. Taras argues that the UCC "largely ignored the Arab-Israeli conflict in the decade from 1956 to 1967. The General Council made only passing references to the Middle East in its pronouncements on international affairs, and the *Observer's* main focus was on religious and social issues. In the international field the magazine's major concerns were the dangers of the Cold War and the church's missionary work abroad" (Taras 88). His description of the GC statements are more accurate than those of the journal.
11. From 1967-1969, twenty-four issues of the *Observer* dealt with the Middle East, the War and its aftermath. Forrest's profound concern for the conditions in which the Palestinians lived illuminates virtually every issue.
12. As outlined succinctly by G. Baum, "Salvation is from the Jews: A Story of Prejudice," *Christian Century* 89 (1972): 775-777.
13. Contrast this with the full page apology the *Observer* published (37 [11] (1974): 11) in response to complaints about an advertisement it ran for a decidedly fringe group: the British-Israelite Federation (37 [9] (1974): 38). Other sources to be consulted concerning this phase of the Jewish community/United Church relationship are: G. Plaut, *Unfinished Business* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1981); R. Slonim, *Family Quarrel: The United Church and the Jews* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1977); and D. Taras, "A Church Divided: A.C. Forrest and the United Church's Middle East Policy," in *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, D. Taras and D.H. Goldberg eds. (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989): 86-101. There are no comparable resources regarding the UCC and the Palestinian community in Canada.
14. The CCIA works under the auspices of the Division of World Outreach and the Division of Mission in Canada of the General Council, and would have been primarily responsible for drafting a response at a GC meeting. Thus, while this statement does not have the same weight as a resolution adopted at such a GC meeting, it can be said fairly to represent the response of the UCC's "head office."
15. Forrest's reaction to the joint statement is indicative of the depth of the animosities involved: "I'm delighted to learn that B'nai B'rith repudiates invective, and I hope that the Zionist press takes note. If anyone points out inaccuracies in the 15-month-old Booth article, we would be pleased to make corrections. As for insensitivity, it is very difficult to express our sensitivity over the continued sufferings of the Palestine refugees, and not seem insensitive to those who are 100 percent pro-Israel" (ibid.). The other statements can be found as Appendices in Slonim, "Statement by Officials of the United Church and B'nai B'rith, May 4, 1973 (165f.); "Statement of Christian Concern About the Middle East, *The Globe and Mail*, October 19, 1973 (166ff.); "Statement of United Church Official on Mideast, October 30, 1973 *Globe and Mail*" (169ff.).
16. The Intifada appeared significantly in three issues. The first occurrence was a simple report on statements issued by church leaders in the Middle East (51 [10] (1988): 37). The second, B. Bettson's "A Delicate Balance" (53 [6] (1989): 35f.), is discussed below. The third highlighted "Israeli Voices Against Occupation" (56 [3] (1992): 34f.), being a description of the weekly protest against the occupation by women in Jerusalem.
17. Established in 1944, the CCC is a focus for ecumenical activity and discussion among its member churches. These latter include most of the major denominations in Canada, some of the smaller churches, and five Orthodox churches. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has been an associate member since 1986, and is exploring the possibility of full membership.

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