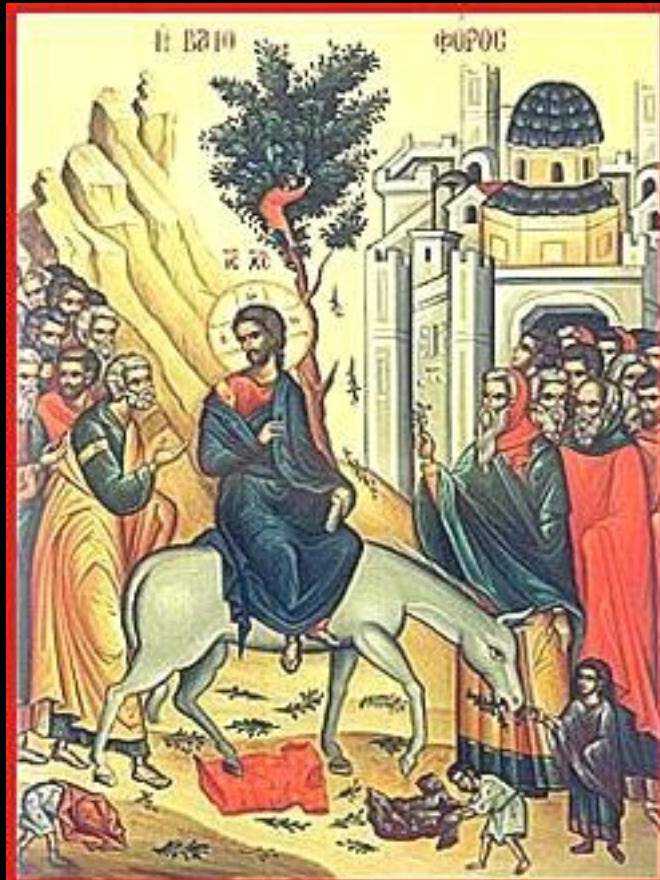


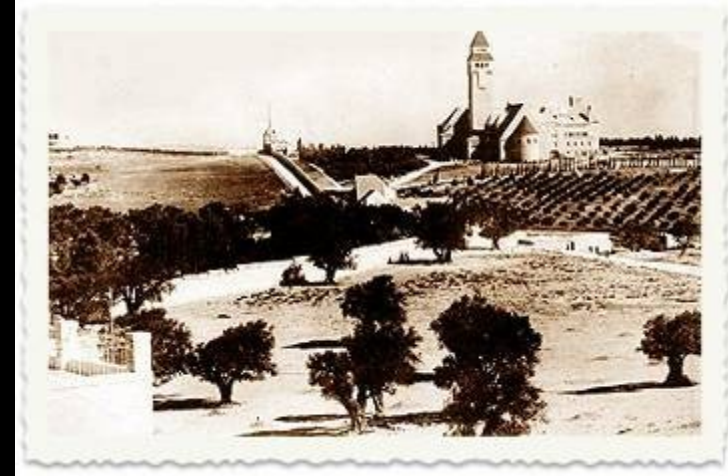
The Christian World and the Question of Jerusalem

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Historical Background

- Christianity played a central role in transforming Jerusalem into a city of world-wide interest.
- The city was ruled by strictly Christian rulers in the Byzantine period and in the Crusaders period.
- At the end of the Ottoman period (in the 19th century) the influence of European nations and the Christian churches grew and became key forces in Jerusalem's history.



Historical Background

- During the British mandate (1917-1948), Jerusalem's local Christian communities reached new demographic peaks and flourished, both socially and economically.
- In 1946 the Christian population numbered 31,000 (19% of the city's population, as opposed to 21% Muslim and 60% Jewish).



Historical Background



- The central trend from 1948 to today is a demographic decline in the Christian population of Jerusalem.
- The causes: emigration due to the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a low birth rate.
- The result: Christians have become a minor factor within the city's population.

Historical Background

- Today the Christian population is 14,000 (including 2000 non-Arab Christians) – approximately 2% of the city's population and 4% of the Palestinian population of Jerusalem and the west bank.
- The status of the local Christians as a small and divided minority in Jerusalem and the occupied territories engenders their near total dependency on the Muslim community.



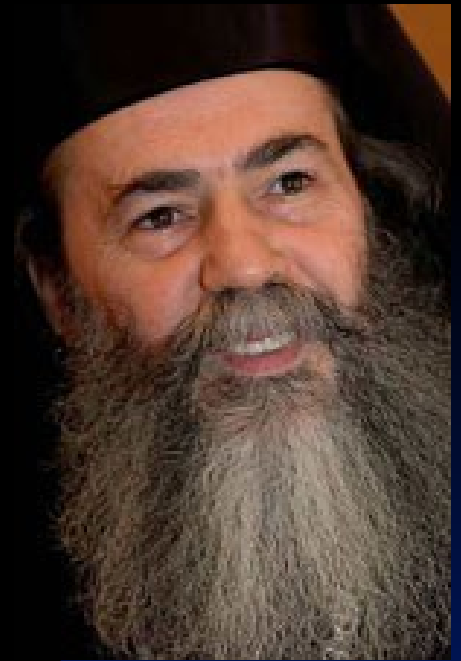
Arabization and Palestinization

- Since 1967 there has been a growing process of Arabization and Palestinization of the leaders of the local churches.
- As heads of most of the churches there are local Palestinian religious leaders who identify with the mainstream within Palestinian society.
- This process has taken place among Greek Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, and Latin Catholics.



The Greek Orthodox Church

- An exception is to be found in the Greek Orthodox Church, which experienced a long struggle between its Arab adherents and its Greek leadership.
- In recent years the hegemony of the Greek leadership has been called into question.



The Greek Orthodox Church

- Israel, the Palestinian authority, Jordan, and Greece have been involved in attempts to influence the selection of the new patriarch and the control of the vast assets of the Patriarchate.
- As a result of these struggles the Patriarchate's influence and power have lessened – yet it is still regarded as the most senior of the Christian factors in Jerusalem.



The Armenians

- Another exception is the Armenian community.
- It would seem that the Armenians would not be affected by the process of Arabization, since they themselves are not Arabs.



The Armenians

- The Armenians are, however, closer to the Arab community than to Israeli society.
- Therefore the Armenians have been affected by the continuing conflict just as the other Christian communities have, and they suffer from a high rate of emigration - especially among the younger generation.



The Monophysite Churches

- Three small communities – the Copts, the Ethiopians, and the Syrian orthodox community – have been struggling for the survival of their status and the preservation of their ancient cultures.



Summary: the Current State of the Local Churches

- Despite their solidarity with Palestinian nationalism, the local Christian churches view with concern the strengthening of Islamic fundamentalism within Palestinian society.
- The local Christians are caught between the desire to identify with Palestinian nationalism and the fear of Islamic fundamentalism. They also suffer from lack of support from the Israeli government.



The Current State of the Local Churches



- Lately the state of the local communities has deteriorated due to the separation fence, which cuts off the communities in the area of Bethlehem and Ramallah from their centers in east Jerusalem.

The International Christian Factors – the Vatican



- Great change in the Vatican stand towards Israel: a shift from hostility to recognition of the State and the establishment of diplomatic relations with it (1994).
- In parallel, the Vatican developed official relations with the P.L.O. and Jordan.
- Concern for the local Catholic communities and their institutions, and fear that the holy places will become museums with no living communities are the Vatican's main motivations.

The Vatican

- Continued dissatisfaction with Israel's policy towards the Christian communities.
- Fear of fundamentalist Islam and anarchy in the Palestinian Authority.
- The result: a cautious and vague stance towards Jerusalem and a proposal for a special statute for the city, to be secured by international guarantees.
- Emphasis on the necessity of preserving Jerusalem's character as holy city to the three monotheistic religions and opposition to exclusive control of the city by any side.



The “Liberal” Protestant Churches



- Support of the Palestinian side as the “weak and suffering” side.
- The taking of anti-Israeli steps by the Anglican, Presbyterian, and other churches up to the point of calling for the cutting back on investments in Israel. They also call for cutting back on investments in companies that work in support of the Israeli occupation or on the building of the separation fence.

The “Liberal” Protestant Churches

- Attempts to exert influence on Israel according to the South African model.
- Jewish claims of the revival of traditional Christian anti-Semitism in these churches: the denial of the legitimacy of the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state.



The Evangelical Churches - the Religious Right

- Enthusiastic support for Israel for theological reasons – the revival of Israel is understood by them to be the realization of Biblical prophecy. In this view, Christians must aid Israel in every possible way.
- In the framework of this support, a number of Evangelical leaders support Jewish fringe groups working to build the third temple on the Temple Mount.



Summary

- The variety and polarization of the Christian world express themselves in the questions of relations with the Jewish people and Israeli control of Jerusalem.
- In an optimistic scenario, the two sides – Israeli and Palestinian – will cultivate Christian support because of its potential contribution to the city and its economy – especially in the field of tourism.



Summary

- To a great extent it was Christianity and the Christian world which turned Jerusalem into a “city of the world.”
- A substantial improvement in the state of the local Christians can come about only if there is significant progress in the peace process and a decline in the strength of fundamentalist Islam.

