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PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS

Situating selves in a dislocated present[1]

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There is clearly no way of doing justice to the diversity of Palestinian Christian experience in a brief primer such as this. In fact, even defining the category of "Palestinian Christian" is more difficult than it appears, with both labels being themselves highly contested even before being placed next to one another. However, it is possible to explore what Palestinian Christians share and what divides them without pursuing a definitive account of their supposed group identity. My approach here, then, is to consider the diverse *situations* in which Palestinian Christians experience and narrate themselves, attending to commonalities and differences in both. This entails attention to *environments* broadly understood: the "clusterings" of lives in different places across historic Palestine, each inscribed by stories and meanings that have implications for everyday experience.[2] We will therefore consider in turn Palestinian Christians' situations in different landscapes, jurisdictions, group relationships (both to one's own and others), and in relation to powerful circulating narratives, not least those that are distinctively Christian and Palestinian. This is an attempt to sketch a physical and symbolic ecology of Palestinian Christian diversity, their interrelationship with places, materials, others (human and non-human), and countless meanings.

Places and displacement

We turn first then to the diverse locations in which Palestinian Christians live. While relationship to diaspora is an important feature of this experience, here we focus on those who reside in historic Palestine: the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel, where Christians are very unevenly distributed. Nearly three quarters of Palestinian Christians in historic Palestine are Israeli citizens living within the 1949 Armistice Line, or "Green Line", that is, the borders of Israel prior to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. The largest population is in the north of Israel (92,200), with Nazareth, Acre, and Haifa all having large Christian populations, in addition to those living in villages and smaller towns. In the Palestinian territories, Christians are especially concentrated in the central West Bank in the Bethlehem (22,400) and Ramallah (12,800) areas. In Jerusalem, there are 12,500 Palestinian Christians – 8,000 in East Jerusalem, 6,000 of whom are in the Old City. There is also a smaller concentration of Palestinian Christians in the northern West Bank, including a much diminished community in Nablus, and in the eastern city of Jericho.

As in Israel, Christians are disproportionately located in larger towns and cities, but some reside in villages, especially around Ramallah such as in the only wholly Christian village of Taybeh, and in Zebabdeh, near Nablus. A study by the Diyar Consortium estimates the presence of a little over 48,000 Christians in the West Bank including their claimed capital in East Jerusalem, out of 2.8 million Palestinians. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics records the presence of around 120,000 Arab[3] Christians in Israel (out of 1.66 million Arabs and a total population a little over 8 million). Gaza's Christian population has, according to a 2014 report by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), dwindled to 1313, much lower than the frequently cited estimate of 2,500–3,000.[4]

While the total population of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank, and even more in Israel, increased throughout the twentieth century – during the British Mandate, after the establishment of the State of Israel, and since the start of the Israeli Occupation in 1967 – each of its territories has experienced very significant Christian emigration, which, alongside a relatively high fertility rate among their Jewish and Muslim neighbors, has reduced the percentage of Christians dramatically, from around 10% to well under 2%.[5] A report by Diyar shows that current inclinations among Christians to emigrate are driven primarily by economic hardship and regional political instability, accounting for the higher numbers of emigrants out of the Palestinian territories compared with Israel.[6]

Landscapes and jurisdictions

This small territory comprises some strikingly different worlds. Haifa, where nearly 7% of the population is Christian,[7] is a bustling city cascading toward the sea, and its Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Bahá'í inhabitants reside in an urban coastal environment that might feel familiar to millions, separated only by water, from Barcelona to Beirut to Algiers. In contrast, the 450 or so Christians in the laid-back, ancient city of Jericho in the Jordan valley share a necessarily languid pace of life, not only with the nearly 99% Muslim population, but with more millions adjusted to the dry heat of the vast Levantine interior to the east.[8] Those in Jaffa, now a suburb of Tel Aviv, dwell in an environment shaped by the concerns of a large commercially oriented metropolis, whereas those in the Old City of Jerusalem experience the intensity of contested space often navigated with reference to ancient scriptures. Acre's old city on the northern Israeli coast, and Nablus, 50 miles to the south-east in the West Bank, share similarly evocative, maze-like streets and bustling markets, but the latter's battle scars have been added to frequently over recent years, whereas Richard the Lionheart and Salah ud-Din are the warriors most often recalled in Acre. Some towns, including Nablus, but especially Gaza City, are increasingly characterized by relatively conservative Islamic norms, whereas villagers in Taybeh have added the celebration of Oktoberfest to their more traditional festivals since Palestine's first brewery opened there in 1994.

These diverse landscapes are subject to multiple jurisdictions. Israel is, within its own territory, a fully sovereign state, so while, say, Haifa's outward-looking cosmopolitanism contrasts with Nazareth's more fraught, suspicious relationship between members of the three main religions,[9] Christians throughout Israel enjoy the rights of citizens, even as they endure various kinds of exclusion.[10] This at least means freedom of movement and political enfranchisement, even though expressing any Palestinian national sentiment within Israel has become harder.[11] The Hamas government in Gaza, though similarly a uniform jurisdiction, lacks monopoly of force, and multiple factions and militias compete with it. Movement in and out of Gaza is usually impossible due to the Israeli blockade. Residents have not participated in any formal democratic exercise since 2006.

Compared with Israel and Gaza, jurisdiction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is complex. As part of the Oslo II Accord of 1995, the West Bank is divided into Areas A, B, and C, indicating different legal regimes: in Area A (18% of the total), the Palestinian Authority has *de jure* civil and security control; in Area B (22%), it has civil control but Israel retains security control; in Area C (60%), Israel is fully in control. In fact, residents of Area A do not live without interactions with the Israeli state. For residents of Nablus or the refugee camps in Bethlehem, Israeli troops are regular visitors, arresting suspected militants, activists,[12] or stone-throwers. Villages such as Jifna or Zebabdeh are small isolated islands of Area A surrounded by Area C, meaning that, in effect, the Palestinian Authority is responsible for municipal functions and policing but is unable to function with the territorial sovereignty of a state. In Area C, meanwhile, the presence of settler colonies provides an extension of the Israeli state, including its military, into Palestinians' everyday lives in those areas.[13]

Disconnection

These diverse territories are most often narrated as part of one territorial whole, Palestine, just as some Zionists' "Land of Israel" is conceived of as an organism, indivisible, resilient in the face of the superimposed boundaries of its current overlords, and in spite of its current fragmentation into different territories. This neither entails the adoption of certain myths of blood or land, nor the negation of the other based only on recent human history (although no doubt it can be both of these things). It is, to some extent, an expression of an ecological fact, specifically the necessary clustering of lives around the line-of-water divide of a mountain range extending from Jenin to Hebron, joining Palestine's major non-coastal cities, which lie atop a large aquifer beneath the West Bank hills.[14] This is the spine whose ribs extend west to the Mediterranean and east to the Jordan Valley.

Notwithstanding this perception of an integral whole, if one word could describe the changes of the last few decades, it could be "disconnection". Most recently, the land has seen the elaboration of an extraordinary architecture of control, which Eyal Weizman describes as a systematic attempt to "separate the inseparable" on the part of the Israeli state.[15] At the micro level, striking examples of this include the respective Jewish and Muslim routes into the Ibrahim Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs and the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif, which recall the layered security architecture of airports. A larger-scale example of this is the colonization of the West Bank with settlements, serving as an extension of the Israeli state into the occupied territories, linked by a series of roads from which Palestinian-registered cars are prohibited and which further carve up Palestinian land.

Bethlehem provides a particularly useful case study in this disconnection. Jacob Norris shows how the town's merchants cultivated links with the far abroad over centuries, especially trading on their proximity to the Nativity story, giving the town a distinctive character of material and symbolic connectedness: to the Levant, to the Mediterranean, and in the nineteenth century to the far abroad, all refracted through the lens of Christian narratives.[16] Today, however, the town provides a particularly striking example of the rapid reconfiguration of landscapes and the lives of those who dwell therein. The wall that isolates Bethlehemites from Jerusalem is probably the most imposing feature of this architecture of control, with the "Holy City" and the rest of Israel (or "48 Palestine") inaccessible without one of 101 different, and somewhat arbitrarily allocated, permits.[17] Disconnection from Jerusalem is more than simply a limitation on movement: it is to deprive Bethlehemites of a source of symbolic sustenance, as well as livelihoods and social relations. Bethlehem's proximity to Jerusalem has long been a defining part of its civic identity and economy, allowing, for

instance, easy access for pilgrims to Bethlehem's holy sites and markets. Disconnection has therefore impacted the vital tourism industry, significantly reducing the numbers who stay in the town, a situation compounded by narratives of danger in the West Bank proclaimed by guests' Israeli hosts on the other side of the wall.[18] Meanwhile, parts that were once common agricultural areas, grazing and recreational spaces, such as around Makhrour to the west and Jabal Abu Ghneim to the north, have been cut off, the latter now superimposed with a settler colony which, though illegal under international law, has been designed to feel much like a suburb of Jerusalem from that side of the wall.

And yet, my morning jog through Bethlehem would take me past David's Well, the Church of the Nativity, sometimes as far as Solomon's Pools or Herodion, together providing a reminder of a much prouder story. Across Palestine, in different places, the land speaks loudly of such ancient roots, of connection to the divine, and also of displacement, of confinement, of disconnection, and of a precarious present and contested future. Leaving aside those now uninhabited, mostly ruined, and often strategically forested Palestinian villages which were cleared in 1947–1949,[19] the remaining dwelt-in landscape is already inscribed with multiple meanings in relation to which those who dwell therein make sense of themselves.

Group identifications

We turn now to the human and symbolic realities in the environments in which Palestinian Christians experience and narrate themselves. I begin by noting a phenomenon in Levantine social life, which Suad Joseph calls "patriarchal connectivity".[20] In short, this entails imagining personhood in relation to one or more networks or quasi-domestic domains revolving around a patriarchal figure: clans, factions, sects, even corporations and governments can sometimes be characterized in these terms. According to Joseph, modern states in the Levant often afford these patriarchs considerable power, an arrangement which contrasts with the idealized, clearly defined public sphere of much Eurocentric social and political discourse, in which anonymous and autonomous individuals are imagined to interact primarily in terms of legally guaranteed individual rights. This phenomenon of patriarchal connectivity should not be imagined to determine all action, of course. Instead, it is like a widespread style of relational weave that is sometimes tight and sometimes much looser.[21]

Denominations

It is from this direction that I want to consider the numerous *ṭawā'if* (denominations or sects) in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and raise the possibility that they are, or can be, particularly strong instances of these patriarchal networks. They retain some power over, for instance, administering family law, and a person's membership of recognized churches also governs access to the countless "holy sites" which they all aspire to access. (Indeed, some of them function locally as clan-like groups,[22] although this is not the case across Palestine.) Christianity is rarely, therefore, a private matter: a person's denominational belonging is an important part of his or her social "location", at least in the eyes of the law and other people.

A little over half of Christians in the West Bank, and the vast majority of those in Gaza, belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, although some of these resent the endogenous appellation and describe themselves as either *rūm* (Byzantine) Orthodox or simply as Arab Orthodox, contrasting this with the *yunāni* (Greek) hierarchy.[23] A handful of my own Christian interlocutors in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Israel recalled the Patriarch

Germanos (or Herman, 1534–1579) whose Hellenizing reforms, while primarily aimed at consolidating the power of his church against Latins in Jerusalem (and the Slavs who dominated the ancient monastery of Mar Saba to the east of Bethlehem), are remembered by them for de-Arabizing the hierarchy.[24]

Catholics in the West Bank are mostly "Latins" (Western rite Roman Catholics) with around 15,000 members, and are especially prominent in Bethlehem, while the 3,000 Greek Catholics are more evenly distributed. Latins number a little more than 30% of the West Bank population, and owe this in large part to the continual presence of Franciscans in the land since the Cairo-based Mamluks consigned the holy sites to them in the fourteenth century.[25] There are also smaller Syriac and Armenian Catholic denominations. Protestants make up around 5% in the occupied territories, mostly Anglicans and Lutherans, while also including Presbyterians, Baptists, and independent evangelicals. Non-Chalcedonian[26] Syriac Orthodox, mostly in Bethlehem, and Armenian Apostolic (or Gregorian) Christians, mostly in Jerusalem, make up about 3% each. Jerusalem's sectarian microclimate includes small communities of Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Tawahedo, and around a hundred Maronites.

The Israeli Bureau of Statistics does not differentiate between denominations but between those identified as Arab (7.5% of the total population, and 93.5% of Christians) and those who identify as non-Arab.[27] The largest church in Israel is the Greek Catholic Church, which is in communion with Rome and uses an Eastern Rite liturgy similar to that of the Orthodox churches. The Greek Orthodox Church is the second largest church, and its members are also distributed widely, while Latins, Maronites, and Anglicans have significant, if more localized, populations in Israel.

Communalism as a centrifugal force

These churches are not, then, merely "denominations" in a pluralist kaleidoscope, but sometimes serve as agents of an institutionalized sectarian rivalry which may make demands on their members' loyalties and can, at times, weaken Palestinian solidarity. From the fourteenth century, when the Vatican secured Mount Zion monastery from the Egyptian Sultan, Latin clergy, notably Franciscans, won increasing numbers of indigenous converts from an overwhelmingly Orthodox Palestinian population, with particular success in Bethlehem.[28] The sour relationship between these two dominant churches led the eighteenth-century Ottoman rulers to take decisive action to enshrine the churches' respective rights in law. The resulting "status quo" consolidated the power of the Greek Orthodox, less so of the Latin Catholic hierarchies, and sidelined others. Those who lost out then recall it bitterly.[29]

This competitive, sometimes acrimonious, intra-Christian relationship should be thought of in relation to a well-established political contest over the term "minority" (Arabic: *aqaliyah*) in the region. According to Benjamin White, experiencing oneself as belonging to a minority accompanied the emergence of the modern nation-state in the Middle East.[30] In the colonial and post-colonial contexts of the eastern Mediterranean, some Christians came to see legal recognition of *minority status* as essential to securing their rights in relation to a Muslim majority and, latterly, Islamic government. However, many others have resisted minority status on the basis that, having enshrined it in law and the popular imagination, all manner of negative experiences can subsequently be framed by the reified divide between the minority and the majority.[31]

Laura Robson describes how the Palestinian version of this contest emerged during the British Mandate as a way of thwarting the emergent, pluralist, and self-consciously modernist middle-class Palestinian nationalist movement. For Robson, this unified Palestinian identity

narrative was carefully undermined by the colonial regime which it perceived, no doubt correctly, as a threat to its power. The enduring salience of sect in Palestinian Christian everyday life is, according to Robson, largely a product of the British communalist colonial logic. The British made access to political influence dependent upon the use of the communal hierarchies that they co-opted.[32] Robson argues persuasively that this served in the end to marginalize Christians in the Palestinian national project while, in fact, this communitarianism may have as much reinforced intra-Christian division as Christian-Muslim division.

Nevertheless, the British did not muster sectarian competition out of thin air. Instead, they exploited the problem of managing Christian rivalry which they inherited from foregoing Muslim regimes.

Palestinian nationalism

This rivalry, however, should not be thought to determine all Palestinian Christians' experience of self and other, even if it is an important social and political context. In certain dialogues, many Christians instead narrate themselves simply as Palestinians. Early Palestinian nationalism should be understood as an expression of anti-colonial modernity which connected landless peasants to the more powerful voices of educated elites[33] in relation to the life of a territory, and connected the ancient toponym (used at least as far back as Herodotus) to the idea of a people whose destiny was bound with it.[34]

Christians played an important role in voicing this new popular consciousness. Advantaged, somewhat ironically, by their favorable access to foreign educational institutions and to global mercantile networks, members of the disproportionately urban and bourgeois Christian population played a prominent role in the emergence of Palestinian nationalism as an anti-colonial political force.[35] Christians Najib Nassar and the al-Isa brothers were, as owner-editors of *Al-Karmil* and *Filastin*, respectively, particularly prominent, and used their newspapers for the advancement of education, resistance of Greek dominance in the Orthodox church, and improvement of conditions for peasants. However, they soon mobilized their resources toward anti-colonialism and anti-Zionism.[36] A little later, Muslim-Christian Associations were founded by urban bourgeoisie, which were expressly anti-Zionist and self-consciously oriented toward challenging the British colonial assumption that Palestinians were hopelessly divided along religious lines.[37]

Notwithstanding the emergence of more exclusively Islamic versions of Palestinian nationalism and Christian communalism, there remain many advocates of this pluralist nationalism. Today, Christians are active in all of the major political factions (even including the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas[38]), and several of my interlocutors denied the everyday salience of sectarian difference, sometimes blaming the foreign-dominated clergy. A few of my interlocutors indeed described the churches' power as a "2nd Occupation". Typically, Christian and Muslim interlocutors would describe Palestinian Christian sects and Muslims as "fingers of one hand". One Bethlehem resident told me, "Palestinians are one people… Sometimes [the Israeli checkpoint soldiers] would ask me, 'You are Christian?' smiling like I was a friend. I would say, 'I am Palestinian!' They become mad!"[39]

Constructive communalism

This Palestinian national identification is narrated differently in relation to Christian and narrower sectarian identifications. Despite the churches' ancient rivalries, something of an ecumenical relationship has developed, and, since 1948, the heads of churches have

periodically put aside their differences to express opposition to Zionism[40] (although they have likewise received criticism from their members for compromise and even collaboration with the Israeli state[41]).

Perhaps a better indication of "constructive communalism" is found at the meso-level of local organizations. Take, for instance, the festive scouts parades, which mix Palestinian national symbols with those of the schools, clubs, and the religio-communal groups with which they are immediately associated. Moreover, one surprising finding of my own research was that communalist connections can be mobilized *toward* the expression of a wider Palestinian solidarity rather than against it. Some of my interlocutors were able to weave communalist and Palestinian identifications together to produce new syntheses. One particularly elegant one was that of my friend "Abu Daoud", another Syriac Christian. Citing his community's powerfully experienced links to ancient Aramean (or sometimes Assyrian) civilization, he told me he was, "Syrian Palestinian, that means we are Arabs. Some people will say, no we are not Arabs. But we are as Syrians the ancient pedigree of the Arabs. The Arab belongs to the Syrian. We are the Mother of the Arabs".[42] This, he argued, was the basis of his community's belonging in the land of Palestine, despite the fact that most of the Syriac community are descendants of refugees from Southeast Turkey, arriving in Palestine in the first quarter of the twentieth century.[43]

Christians among Jews and Muslims

Christians' experiences and expressions of belonging do not, of course, occur in a vacuum, but respond to and internalize more or less explicit questions of identification borne of co-habitation with visible and materially important difference. In other words, narrating oneself as a Palestinian Christian must speak to the presence of non-Christians and non-Palestinians. Very often, Christians' relationships with Jews and Muslims in Palestine are portrayed in black and white terms as either unproblematic or hopelessly conflictual. Christians' relations with Jewish Israelis are either framed in terms that speak of Israel as the best place for Christians to live in the Middle East or in terms that emphasize violent Jewish militancy.[44] Meanwhile, Christian-Muslim relations are either portrayed as one of minority "persecution",[45] or one of blissful harmony and unwavering solidarity. In fact, it should not be surprising that there is a vast range of relationships between Christians and their neighbors, from murderous violence[46] to antagonism[47] to strategic alliance, to everyday sharing and warm affection.[48] Nevertheless, there are developments that have been framed by Christians as evidence of the Judaization and Islamization of their respective Israeli and Palestinian territories.[49]

Israel

Recalling the checkpoint interaction Abu Daoud has described, a *divide et impera* logic influences contemporary Israeli engagements with Palestinians under its control. Likud parliamentarian Yariv Levin successfully promoted a bill ascribing to Christians and Muslims distinct status in law and "separate representation…because [Christians] aren't Arabs".[50] This telling statement recalls the British connection of religious affiliation to political access by rendering it decisive in official identity classifications, and reflects increasingly dominant narratives of separation in Israeli discourse. Dividing their Palestinian population along confessional lines is not entirely new: a handful of Christians were allowed to return to their homes in Haifa, Nazareth, and the Galilee, providing they pledged to campaign against the anti-Zionist communists in the 1950s.[51] However, the explicit connection of such divisive

interventions with an alternative *ethnoreligious* narrative – the denial even of their Arabness – is a novel generalization of specific (Arameanist, Assyrianist, and Phoenicianist) communalist narratives to all Arabic-speaking Christians, and exploits the more extreme versions of these communalist narratives in service of the Israeli state.[52]

The Central Bureau of Statistics still records them simply as "Arab Christians", however,[53] and Una McGahern argues that Israeli state policy toward Christians is only preferential to the extent that it is divisive. McGahern frames Israeli policy toward Palestinian Christians as the product of "a dilemma",[54] problematizing, as this population does, the binary framing of Israel's conflicts in terms of the "clash of civilizations" between a Muslim East and a Judeo-Christian West.[55]

Gaza and the West Bank

In the Palestinian territories, likewise, there are important qualifications to claims of perfect harmony. The murder of evangelical leader Rami Ayyad in 2007 by unknown assailants in Gaza was especially disconcerting,[56] but everyday constraints upon Christians' freedoms there are more a function of wider developments than occasional murderous violence. Gazans are subject to periodic Israeli aerial assaults and ongoing, low-level Palestinian factional violence. The Hamas government has sought to stymie growing political support for their militantly exclusivist rivals (such as Jaish al-Islam, Jaish al-Ummah, Sheikh Omar Hadid Brigade, and Ansar al-Bayt al-Maqdis[57]) by demonstrating their Islamist credentials. While there can be no denying the shared experience of suffering due to Israeli blockades and periodic war, changing norms in dress, restrictions on public non-observance of fasts, and official regulations against co-education are cited by some of my Christian interlocutors as evidence of unwelcome Islamization.

Nicholas Pelham argues that Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority treat Christians better than the Israeli government, and Christians certainly play a much bigger role in public life in the West Bank than in Israel.[58] Christians in the West Bank still, of course, sometimes complain of poor relations with some of their Muslim neighbors.[59] Whether this is framed as discrimination, Islamization, or just as trouble with the neighbors, depends greatly upon the individual and the context of the dialogue in which he or she is protesting. A key feature of this context in the West Bank is the movement of people. The demographics of Christians' heartlands around Bethlehem have changed rapidly and radically. Alongside quite rapid emigration of many wealthier and better-connected Christians, the even more parlous situation to the south near Hebron and in the recently colonized areas of Area C to the east has increased the number of rural Muslims who have moved into the town, and whose previous experience of its everyday intersectarian coexistence is limited. Bethlehemite Muslims and Christians alike complained to me of incomers who had no "respect" for the interreligious equilibrium that, they said, previously prevailed.

For some, demographic changes compound their sense of disconnection: no longer do their neighbors understand their hometown as *meaning what it means to them*. While a certain amount of this is anti-migrant sentiment that one may discern in countless other places among established elites, there are exacerbating factors that make it rather more understandable. Everyone in Bethlehem is aware of the "land mafia" who has had some success appropriating land through forgery and infiltration of the police.[60] As disproportionately landed, Christians have been disproportionately victims of this criminality. This has as much to do with the weakness of the Palestinian Authority, confined as it is to discontiguous islands of responsibility, as to any external interference; however, these clan-based operations are

rumored to be funded by "Saudis" and "Qataris", pointing at least to how some Christians are connecting local realities to regional politics.

How Christians respond is, however, not simply a question of perception but also of strategic interests. In 2013, a controversy arose around the purchase of land by the Syriac Orthodox patriarchate, in which the purported vendor disappeared with the money. After several weeks of internal debate over the best way to proceed, the Syriac community marched through Bethlehem, waving Palestinian flags and bearing photos of President Abbas, rather than asserting a defensive narrative of being targeted as Christians.[61] This, I suggest, was an attempt not only to insist upon the community's rights within the system supposedly guaranteed by the PA, but to affirm a stronger solidarity between the Syriac community and the Palestinian Authority by way of shoring up the latter's authority in the face of clan competition and, perhaps, the targeting of Christians.

Contrasting publics

Beyond state policy, meanwhile, it is important to acknowledge that Christian experiences as Christians will vary also in terms of an individual's relationship to social norms. For some, patriarchal connectivity is a means of security and access to resources and influence; to others, it is a constraint upon individual freedom. Thus, the relative strength of liberal individualism in Israel, though heavily qualified in relation to powerful ethnoreligious and ethnonationalist discourses, has implications for some Christians. Notably, for ex-Muslim converts to Christianity, Israel affords a larger "liberal public" in which to practice their Christianity, which would be difficult, and potentially dangerous, in the context of closely knit patriarchal connectivity.[62] While Duane Miller deals with the situation of ex-Muslims in more detail Chapter 10, it is important to recognize here that relationships between Christians and their Muslim or Jewish neighbors may be shaped by contrasting religious ontologies. The ontology implicit in patriarchal connectivity is that religion is woven into one's social situation and is not exchangeable.[63]

As a consequence, it is especially in urban contexts such as Haifa and Tel Aviv that one can meet people for whom inherited patriarchal connections have been eschewed in favor of individualistic self-articulations. This liberal, negative freedom is therefore of considerable material value to, say, some ex-Muslim Christians or self-identifying members of sexual minorities.

Christian inheritance

This reflection on contrasting experiences of being Christian alerts us to the possibility of distinctively Christian "content" to this social category. We should briefly consider these diverse, sometimes contradictory, but distinctively Christian expectations about the way the world works and the meanings that they inherit, adapt, narrate, and even sometimes reject in their everyday contexts.

In recent years, increasing scholarly attention has been paid to various Palestinian Christian theologies, especially their interpretations of scripture. Building on the work begun by writers such as Naim Ateek and Mitri Raheb, Palestinian Protestants, whose co-religionists in the global north remain overwhelmingly pro-Zionist, have invested in strong rebuttals of "Christian Zionist" interpretations of scripture.[64] However, while the political relevance of this may be considerable, I do not believe scriptural interpretation provides the key to Palestinian Christians' everyday recourse to Christian symbolic resources. By far,

the majority of them live with traditions of scripture-use that *perform* the Bible "prior" to interpreting it: the question of an individual's understanding of it is secondary to their *participation* in its dialogue. I elaborate this elsewhere, but it connects to a broader experience of scripture as part of a liturgical drama that draws the Christian subject closer to God through entering into the redemption narrative as it were in the first-person.[65] Or, as one evangelical Palestinian friend of mine reflected, following his attendance at a Greek Orthodox funeral, "When you chant scripture, you own it".

Importantly, in Palestine, this liturgical drama is connected to the everyday experience of the "holy land": the setting of the Bible's stories of divine engagement with humanity. Foremost among these stories is that of the Incarnation of God as Jesus in *their* land. Many of my interlocutors, even those who denied that they were religious, scorned the church hierarchies, and, indeed, dismissed (parts of) scripture, nevertheless expressed an intensely felt connection to "Our Lord Jesus Christ". As well as pointing to the problem of the "secular" category to describe the less overtly religious,[66] it points more powerfully to the experienced presence of Christ, as it were as a living neighbor in his homeland.

It has become controversial to describe Christ as "a Palestinian", as this is felt by some to be simply an attempt to sanctify the Palestinian national cause or even as anti-Semitic erasure of the Jewish Jesus.[67] This is to miss the quiet, everyday quality of experiencing this Palestinian Christ when dwelling in his land. It is in this land that Christians have, longer than anywhere else, experienced the presence of Christ in scriptural, liturgical, and orally expressed memory, and as a felt, living presence.[68] In an important sense, dwelling as a Palestinian Christian in Palestine is to have daily reminders of the presence of Christ as one's neighbor as well as, for some, one's Palestinian redeemer. This does not demand the appropriation of Christ for parochial or nationalistic theology, but it has the potential to refract the everyday through a Christological lens. For instance, Mitri Raheb writes, with a Western Christian audience in mind:

> God himself becomes like our Palestinian refugees. He becomes one of us, one who was driven from his homeland. God is very close to us precisely at this time of occupation. Furthermore, he understands our suffering like no other because he himself underwent these sufferings. He felt them in his own body… Perhaps it is precisely now, under the occupation, that we can best understand the mystery of the child driven out of Bethlehem.[69]

Or, in a more vernacular account, a friend reflecting on the pressures of living in Bethlehem told me: "You know Rachel's tomb? I live there. Our house is surrounded on three sides but we won't leave. This is the land in which Jesus was born".

Conclusion

Palestinian Christians, then, share their ability to narrate widely diverse experiences in a divided land, with reference to a rich repertoire of Christian and Palestinian meanings: canonical, ecclesiastical, communal, sectarian, and, indeed, those drawn from recent Palestinian history, such as in the nascent national movement. Narratives of identification, like all meanings, do not reside in a parallel world, but are mediated in this world by their narrators and the physical environments in which they are narrated. Thus, to attempt to represent a group "identity" without attention to these environments is to risk missing an important element in the experience of self in relation to others. For Palestinian Christians, the decisive

fragmentation of their homeland is an important part of this experience, not just context to it. If we want to grasp something of the diversity of this experience, therefore, it behooves us to attend to the creative process of self-narration rather than simply the more obvious, louder expressions of Palestinian and Christian identity in the Holy Land: those that are deemed by dominant discourses to be inadequately or excessively Palestinian, inadequately or excessively Christian, or provisional, ambiguous, and, sometimes, apparently contradictory.

Notes

1   This chapter is based in part upon PhD fieldwork, research pursued at, and financially supported by, the University of Aberdeen. I am grateful for the comments of Brian Calder, Yohanna Katanacho, and Daniel Bannoura on early drafts of this chapter.

2   See Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007).

3   This excludes Hebrew-speaking Christians, foreign Christians, and Messianic Jews who identify as Jewish but confess the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth.

4   Figures for the West Bank from Rania Al Qass Collings, Rifat Odeh Kassis, and Mitri Raheb, eds., *Palestinian Christians in the West Bank: Facts, Figures and Trends* (Palestine: Diyar, 2012), for Israel from Central Bureau of Statistics (2016), and for Gaza from YMCA, *Survey of the Christians of the Gaza Strip* (Gaza: YMCA, 2014), estimates rounded to nearest 100. Additional Jerusalem figures are from Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies, "Table III/9 – Population of Jerusalem, by Age, Religion, and Geographical Spreading, 2014", Statistical Yearbook. Available www.jiis.org. il/upload/yearbook/2016/shnaton_C0916.pdf (Accessed 21 September 2016).

5   See UK Government, *Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Year 1937* (1937). Available http://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7BD D2C11C15B54C2052565D10057251E (Accessed 20 September 2016) for Mandate-era population figures.

6   Collings et al., *Palestinian Christians*, 48.

7   According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 2016, Christians comprise 18,800 of a population of 278,900, and 15,300 Christians of a total Arab population of 30,700. This is a lower proportion than the 14% some of my academic interlocutors have cited in conversation, a figure for which I have found no source.

8   Collings et al., *Palestinian Christians*, 11.

9   See, for instance, Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth: The Ethnography of Exclusion in Galilee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Una McGahern, *Palestinian Christians in Israel: Non-Muslims in a Jewish State* (London: Routledge, 2011), especially 125–149.

10 See Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, *Discriminatory Laws Database* (Jerusalem: Adalah, 2016) for a database of Israeli laws which they deem discriminate against non-Jews or Arabs in particular.

11 Adalah cites, in particular the "Nakba Law" of 2011, which removes state funding from organizations that reflect Palestinian narratives of loss surrounding the establishment of the state of Israel, thus affecting historical and heritage work in Israel's Arab community.

12 Patrick Strickland, "Israel Jails Palestinians for Facebook Comments", *Al-Jazeera* [online], 23 May 2015. Available www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/israel-jails-palestinians-facebook-comments-150521082135363.html (Accessed 25 May 2017).

13 Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

14 Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 18.

15 Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 15.

16 Jacob Norris, "Exporting the Holy Land: Artisans and Merchant-Migrants in Ottoman-Era Bethlehem", *Mashriq and Mahjar: Journal of Middle East Migration Studies* 1, no. 2 (2013), 14–40.

17 Chaim Levinson, "Israel Has 101 Different Types of Permits Governing Palestinian Movement", *Haaretz* [online], 23 December 2011. Available www.haaretz.com/israel-has-101-different-types-of-permits-governing-palestinian-movement-1.403039 (Accessed 25 May 2017).

18 Jackie Feldman, "Abraham the Settler, Jesus the Refugee: Contemporary Conflict and Christianity on the Road to Bethlehem", *History and Memory* 23, no. 1 (2011), 62–95. Whenever I hired a car in

West Jerusalem, I was told that my Israeli plates would mean I would have stones thrown at me in Bethlehem, which didn't happen in sixteen months of fieldwork. In fact, some of my Palestinian neighbors in Bethlehem had Israeli-plated cars.

19 Benny Morris, "Revisiting the Exodus of 1948", in Avi Shlaim and Eugene Rogin, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37–59. See also Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 120; and Zochrot, *List of Destroyed Palestinian Villages on Which JNF Sites were Erected*. Available http://zochrot.org/en/article/52241 (Accessed 20 September 2016) on Jewish National Fund forests.

20 Suad Joseph, "The Public/Private: The Imagined Boundary in the Imagined Nation/State/Community: The Lebanese Case, *Feminist Review* 57, no. 1, (1997), 73–92.

21 Bard Kårtveit, *Dilemmas of Attachment: Identity and Belonging among Palestinian Christians* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 53, shows how differently residents of Bethlehem experience these conservative patriarchal connections. In particular, times of upheaval "can serve to heighten tension between forces of conservation and forces of social change", and conserving these patriarchal connections promises stability even as they constrain the freedoms of individuals to, say, marry for love.

22 Mark Daniel Calder, "We Are the Mother of the Arabs: Articulating Syriac Christian Selfhood in Bethlehem", (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, June 2015), 76.

23 See Mitri Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

24 Hanna Kildani, *Modern Christianity in the Holy Land* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2010), 20–29. On Germanos see also Nabil Matar, "An Arabic Orthodox Account of the Holy Land, c.1590s", in Judy A. Hayden and Nabil Matar, eds., *Through the Eyes of the Beholder: The Holy Land 1517–1713* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 27–52; and S. Khūrī, N. Khūrī and R. Abu Jābir, *Khulāṣat tārīkh kanīsat Ūrushalīm al-Urthūdhuksīyah* (Amman: s.n, 1992). On Slavic dominance of Mar Saba, see Joseph Patrich, "The Sabaite Heritage: An Introductory Survey", in Joseph Patrich, ed., *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present* (Leuven: Peters, 2001), 16.

25 Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 59–60.

26 The Council of Chalcedon of 451 was convened to arbitrate between those who thought Jesus Christ had a single composite nature comprising divinity and humanity and those who considered him to have two natures, one human and one divine. It resulted in the exclusion of "miaphysites" from imperially sanctioned orthodoxy. Syriac, Ethiopian, and Coptic Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic churches assert a non-Chalcedonian miaphysite Christological formula.

27 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015.

28 Oded Peri, "The Christian Population of Jerusalem in the Late Seventeenth Century: Aspects of Demography, Economy, and Society", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39, no. 4 (1996), 410–411.

29 One ethnographic vignette, taken from my fieldwork in Bethlehem, exemplifies these elements of Christian disunity. "*Throughout the early hours of Christmas day, the Greek, Coptic and Syriac Orthodox offer liturgical worship in the packed Church of the Nativity, simultaneously and with the necessary involvement of the Palestinian Authority's police. The Greek Orthodox patriarch will spend much of the night in the grotto, emerging to bless his gathered faithful, but the Syriac Orthodox only get a brief slot in the grotto at the end of the night. During this time, around 4 AM, their worship is supervised by one Greek Orthodox, one Roman Catholic and one Armenian cleric, located next to the corners of the grotto corresponding to their respective territorial rights under the status quo, and giving me the distinct impression of ecclesiastical policing. The rights of the Syriac Orthodox are, as with the other sects, minutely prescribed, to the extent that, when the photographer hired by the Syriac Orthodox stood on a step on the south side of the grotto, opposite the door through which the Syriac faithful were to enter and exit, he was told to stand down by the Greek Orthodox priest whose church retained sole rights to that staircase, even during Syriac Orthodox prayers. My interlocutor told me at mass on the following Sunday, 'It used to be worse. They [the Greeks] used to put a chair right in the middle of the grotto and say that we couldn't touch it or move it because it was a Greek Orthodox chair, and we used to break it and that caused lots of problems.' I checked this story, as it sounded so far-fetched, with a number of interlocutors, including [Syriac priest] Abuna Butros, all of whom confirmed it. One indeed added that, 'The Armenians pushed us to fight with the Greeks over a carpet last year*".

30 Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

31 Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), has shown how the history of this contest in the southern and eastern

Mediterranean, especially Egypt, is closely related to liberal vs. communitarian debates about secular governance in Europe. See also H. Murre-Van den Burg, "Searching for Common Ground: Jews and Christians in the Modern Middle East", in S. Goldstein-Sabbah and H. Murre-Van den Burg, eds., *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 6–9.

32 Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 160.

33 Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 96.

34 Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 96.

35 Maronite Neguib Azouri, a Syrian who served in Jerusalem, was one of the earliest to articulate Arab nationalism in opposition to Ottoman rule, Christian sectarianism, and early Zionism in 1905. See Anthony O'Mahony, ed., *Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics, and Society in the Holy Land* (London: Mellisende, 1999), 44.

36 Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 126.

37 Roberto Mazza, "Churches at War: The Impact of the First World War on the Christian Institutions of Jerusalem, 1914–1920", *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 2 (2009), 220. See also Anthony O'Mahony, ed., *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) and Abd al-Aziz Ayyad, "Arab Nationalism and the Palestinians 1850–1939", *PASSIA* [online], 1999. Available www.passia.org/publications/Arab-Nationalism/Arab-Nationalism.pdf (Accessed 20 September 2016).

38 Motasem Dalloul, "Christian Candidate on Hamas Ticket", *Al-Jazeera* [online], 25 January 2006. Available www.aljazeera.com/archive/2006/01/200841012738354402.html (Accessed 20 September 2016).

39 Calder, "We Are the Mother of the Arabs", 84.

40 See, for example, Committee of the Christian Union for Palestine, *Leaders of all Christian Churches in Palestine Denounce Partition and Demand Arab Independence for the Holy Land*. Available https://archive.org/stream/ldpd_11149941_000/ldpd_11149941_000_djvu.txt (Accessed September 2016); and Appendix 2 of Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* includes the full text of such statements up until 1994. See, more recently, Jack Khoury, "Palestinian Church Leaders Call on British MPs to Recognize Palestine", *Ha'aretz* [online], 10 October 2014. Available www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.620135 (Accessed 11 October 2014).

41 D. Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to 2000* (Sawbridgeworth: Melisende, 2003), 167–171.

42 Calder, "We Are the Mother of the Arabs".

43 For more on Palestine's *siryān,* see Sebastian Brock and Witold Witakowski, *The Hidden Pearl, Volume III: At the Turn of the Third Millennium: The Syrian Orthodox Witness* (Rome: TransWorld Film, 2001) and Calder, "We Are the Mother of the Arabs".

44 Avi Lewis, "Vatican: Anti-Christian Violence Crosses 'Red Line' in Israel?" *Times of Israel* [online], 10 August 2015. Available www.timesofisrael.com/vatican-anti-christian-violence-crosses-red-line-in-israel/ (Accessed 15 September 2016).

45 Justus Reid Weiner, "Human Rights of Christians in Palestinian Society", *Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs,* 2005. Available www.jcpa.org/christian-persecution.htm (Accessed 21 September 2016).

46 Infamously, the Greek Orthodox custodian of the monastery at Jacob's Well, Fr. Philoumenos Hasapis was hacked to death and his body mutilated after weeks of intimidation by Jewish militants in 1979. Meanwhile, evangelical leader Rami Ayyad was gunned down in Gaza in 2007 by suspected radical Islamists.

47 Spitting at clergy and other Christians (including the author) is a widely reported gesture of hardline Orthodox Jews, especially in Jerusalem. See Anti-Defamation League, "ADL Urges Israeli Chief Rabbinate to Denounce Ultra-Orthodox Practice of Spitting at Christians", *Anti-Defamation League* [online], 2011. Available www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/israel-middle-east/adl-urges-israeli -chief.html (Accessed 30 September 2016. Several commentators have noted rising antipathy toward Christians (e.g., Daniel K. Eisenbud, "Jerusalem Church Vandalized with Crude Anti-Christian Slogans", *Jerusalem Post* [online], 17 January 2016. Available www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Jerusalem-church-vandalized-with-crude-anti-Christian-slogans-441762 (Accessed 20 September 2016), although the focus on Jewish anti-Christian violence tends to ignore the general growth in Jewish extremism which has as its most frequent target other, "heretical"

Jews: indeed, most desecration in Israel appears to be intra-Jewish (Elhanan Miller, "In Israel, More Jewish Holy Sites Desecrated than Christian, Muslim Ones Combined", *Times of Israel* [online], 16 September 2015. Available www.timesofisrael.com/in-israel-more-jewish-holy-sites-desecrated-than-christian-muslim-ones-combined/ (Accessed 15 September 2016). Some of my interlocutors in Bethlehem and Nablus, as well as those in Droeber (2014) framed negative experiences at the hands of PA police as religious discrimination, and Zionist-sympathizing Christians such as the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem have reportedly faced harassment. Julia Droeber, *The Dynamics of Coexistence in the Middle East: Negotiating Boundaries between Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Samaritans in Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

48 See Bowman's account of Muslim-Christian (1993) and previously Jewish-Muslim-Christian (2007) shrine-sharing. Glenn Bowman, "Nationalizing the Sacred: Shrines and Shifting Identities in the Israeli-Occupied Territories", *Man* 28, no. 3 (1993), 431–460; "Sharing and Exclusion: The Case of Rachel's Tomb", *Jerusalem Quarterly* 58, (2007), 30–49.

49 Manal Jamal, "Beyond Fateh Corruption and Mass Discontent: Hamas, the Palestinian Left, and the 2006 Legislative Elections", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 3, (2013), 273–294, contests the idea that increased political support for Islamist parties is evidence of increased religiosity in any case.

50 Jonathan Lis, "Knesset Passes Bill Distinguishing between Muslim and Christian Arabs", *Ha'aretz* [online], 25 February 2014. Available www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.576247 (Accessed 16 February 2014).

51 Adel Manna and Motti Golani, *Two Sides of the Coin: Independence and Nakba 1948,* English–Arabic Edition, (Dordrecht: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, 2011), 130.

52 Jerusalem Post, "IDF Christian Recruits on Rise as Soldiers Gather for Christmas Party", *Jerusalem Post* [online], 23 December 2015. Available www.jpost.com/Christian-News/IDF-Christian-recruits-on-rise-soldiers-gather-for-Christmas-party-438212 (Accessed 5 September 2016).

53 Israeli official discourse does not recognize their Arab citizens' "Palestinian" self-identification.

54 McGahern, *Palestinian Christians*, 91.

55 Michael Dumper, "The Christian Churches of Jerusalem in the Post-Oslo Period", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 2 (2002), 51–65.

56 See Mitri Raheb, "Christianity in the Context of Israel-Palestine and Within the Context of Two Major Monotheistic Religions", in Christine Lienemann-Perrin and Wolfgang Lienemann, eds., *Crossing Religious Borders: Studies in Conversion and Religious Belonging* (Wiesbaden: Harrisowitz Verlag, 2012), 547–559.

57 See Asmaa Al-Ghoul, "Hamas Cracks Down on Salafists in Gaza Strip", *Al Monitor* [online], 10 May 2015. Available www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/palestine-gaza-strip-hamas-salafist-attack-kidnapping-mosque.html (Accessed 25 May 2017).

58 Nicholas Pelham, "Where Is It Really Better to be a Christian – Israel or Palestine?" *Ha'aretz* [online], 11 May 2014. Available www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.590027 (Accessed 25 May 2017).

59 Julia Droeber's account of Christians in Nablus describes something similar, which she explains with recourse to Scott's notion of "official" and "hidden transcripts". While Christians will affirm Palestinian unity in public, she argues, it is behind closed doors and with confidantes that they will express a more authentic narrative of suspicion. Droeber's account was not borne out by my fieldwork. On the contrary, a single interlocutor could express strong solidarity with his Muslim compatriot, then strong suspicion of local Muslims, and then return to narratives of brotherly affection all within a single conversation. I found that individuals whom I came to know well would use divergent narratives creatively, unpredictably, and without the progressive "unveiling" Droeber presents. The sense I had, in Bethlehem's radically changed environment, was of a feeling around for narratives that made best sense of a disorienting everyday reality. This was not linear, but rather my interlocutors would dart between narratives that best framed a particular issue in which selfhood and solidarity were implicated. Drober, *Dynamics*.

60 Kårtveit *Dilemmas of Attachment*.

61 Palestine News Network "السريان الأرثوذكس في مسيرة إحتجاجية لإعادة ما سلب" *Youtube* [online], 2013. Available www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKpxPkHaeTg&feature=player_embedded (Accessed September 2016).

62 See Miller, this volume, and Raheb, "Christianity".

63 Raheb, "Christianity".

64 See, for example, Munther Isaac, "Must the Land Divide?" *scholarsleaders.org* [online], 2012. Available http://scholarleaders.org/insights_essays/must-the-land-divide/ (Accessed 13 September 2016); and Yohanna Katanacho and Bishara Awad, *The Land of Christ: A Palestinian Cry* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

65 Mark Daniel Calder, "Researching Palestinian Christian Uses of the Bible: Israeli and Israelite Violence as a Canonical Problem?", in Paul S. Rowe, John H.A. Dyck, and Jens Zimmermann, eds., *Christians and the Middle East Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2014), 152–170.

66 A counter-sectarian perspective is often described as "secularist", but one should use the term advisedly. There are certainly some who would exclude Islam and Christianity from political discourse, but far more common are framings of pluralist nationalism in terms of religious duty. Indeed, as Noah Haiduc-Dale shows, this non-secular pluralist nationalism was a distinctive feature of the early Muslim-Christian Association national discourse. Haiduc-Dale, *Arab Christians in British Mandate Palestine: Communalism and Nationalism, 1917–1949* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). This, indeed, was arguably the dominant narrative in the PLO under Yasser Arafat, as opposed to anything straightforwardly secular. In Lybarger's account indeed, some of his "secularist" interlocutors expressed strongly non-secular accounts of the world: if secular is to imply a well-defined public sphere in which religious symbols and narratives are broadly excluded, as we have seen, such a public space is not easily identified in Palestine. Loren Lybarger, "For Church or Nation? Islamism, Secular-Nationalism, and Christian Identities in Palestine", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 4 (2007), 777–813.

67 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Jesus Was Not Palestinian, Australian Church Says", *Ha'aretz* [online], 28 December 2015. Available www.haaretz.com/jewish/news/1.694221 (Accessed 17 September 2016).

68 Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2008), 29 and 205.

69 Raheb, *I am a Palestinian Christian*, 106–107.