Editor's Note: This article, the second installment in a three-part series, first appeared in the March 2015 Edition of *Catholic Family News* (click HERE to subscribe). See here for Part I.

*****

Last month in Part One, we began a systematic look at "the land" in the history of the Jews. Focusing on the Old Testament, we explored the concept of land as a divine blessing and the origins of the "Promised Land" to God's chosen people, the descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Finally, we noted through numerous Biblical texts that God's covenant with the Jews concerning the "land flowing with milk and honey" was not a permanent "real estate deed". Rather, it was directly dependent on their fidelity to God's commandments. The failure of the Israelites to maintain the covenant led to misery and disaster, first under their own kings, and later in exile under the heel of merciless Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors. Moses had correctly predicted (Deut. 4:26) that "you will not live long in the land."

Here in Part Two, we will examine the issue of land in the New Testament, primarily through the words of Christ, and also note the vastly different attitudes of Jews and early Christians towards the land in the first century.[1] Finally, we will advance to the 19th and early 20th centuries to consider the key points of the (land-based) ideology of Zionism which led to the creation of the modern state of Israel.

The Land in the Early Life of Jesus

Before we consider the public ministry of Jesus, we should note several points about the significance of land in His personal life. First, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, whose founding is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 4:4 and which is the setting for most of the Book of Ruth. Bethlehem was also the home of David the King, the great-grandson of Ruth (significantly, both David and Jesus were of the lineage of Ruth — a Moabite, not a Jew). Finally, Bethlehem was the subject of the great prophecy of Micah about the coming of the Messiah (Mic. 5:2). Nevertheless, when confronted by the Jews about His birthplace during His public ministry, Jesus did not grasp at His linkage to Bethlehem any more than He "grasped at equality with God" (Philip. 2:6). The skeptics among His audience had asserted, "The Messiah will not come from Galilee! The scripture says that the Messiah will be a descendant of King David and will be born in Bethlehem, the town where David lived" (John 7: 41-42).[2] Jesus is not recorded as saying anything in reply; surely He knew that if He claimed Bethlehem as His birthplace, with no obvious proof, the scoffers would ridicule Him. God had His own reasons for keeping the divine birth in Bethlehem a secret.[3] Secondly, Jesus and His parents lived among the extensive Jewish diaspora in Egypt, likely

for several years, during their flight from the long arm of Herod the Great (Matt. 2). Finally, Jesus spent most of His "hidden years" in the remote village of Nazareth of Galilee, far to the north of Jerusalem and Judea, the center of Jewish society and culture in the first century A.D. The distance was so great (a four-to-five-day walk) that Nazarenes and other Galileans had a distinctive dialect, as we ascertain in the denial of Peter (Matt. 26:73). Nazareth had no importance in earlier Jewish history; it is not even explicitly mentioned in the Old Testament. Indeed, Nazareth seems to have been so humble a town that the Apostle Nathanael, from the nearby fishing village of Bethsaida, quipped, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

The Roman Occupation

By the time of the public ministry of Jesus, Judea had been under Roman control for nearly a century (since 63 B.C.) and was reduced to a rump state carved from the ancient Promised Land. The Jews understandably chafed under the Roman occupation and found that they had three options available: cooperation, separation, or resistance. Herod and the Sadducees represented cooperation, giving the Romans what they demanded (primarily tax revenues) in return for stability and enjoyment of the burgeoning Hellenistic culture of the age. The second choice was separation, the disengagement from the occupation insofar as possible and the building of an alternative and pure community consistent with ancient Jewish law. The one prominent example here was the relatively small sect of the ascetic Essenes, most notably of Qumran along the Dead Sea. The final option was resistance, espoused by the Zealots who, consistent with the precedent of the Maccabees two centuries earlier, resorted to violence to reassert Jewish independence and freedom. Land was obviously a major factor in the ideologies of all three groups.

As for Jesus, He resolutely refused to endorse any of these factions or their agendas. In fact, He gave no indication that the children of Abraham had any special place of distinction or privilege in the sight of God. As we will see in the texts cited below, Jesus was equally receptive to all, including the hated and feared Roman conquerors and the much-scorned Samaritans.

The Land in the Public Ministry of Jesus

Jesus began and concentrated His public ministry in Galilee, a region far more Hellenized than Judea to the south. There is no Biblical record of Jesus entering Gentile communities there such Tiberius or Sepphoris, but it would seem almost impossible to avoid them. Matthew 4:25 states, "Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Ten Towns [the Decapolis, of which nine cities were east of the Jordan River], from Jerusalem, Judea, and

the land on the other side of the Jordan." There is also a strong tradition that John's baptism of Jesus occurred on the east bank of the Jordan River (see here, for example). Certainly, as recounted by three of the Evangelists, the spectacular miracle of casting out demons from the possessed wild man and into a herd of pigs occurred east of the Jordan.[4]

On the other hand, Jesus seems to have largely avoided Jerusalem in His ministry, except when Jewish law required. The Gospel of John records only four visits to the city, including His Passion and death. Jesus showed respect for the Temple but also did not hesitate to predict its destruction. When asked to admire the splendor of the (newly completed) Temple, Jesus remarked: "All this you see — the time will come when not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one will be thrown down" (Luke 21:6; cf. Matt. 24:2, Mark 13:2). In a separate passage, Jesus wept over Jerusalem, offering another astonishing prediction: "The time will come when your enemies will surround you with barricades, blockade you, and close in on you from every side. They will completely destroy you and the people within your walls" (Luke 19:43-44). These two passages from Luke were fulfilled to the letter during the brutally efficient Roman siege of Jerusalem under Titus in A.D. 70.

The Land in the Words of Jesus

Both the parables and other sayings of Jesus are replete with significance for the land and its inhabitants, entirely consistent with what we saw in the Old Testament in Part One. We will focus on only five, including two parables.

First, we consider the incident in the Nazareth synagogue where Jesus, after being handed a scroll of the Prophet Isaiah, selected and read a passage citing Isaiah 61:1-2. According to Luke, the people were initially "well impressed" with the "son of Joseph" until He proceeded to elaborate on the text: "Listen to Me: it is true that there were many widows in Israel during the time of Elijah, when there was no rain for three and a half years and a severe famine spread throughout the whole land. Yet Elijah was not sent to anyone in Israel, but only to a widow living in Zarephath in the territory of Sidon. And there were many people suffering from a dreaded skin disease who lived in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha; yet not one of them was healed, but only Naaman the Syrian." These bold remarks caused a self-righteous uproar among His Jewish audience, who proceeded to drag Jesus out of town and would have thrown Him off a nearby cliff had He not miraculously escaped their clutches. The lesson is clear: the people of Nazareth were not upset by (or did not understand) the claim of Jesus that He was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (Luke 4:21-22); however, they were furious at His implication that two Gentile neighbors were more favored by God than the children of Abraham (Luke 4:16-30).

Secondly, we note the request to Jesus by the Roman centurion in Capernaum, seeking a

cure for his servant. The centurion's statement that Jesus was a "man of authority" and need only "give the order" for a cure astonished the Lord, causing Him to remark, "I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this." More to our point, He added, "I assure you that many will come *from the east and the west* and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of heaven. But those who should be in the Kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness, where they will cry and gnash their teeth" (Matt. 8:5-13).

Let us now consider a second example of the interaction of Jesus with non-Jews, the encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. The story is a long one, with many lessons, consuming most of John 4. We pick up the conversation with the words of the woman: "'My Samaritan ancestors worshiped God on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where we should worship God.' Jesus said to her, 'Believe Me, woman, the time will come when people will not worship the Father *either on this mountain or in Jerusalem*.... But the time is coming *and is already here*, when by the power of God's Spirit people will worship the Father as He really is, offering Him the true worship that He wants" (John 4:20-23). Here at one stroke, Jesus was terminating the importance — indeed, the validity — of the Old Covenant, the Temple, and the Promised Land. Catholics can easily recognize this as a prefiguring of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the perfection of the Temple sacrifice and is not constrained by time or place.

The Land in the Parables of Jesus

Matthew tells us that Jesus "would not say a thing to [the crowd] without using a parable" (Matt. 13:34) and this certainly includes His references to the land. For example, there is the parable of the tenants in the vineyard, recounted in all three Synoptic Gospels.[5] Note that the landowner "rented the vineyard to tenants" (the Jews) who eventually beat or killed all of the landowner's servants (the prophets). Finally, after the tenants killed the owner's "dear son" (yet another prediction of His own death), Jesus concludes the parable by avowing that the owner of the vineyard "will come and kill those men and turn the vineyard over to other tenants." The story was a thinly veiled condemnation of the Jewish leaders, who "knew that He had told this parable against them." Both this parable and the next strongly evoke the moral of Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7), cited in Part One.

Our second example is the parable of the fig tree (Luke 13:6-9), which we recount in full: "There was once a man who had a fig tree growing in his vineyard. He went looking for figs on it but found none. So he said to his gardener, 'Look, for three years I have been coming here looking for figs on this fig tree, and I haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it go on using up the soil?' But the gardener answered, 'Leave it alone, sir, just one more year; I will dig around it and put in some fertilizer. Then if the tree bears figs next year, so much the better; if not, then you can have it cut down.'" In this instance, the Jews are not the tenants but the fig tree itself. Jesus assumes the role of the gardener, pleading for mercy from the vineyard owner, God the Father. Finally, the three years represents the duration of His public ministry. Jesus leaves the parable open-ended; it applies most directly to the Jews, but in another sense it refers to all the children of Adam, whom the Vineyard Owner rightly expects to "bear fruit."

The Spread of Christianity and Collapse of Israel

As with the Old Testament in Part One, we have addressed only the highlights concerning the significance of the land in the ministry of Jesus. After Pentecost, as the "good news" began to spread among both Jews and Gentiles, one salient point about the early Christians should attract our attention: *they had no interest in the land*. Neither the traditional land of Israel nor the Kingdom of Judea was part of the covenant which they embraced. Rather, they saw their proximity to God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24) and took comfort in the words of Christ to the Roman procurator that "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Early Christians (and their descendants) saw no need to emigrate to the Promised Land or to sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem, which had in any event been destroyed. God could be loved, adored, and served in a mystical way that transcended earthly territory. Indeed, the pious tradition of pilgrimages to the scenes of Christ's life did not begin for

several centuries, long after the collapse of Jewish covenantal practice. Meanwhile, the extensive Jewish diaspora communities served a purpose which only God could have foreseen. They became logical destinations for St. Paul and the other Apostles and served as convenient staging areas for their further missionary travels.

The Jews, on the other hand, clung tenaciously to the land and began their ill-fated revolt against Rome in A.D. 66. The first Jewish Christians pointedly did not join the rebellion; rather, they fled for safety to the city of Pella on the east bank of the Jordan (see here, for example). Four years later, culminating a seven-month siege, Roman legions under Titus systematically ransacked, burned, and destroyed Jerusalem, bringing to an ignominious end Jewish public life and worship as it had existed for centuries. The triumphant Messiah did not appear to rescue the Jews in their greatest hour of need.

Interlude

For the next 18 centuries — indeed, even until today — the history of the Jews is extraordinarily complicated and diffuse. Their relationships with Christian, Muslim, and other neighbors, from Persia to Iberia, from Lithuania to Abyssinia, varied widely over time. Of note, the Jews of Palestine[6] resolutely sided with the Arabs against the Crusaders during the First Crusade in 1099. In fact, the treatment of the Jews tended to be relatively tolerant under the Ottomans, the Moors in Spain, and other lesser Muslim regimes. Within Christendom, they generally fared far worse. The Jews were temporarily expelled from France (Philip Augustus in 1181), England (Edward I in 1290), and permanently from Spain (Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492).

Oppression — and Opportunity

One of the most important — certainly the most widely cited — form of discrimination against the Jews is that they were forbidden to own land. According to popular lore, this drove the Jews off their farms and into the cities where they mastered urban professions, becoming craftsmen, merchants, and moneylenders. Recent research by two economic historians, however, has identified an entirely different reason for this migration of Jewish labor. According to Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, the Jews were quitting the land as early as the second through the seventh century A.D., long before discriminatory policies were put into place by medieval European rulers. Their motive, understandably enough, was economic — the higher wages of urban occupations. But the literacy and education required to master those jobs was so expensive as to be a poor investment, despite the greater income. However, the requirement under Judaism to read the Torah (multiple times weekly) presupposed and mandated literacy, a requirement “unique among religions in the early

Middle Ages." Thus, the Jews' emphasis on education for their children gave them a huge advantage over time in the search for coveted skilled urban jobs. "Only many centuries later did education start to make sense economically, and by then the Jews had become well established in banking, trade, and so forth."[7] In summary, the migration of the Jews in most of Europe from the farm to the city was far more a matter of self-interest and opportunity than of oppression. It was, again, the allure of Hellenism.[8]

Nevertheless, this situation — which has lasted in Europe to the current day — called into question the loyalties of Jews to their Christian neighbors and the countries of their residence. G.K. Chesterton, in his 1921 work *The New Jerusalem*, summed up the problem: "It is the theory that any abnormal qualities in the Jews are due to the abnormal position of the Jews. They are traders rather than producers because they have no land of their own from which to produce, and they are cosmopolitans rather than patriots because they have no country of their own for which to be patriotic."[9] Justifiably or not, the absence of Jewish ties to the land furthered suspicion about them. In a way that could have been foreseen only by Heaven, the Jews' abandonment of their covenant with God cost them not only the Promised Land but land in many other countries besides.

The Beguiling Aspects of Zionism

Before we begin the briefest sketch of the history of Zionism below, it is important to note this point: Zionism is unique among all modern ideologies because the Jews are unique. Zionism became a force during the nineteenth century, the great age of European colonialism, however its justification and its appeal have varied with the audience and over time. As noted by Fr. Michael Prior, "Even though nationalist colonialism is long out of vogue with liberal Western intellectuals, and is an object of disdain among Christian theologians, support for Zionism is widespread. The existence of a Jewish state is justified by appeal to some combination of the following factors: the need for a haven; the biblical mandate; the unique historical claim; persistent diaspora longing; unbroken Jewish residence in the land; the decision of the United Nations; the reality of military conquest, etc. Since the relative value attached to each element of legitimization has varied at different stages, and among different groups, it is naïve to construct a composite legitimization by blending them all together, reducing them to a form in which their unique identity is subsumed, and their relative importance is undifferentiated. However, the array of justificatory arguments is unparalleled in subtlety and imagination."[10] In short, it seems that Zionism has something for everybody. Indeed, a century ago, Zionism even appealed to anti-Semites throughout Europe; a separate home for the Jews would help rid Europe of its "Jewish problem." The one common factor was land for the Jews.

Conception

Although its gestation period was centuries long, and it was not given a name until 1890, Zionism was a child of the Protestant Reformation, especially in England. The unity of medieval Christendom, which was never more than fragile, was steadily pulled asunder by the rise of numerous Protestant sects, as well as the rise of nationalism. Protestant theologians, who could no longer appeal to "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," shunned Rome and championed *Sola Scriptura*. They began to look elsewhere for inspiration and guidance, and to discern the action of Divine Providence among the nations. Not surprisingly, their eyes fell on Jerusalem, the Promised Land, and the Old Testament. As early as 1621 (Shakespeare had been dead less than a decade), a prominent member of Parliament, Sir Henry Finch, authored a book entitled *The World's Great Restauration or Calling of the Jewes*. In it he predicted a literal restoration of the tribes of Israel to their ancient land and their conversion to Christianity.[11] About the same time, Puritan settlers in Massachusetts were referring to their colony as "the new Zion." In 1649, at the height of England's embrace of Puritanism, the so-called Cartwright Petition requested that the English "transport Izraell's sons and daughters in their ships to the Land promised to their forefathers…for an everlasting Inheritance."[12] These events were symptomatic of a broader revolutionary Protestant eschatology, planting a seed that would lay dormant until the 19th century.

Birth Pangs

If Theodore Herzl (1860-1904) was the father of Zionism, its godfather was certainly an evangelical English nobleman, Anthony Ashley Cooper, better known as Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885).[13] Energetically pursuing social reforms on such issues as lunatic asylums and child labor, Shaftesbury was also imbued with the (by now) widespread notion of returning the Jews to Palestine. A deeply religious man, Shaftesbury embraced the Protestant notion of the "literal interpretation of Scripture," once observing — illogically — that "Nothing but Scripture can interpret Scripture."[14] And in Scripture, Shaftesbury claimed to have found the mandate for "God's ancient people," as he called the Jews, to return to the Promised Land and thus pave the way for the "Second Advent" of Christ. In the words of historian Barbara Tuchman, Shaftesbury's vision was "an Anglican Israel restored by Protestant England, at one stroke confounding popery, fulfilling prophecy, redeeming mankind."[15] Shaftesbury was hardly alone in his enthusiasm for a Jewish homeland. One of his followers, Laurence Oliphant, authored a book in 1880 entitled *The Land of Gilead,* urging active English support for the settlement of European Jews in Palestine "and proposing that that Palestinian Arabs be removed to land reservations like those for the Indians of North America."[16] Another prominent advocate was novelist George Eliot, who used her novel *Daniel Deronda* (1876) as a mouthpiece for a restoration of the Jews.

Anglican interest in the Jews did not confine itself to pious proclamations. In 1809, the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews was founded, which was instrumental in the creation of the first Anglican bishopric in Jerusalem in 1841. The society attracted broad support and ample funding from the English upper class and sponsored extensive missionary activities in the Middle East, including medical and educational efforts. However, it was a spectacular failure at its primary mission of conversion. After some 30 years of operation, it had gained a grand total of eight Jewish converts in Jerusalem, two in Baghdad, and none in Smyrna. Again, in the words of Barbara Tuchman, "it is quite striking how optimistic the Society's workers were in a task in which the greatest of all missionaries [St. Paul] had conspicuously failed." Even Shaftesbury eventually expressed concern: "Have we conceived a merely human project and then imagined it to be a decree of the Almighty?"[17]

The Convergence of Prophecy and Empire?

As the 19th century unfolded, Britain saw its strategic interests steadily expand in the Middle East. In the 1850s, it joined France in the Crimean War, opposing Russian southern expansion and defending Ottoman interests. The same decade, the French began construction of the Suez Canal, which opened in 1869 and eventually came under British

control in 1888. The canal, in other than British hands, was regarded as a potentially major threat to India, the crown jewel of the British Empire. The British began to view the settlement of Jews in Palestine as a means to bolster the Ottoman Empire ("the Sick Man of Europe") and defend the Suez Canal, their lifeline to India. The original utopian idea of Jewish resettlement in Palestine was increasingly perceived as conveniently beneficial to British strategic interests.

There remained, however, one missing ingredient: the pool of Jews willing to emigrate. Certainly, most British and western European Jews had little interest or incentive to do so; they were largely assimilated into European culture, although few had adopted Christianity. Many Jews were well-to-do and they were treated more or less equitably. Quite a few Jews (e.g., Claude Montefiore, founder of Liberal Judaism in England) actually opposed Zionism on the grounds that it undercut their claim to be loyal Englishmen. In this matter, the assassination of the Russian Czar Alexander II in 1881 proved pivotal. The new regime of his son, Alexander III, banned Jews from certain areas even within the Pale of the Settlement, restricted the occupations open to Jews, and initiated a series of pogroms lasting over three years. Conor Cruise O'Brien, in his comprehensive study of Zionism, regards the assassination of Alexander II as one of the "great turning points" in world history. "It is the moment in which the notion of the inevitable and universal triumph of liberal ideas receives its first great setback."[18] Indeed, it became the stimulus for thousands of Russian and other East European Jews to flee to Palestine in the coming decades. By the 1930s, England would discover to its chagrin that these Jews — not surprisingly — would exhibit no trace of loyalty to British interests, nor had they the slightest interest in Christianity.

Herzl, Weizmann, and Balfour

Through the 1880s, the resettlement of the Jews was still an insignificant issue, of interest mainly to well-meaning if naive Anglicans and small cadres of Orthodox and secular Jews in central and eastern Europe. If Zionism (the name was coined by Nathan Birnbaum in 1890) were to succeed, it needed a public and charismatic Jewish face. Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl filled that void. Influenced by French anti-Semitism on display during the tawdry Dreyfus Affair, Herzl found a cause he could champion. Under his untiring leadership, the issue of the fate of the Jews moved from sedate English tea rooms to royal palaces and foreign ministries across the continent. Herzl orchestrated a series of Zionist Congresses beginning in 1897 which galvanized an informal network of European Jewry. He promoted his agenda via personal meetings with heads of state, including Kaiser Wilhelm, Sultan Abdul Hamid, and Pope Pius X.[xix] Herzl died prematurely in 1904; like Moses to whom he was frequently compared, he did not live to see the Jews enter the "Promised Land."

Herzl's Second Zionist Congress in 1898 was attended by a young chemistry student from Belarus named Chaim Weizmann. Within a few years, Weizmann had moved to England where he became an eminent scientist and an acknowledged leader of the English Zionist movement. Weizmann eventually made a hugely significant contribution to the British war effort in World War I by creating a chemical process for the development of acetone, so much in need for the production of munitions. Two years later, in 1917, it was the influential Weizmann who convinced Sir Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary (and former Prime Minister) to issue the so-called Balfour Declaration. Crafted as a letter from the Foreign Secretary to Lord Rothschild, the declaration famously stated that "His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

While the Balfour Declaration did reflect England's sympathetic views toward the Jews, it was far more a ploy for international Jewish help in the war effort against Germany. Then-Prime Minister David Lloyd George, a committed Zionist himself, addressed the issue years later, stating that the declaration had been made "due to propagandist reasons." Citing the deadlock on the World War I battlefields at the time, Lloyd George said, "In this critical situation it was believed that Jewish sympathy or the reverse would make a substantial difference one way or the other to the Allied cause. In particular Jewish sympathy would confirm the support of American Jewry, and would make it more difficult for Germany to reduce her military commitments and improve her economic position on the eastern front.… The Zionist leaders gave us a definite promise that, if the Allies committed themselves to giving facilities for the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine, they would do their best to rally Jewish sentiment and support throughout the world to the Allied cause. They kept their word."[20] As an indicator of the powerful influence of American Jews in supporting the Zionist cause even at this early juncture, the United States Congress adopted a joint resolution in 1922 essentially echoing the text of the Balfour Declaration.

Implosion of the Old Order

It has been widely observed that the final apparition of Our Lady of Fatima in 1917 (and the Miracle of the Sun) took place less than a month before the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which began on November 7, 1917. Less noticed is that the Balfour Declaration was publicly announced two days later, on November 9. Thus, within two days were revealed two related earth-shaking events, made possible by the demise of the Romanov and Ottoman dynasties: first, the spark of violent, godless revolution in Russia; second, a Great Power "green light"

for what would soon prove to be a similarly aggressive, ruthless ideology in the Middle East. The most prominent leaders in both the Bolshevik and Zionist camps were atheistic Jews.

The collapse of the Czar's regime meant the disappearance of the champion of Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East. Russia would no longer protect the Holy Places or safeguard the flow of Orthodox pilgrims to the Holy Land. With the vanquishing and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire which began a year later, all the inhabitants of Palestine — Muslims, Christians, and Jews — lost their legitimate source of civil governance. Into this power vacuum willingly stepped both the Zionists and the British government, albeit for vastly different reasons. What was required next was some international stamp of legitimacy on England's craving for more colonial territory.

The Versailles Conference

The Versailles Conference of 1919, in which the victorious allied powers of World War I presumptuously redrew international boundaries across Europe and the Middle East, was in many respects a diplomatic circus of duplicity and ignorance. Palestine was Exhibit A in this regard, and the duplicity was twofold. First, the British and French devised the legal subterfuge of "mandates" to allow themselves to carve up the traditional Middle East. As British forces under General Allenby had already taken Jerusalem in 1917, the English "claim" to historic Palestine was uncontested except by the people who lived there — the Arabs.[21]

Secondly, the British reneged on a prior written commitment to Arab independence made in the so-called Hussein-McMahon correspondence of 1916. Having thus successfully enticed the Arabs to revolt against the Ottomans, Britain recanted on this promise at Versailles. The British in their desperation for victory had made too many promises. The Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement, in which Britain and France had secretly agreed to divide the post-war Middle East, had trumped Hussein-McMahon. The Arabs found themselves the odd man out, behind both the French and the Zionists. The Arabs, who in 1919 represented 87% of the population of Palestine, also learned to their dismay that the application of Woodrow Wilson's dictum about popular self-determination would be highly selective.[22] This was also the first of many instances over the next century in which the Arabs would experience American hypocrisy.

As for the ignorance at Versailles, we note the stance of David Lloyd George, the strongly pro-Zionist British prime minister. As David Fromkin describes in *A Peace to End All Peace*, "Lloyd George, who kept demanding that Britain should rule Palestine from (in the Biblical phrase) Dan to Beersheba, did not know where Dan was. He searched for it in a nineteenth-century Biblical atlas, but it was not until nearly a year after the armistice that General

Allenby was able to report to him that Dan had been located and, as it was not where the Prime Minister wanted it to be, Britain asked for a boundary further north."[23]

From Arrogance to Folly

The Balfour Declaration is certainly one of the most bizarre — and arrogant — expressions of government policy in the modern era. As Jewish historian Arthur Kessler observed, "one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third." Moreover, the second "nation" was no more than an amorphous group of Jews with no diplomatic legitimacy and the country to be promised (Palestine) was still part of the empire of a fourth (Ottoman Turkey).[24] After the war, questions quickly arose about how Britain proposed to fulfill the promise of a "homeland" in light of the still overwhelming percentage of Palestinians on the land. Balfour, still the Foreign Secretary in 1919, breezily dismissed any concerns about the rights of the native-born Palestinians, to whom Britain was ostensibly providing "guardianship" under the new League of Nations mandate: "In Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country…the Four Powers [Britain, France, Italy, and the U.S.] are committed to Zionism, and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land…."[25] Arthur Balfour lived until 1930, long enough to see the folly of his 1917 declaration. The year before he died, British

authorities in Jerusalem had to cope with a week-long riot which resulted in over 300 deaths and over 500 injuries to Arabs and Jews. The official British investigation concluded that the fundamental cause was "the Arab feeling of animosity and hostility towards the Jews consequent upon the disappointment of their political and national aspirations and fear for their economic future." It also attributed the cause to Arab fears of Jewish immigrants "not only as a menace to their livelihood but as a possible overlord of the future." The Arab concerns would prove well-founded on both points.

Summary and Segue to Part Three

The combination of Anglican empathy for the Jews and Britain's desperation for victory in World War I created the circumstances which eventually resulted in the state of Israel in 1948. Had either of these factors been missing, it seems highly unlikely that the state of Israel would exist today. Two major issues were routinely ignored, dismissed, or concealed by both the British and the Zionists during the critical years we have examined. First, they ignored the legitimate interests — and even the presence — of the Palestinians who had lived on the land of Palestine for centuries. Secondly, consistent and vague references to a "homeland" for the Jews, in the Zionist Congresses and in the Balfour Declaration, begged the obvious question — whether or not that "homeland" would be constituted as a Jewish nation-state, complete with civil and military powers *and control of the land*.

In Part Three, next month, we will see the deplorable results of Zionist ideology in action, from the years of the British mandate to the present. In particular, we will examine the ultimate geographical tragedy, the Gaza Strip. We will discover that the Zionist obsession with the land and disdain for its occupants has been a major key to the disaster that has befallen the Middle East, threatens Arabs and Jews alike, and possibly the entire world.

Read the final installment of this three-part series here. Part I is available here.

Want more great Catholic content? SUBSCRIBE to *Catholic Family News* and help support our work! DONATIONS are also accepted and greatly appreciated. God bless you and thanks for reading!

---

[1] For a comprehensive summary of the spiritual significance of the land in both the Old and New Testaments, see Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), previously cited in Part One.

[2] Biblical citations are from the *Good News Bible, Catholic Study Edition* (New York:

Sadlier, 1979).

[3] In an intriguing sidebar, the name "Bethlehem" means "house of bread" in Hebrew and "house of meat or flesh" in modern Arabic. We should consider with awe how God, in His omniscience (and sense of irony), arranged for the Incarnation of His Son, the "Word made flesh" and "Bread of life" (John 1:14, 6:35), to occur in this town.

[4] The area is variously recorded as Gadara (Matt. 8:28) or Gerasa (Mark 5:1 and Luke 8:26). Matthew indicates two possessed men, Mark and Luke only one.

[5] Citations are from Mark 12:1-12; see also Matt. 21:33-46 and Luke 20:9-19.

[6] The term "Palestine" dates to the fifth century B.C. After repressing the final, short-lived Jewish revolt under Bar Kochba in A.D. 135, Roman authorities created a new province of "Syria Palæstina." For the next 1,800 years, "Palestine" carried a geographic, rather than political overtone, until the British opted to give the name to their mandate, beginning in 1920.

[7] Steven E. Landsburg, "Why Jews Don't Farm," *Slate*, June 13, 2003. Botticini and Eckstein's book is entitled *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492* (Princeton University Press).

[8] As cited in Part One by Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010).

[9] G.K. Chesterton, *The New Jerusalem* (Fort Collins, Colorado: Roman Catholic Books, originally published in 1921), p. 287.

[10] Michael Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 189.

[11] Barbara Tuchman, *Bible and Sword* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956), p. 131.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 121.

[13] Tuchman, in *Bible and Sword*, calls Shaftesbury "the most influential nonpolitical figure, excepting Darwin, of the Victorian Age" (p. 176).

[14] *Ibid*., p. 177. The encounter in the Book of Acts (8:26-40) between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch should have been proof enough for Shaftesbury that Scripture does not interpret itself.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 184 and 207.

[18] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Siege* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 34.

[19] Herzl's account of his meeting with Pope St. Pius X is available here.

[20] Although the United States had declared war on Germany seven months prior to the Balfour Declaration, there was still uncertainty in Britain about the American commitment. See O'Brien, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-126.

[21] Palestine itself was not explicitly included in the 1915 written promises of Sir Henry McMahon to Sharif Hussein of Mecca concerning the proposed area of Arab independence. The Zionists and the British later claimed that McMahon had made an implicit exception for Palestine, by resorting to geographical references. However, Arnold Toynbee, then of the British Foreign Office, maintained that McMahon's intent was to earmark Palestine as part of an independent Arab state. Israeli historian Benny Morris also agrees with the Arab interpretation, i.e., that McMahon had no objection to Palestinian independence (Morris, *Righteous Victims* [New York: Random House, 1999], pp. 69-70). Regardless of McMahon's actual intent, the sum of British actions at the Versailles Conference and afterwards indicates that they had no intention of granting independence to the people of Palestine. This was consistent with the British goal of bolstering control of the Suez Canal. Perversely, England and France insisted on guardianship (through the mandate system) of the most advanced Arab peoples of the day — Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinians — while ignoring the more backward peoples of Arabia and Yemen.

[23] David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (New York: Avon Books, 1989), p. 400.

[24] See here for a detailed explanation.

[25] Doreen Igrams, *Palestine Papers, 1917-22, Seeds of Conflict*, John Murray, London, 1972, p. 73, as cited in Donald E. Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise* (London: Melisende, 2003), p. 102.

