



PEACE
in
JERUSALEM

But the battle is not over yet!

CHARLES GARDNER

Here is a Middle East peace process that does not involve politicians or bureaucrats!

At its heart are believers in the One who died in Jerusalem to reconcile man to God—and each other. Charles Gardner has seen the evidence of this with his own eyes as he witnessed Arab and Jew embracing one another with arms of love, not hate. This book digs beneath the propaganda put out by a largely liberal media and tells the truth about what's really happening as the Jewish people face yet another threat of extinction by their sworn enemies.

With an insightful story-telling ability, Charles Gardner is a very experienced, highly intelligent journalist of long and high standing who cuts quickly to the core of often complex subject matter. He has the rare capacity to transform that complexity into a simple understanding that grips the heart and mind of the reader. Be prepared to have your knowledge expanded and your faith deepened, thereby gaining more wisdom.

OWEN HOSKIN, recently retired headteacher of the Anglican International School in Jerusalem, now back in his native New Zealand.

Charles Gardner is a writer who combines passion with integrity and has a strong commitment to revealing the truth about what is happening in the Middle East today. Over many years his journalism skills have been focused upon Israel and in Peace in Jerusalem he deals with personal relationships between Jews and Arabs as well as social and political issues in the context of the ever-present threats to world peace through the activities of some of Israel's neighbors. This is a good read and I warmly commend it.

DR CLIFFORD HILL, Editor-In-Chief, *Prophecy Today UK*
Congregational minister, sociologist, international speaker and author.



CHARLES GARDNER, 65, is a Cape Town-born British journalist working on plans to launch a new UK national newspaper reporting and interpreting the news from a Biblical perspective. With his South African forebears having had close links with the legendary devotional writer Andrew Murray, Charles is similarly determined to make an impact for Christ with his pen and has worked in the newspaper industry for more than 40 years. Part-Jewish, he is married to Linda, 57, who takes the Christian message around many schools in the Yorkshire town of Doncaster. Charles has four children and eight grandchildren.



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Messianic & Christian Publisher



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Dedicated to my beautiful wife, Linda, out of gratitude for her constant love and support.

And with grateful acknowledgements to the many people who have influenced and inspired me over the years.

Other Books by the Author

Israel the Chosen: Why the Jews are So Special

Tongues of Fire: The Phenomenon that Set the World Aflame

Doctor on the Run: The Memoirs and Prescriptions of Dr David Gardner

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	6
Chapter 1 – Dividing Wall of Hostility Destroyed.....	15
Chapter 2 – A Foretaste of Heaven!.....	20
Chapter 3 – An Amazing Ministry.....	25
Chapter 4 – Getting Acquainted.....	32
Meeting the CMJ Board Members.....	32
Spiritual Attack.....	37
Holocaust Wake-Up Call.....	35
Out into the Wilderness.....	37
Other Extraordinary Connections.....	40
Going to School.....	44
Bookstore and Garden Tomb.....	45
The Benefits of Sabbath Rest.....	48
Chapter 5 – Arab and Jew Embrace.....	52
Arriving in Israel for the Event.....	54
Israel Fills the World with Fruit.....	59
Peace in Our Time – in Jerusalem!.....	61
Chapter 6 – Crisis at the Customs.....	65
UK-based Iranians Deported from Israel.....	69
Making More New Friends.....	70
Chapter 7 – The Real Middle East Peace Process.....	75
Israel and Iran Pray for Each Other.....	77
Iran’s Gospel Revolution.....	79
Jesus Reconciles Muslim Couple.....	80
Jesus Answers Call for Help from Muslim.....	82
Chapter 8 – Muslim finds Jesus in Mecca!.....	87
Chapter 9 – From Baghdad to Jerusalem.....	90
A Highway to Welcome Jesus Back!.....	96
News Spreading.....	98
Chapter 10 – Palestinian’s Recipe for Peace.....	101
Sons of Abraham Reconciled.....	105
Chapter 11 – Open Mike in Jerusalem.....	111
Airport Staff on Strike!.....	115

Chapter 12 – Israel Accused of Apartheid.....	120
Arab Shepherd Boy Becomes Israeli Diplomat.....	125
No Safe Haven for Palestinian Christian.....	127
Chapter 13 – Boycott Israel Protest Flawed.....	130
Co-op Pays Dearly for Israeli Boycott.....	132
Chapter 14 – Tough-Talking Truth About Israel.....	136
Bethlehem Bans Baby’s Birth!.....	140
Palestinian Propaganda Funded by British Taxpayer.....	145
Battle Over Truth Intensifies.....	148
Chapter 15 – Church Betrays Israel.....	151
“Church Must Repent Over the Sin of Anti-Semitism”	156
Key to Revival: Blessing the Jews!.....	160
Chapter 16 – Egypt’s Bitter Harvest.....	168
Christians Made Scapegoats.....	169
Fools Rush in Where Angels Fear to Tread.....	174
Chapter 17 – “Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing”	176
History Repeats Itself.....	178
Chapter 18 – God’s Political Storms.....	182
Britain Cursed by Pagan Rites.....	187
Apocalypse Shakes an Empire.....	189
Menachem Begin Builds a Bridge with Christians.....	192
Mrs. Thatcher Saves Jewish Girl from Holocaust.....	195
Chapter 19 – Jesus—and the Holocaust.....	198
Brave Scot Sews in Tears.....	202
A Suitcase Tells Ten Thousand Stories.....	205
Chapter 20 – Signs of the Second Coming!.....	209
Blood Moon Could Mean War On Earth.....	211
The Great Tribulation.....	214
Secularists Succumb To Islamic Barbarism.....	217
Jesus Still Heals in Israel.....	221
“Messiah Appears to Famous Rabbi”.....	223
Chapter 21 – The Passover Lamb.....	225
Christianity Cannot Exist Without Judaism.....	228
Bibliography.....	232

1

Dividing Wall of Hostility Destroyed

As politicians preside over the abject failure of another attempt to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and as much of the Middle East is engulfed in flames ignited by Islamic fanatics, what hope is there for peace?

Well, I have witnessed at close hand the answer to the crisis. I have seen with my own eyes Arab and Jew embracing one another in Jerusalem, that beautiful city God calls His own!

In a 40-year career in journalism which has encompassed political struggles in other parts of the globe, and which has also included coverage of some of the world's greatest sporting events, nothing compares with the thrill of what I have recently experienced on Mount Zion.

I love the way Mark Twain introduces his classic *Huckleberry Finn*: “You don’t know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.” In the same way, you will have learned something about me through a book called *Israel the Chosen*. But in case you haven’t, and at the risk of repeating myself, I will re-introduce myself somewhat so that what follows is set more comfortably in context.

My first book on the subject, *Israel the Chosen*, was published shortly after I took early retirement from South Yorkshire Newspapers at the end of 2012, and was the result of hearing the distinct “voice” of God speaking to me thus: “I want you to be a helper of Israel.” However, the book was only the beginning. It was as if all those forty years had been a sort of “wilderness” preparing me for my real calling which would only be fulfilled following retirement!

Yes, I have found that He has indeed called me to the Kingdom “for such a time as this,” as Queen Esther had been millennia ago when God used her to save her people from destruction.

I found myself in a parish church not far from where I live, in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, listening to representatives of an organization with which I was familiar: the *Church’s Ministry Among Jewish People* (CMJ). I learned about an inaugural conference called *At the Crossroads* which had been held at their Jerusalem headquarters at Christ Church the previous year, in 2012, in which Arab Christian pastors and Jewish followers of Jesus (known as Messianic Jews) had met together to seek ways they could further support and encourage one another. The Arabs among them had travelled from all over the Middle East at great risk to their lives (from a Muslim world fiercely opposed both to Judaism and Christianity) and had embraced their Jewish brethren. This wasn’t an attempt at reconciliation; they were already reconciled, I was assured.

I had felt my heart “strangely warmed,” as it were, on hearing about what had happened at that conference (and seeing something of it on a DVD), rather as John Wesley had described his conversion, and indeed it represented a

turning point—a new direction—in my Christian life that now exceeded 40 years. The desire to see reconciliation at work was something that had long been close to my heart: between English and Afrikaner, between black and white in South Africa where I grew up, between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland where my wife, Linda, had worked and prayed to that end for several years, and even between church people who often fell out with each other. I have seen the Holy Spirit moving powerfully in this way, especially during meetings in Sunderland in the North-East of England during the 1990’s, much criticized at the time because of strange manifestations, but where men of God once at loggerheads with each other were seen to embrace in repentance and mutual forgiveness. Now, I was hearing about Arab and Jew being reconciled, and I wanted to see that—and report on it—more than any other phenomenon. This was surely the greatest untold story of all, and I wanted to play my part in telling the world that the Prince of Peace has the answer to all the problems of the Middle East—and indeed of the world itself.

So when I heard that CMJ was soon holding its national UK conference in Swanwick, Derbyshire, I was keen to be part of it, the cost being met by Linda as a 64th birthday present. Naturally I wanted her to join me, so I paid for her ticket! It was a steaming hot July day, almost exactly eight years since a devastating event struck my family (and the nation) in 2005 when my younger brother David was severely injured in the 7/7 bombings of the London transport system during the morning rush hour which left 52 dead and hundreds wounded. He lost his left leg and spleen, and was battered and bruised in many places. But he made an

incredibly brave recovery, thanks no doubt to prayers around the world as well as the skill of the doctors and nurses at St Mary's, Paddington. The Islamic fundamentalists failed to break his indomitable spirit as he cheerily continued his life at work as a management accountant for the Evening Standard, on the stage in amateur dramatics, as chief server at church, and even, occasionally, on the golf course or at wheelchair tennis. He and his wife Angela already had Matthew and then along came Alice Mary Jane, her last given name in honor of one of the paramedics who saved David's life.

Dates and anniversaries always mean a lot to me. So I suppose it was appropriate that this anniversary date marked the beginning of the work I was about to undertake that could help in healing the rifts, divisions, and misunderstandings that had allowed the thought of such atrocities to poison the minds of many, bringing yet further misery to our hurting and sinful world.

Shortly before Swanwick, Martin Hall, a friend from my home town of Doncaster who was already a committed supporter of Israel-oriented mission, came round for a chat. He said that he and his wife, Margaret, had been praying about future support, and felt led to offer me the opportunity of visiting Israel, possibly as part of a tour or conference, to help me learn more about what was obviously becoming a new and important ministry for me. They were prepared to pay for my flight, which they saw as an investment towards extending the Kingdom of God, especially among the Jewish people. My excitement and anticipation went up a notch as a result, and I couldn't wait for the next installment of what God had in store for me.

So when an appeal was made during the Swanwick conference for a volunteer coordinator to help prepare for the next *At the Crossroads* the following May, I once more felt that strange warmth pulsate through my spiritual antennae. They also wanted a new editor for their quarterly Prayer Focus to inform supporters of the prayer needs of their various workers around the world, and I suppose that was a "no-brainer" in view of my qualifications. But Linda couldn't at first understand why I had offered to help with the Jerusalem conference since it was about organizing rather than writing or editing.

My offer of taking over the editorship of the Prayer Focus was duly accepted, but it was three months before my offer to help with the *Crossroads* conference was accepted, by which time—by mutual consent through phone-link discussions with some of the leaders in Israel—my job description had been significantly tweaked to fit my skills and calling to their needs. My focus was to be generally on communications, while also helping to write fundraising appeals. Then during and after the event, I was to give journalistic coverage of it with the intention of raising the profile of what God was doing in the region at a time when the media focused almost exclusively on conflict.

Now my heart was racing. I was certainly up for this! What a privilege and what a challenge!

2

A Foretaste of Heaven!

When I was taken on as the Prayer Focus editor, it was emphasized that a visit to Israel would greatly help my understanding of the role. Thanks to the generous offer of my friends, Martin and Margaret Hall, this was now clearly on the cards. In the ensuing three months, by the time my conference coordinator offer had morphed into conference correspondent, an Israel visit became urgent.

CMJ Israel director Don Stanley, a lovely Australian, wanted me to come out more or less straight away—to meet staff, get a feel of the land, see the sights, and talk through my role with conference organizers—before returning in the spring for the event itself. In 64 years I had never been to Israel; now I was being asked to visit twice in six months! All the “buses” were coming at once. I was on the ceiling with excitement, mixed with a little panic at what it would all entail. It took me quite a while to come down to earth.

I was about to go, as someone quipped, “where it is all happening, where it all has happened, and where it all will happen.” My first-ever visit to Israel was a greater blessing than I could ever have imagined—even “a foretaste of heaven,” as one of the clergy said during the Sunday service at Christ Church in Jerusalem, the CMJ Israel headquarters which includes an extensive guest house, coffee shop,

bookshop, heritage center, and much more. Built in 1849 as the first Protestant church in the Middle East, it’s a beautifully tranquil oasis secure in its own compound (complete with gardens and courtyards) just inside the Old City walls of this ancient city referred to by the psalmist some 3,000 years ago as “the joy of the whole earth” (Psalm 48:2). And indeed it lives up to that with its glorious white stone reflecting the warm late autumn sunshine, its lofty position on Mount Zion and other familiar sites from the Bible and the magnificent colors of bougainvillea and other flora even at this late hour of the year set against rows of majestic palms.

The clergyman’s “heaven” comment was specifically referring to the multi-national congregation that morning when large groups from Uganda and Singapore joined worshippers from many other nations in a time of powerful praise. All who took part in leading the service, including the Archbishop of Uganda, were so articulate, eloquent, and passionate, and the beautiful Kenyan liturgy added something special. The stunning building, totally restored for the bi-centenary year of 2009, was packed to the rafters amidst a heavenly atmosphere and truly wonderful worship accompanied by trumpet, grand piano, and guitar.

My trip coincided with the Jewish festival of Hanukkah (celebrating God’s miraculous provision of light at yet another dark time in their history), so it was a joy to watch the lighting of the nine-branched menorah amidst a carnival atmosphere pervading the city. It was apparently the first time in 175 years that it coincided with Thanksgiving, which meant a lot to the many Americans whose company I enjoyed while there—and I did sample some pumpkin pie in Galilee!

As Jesus is “the Light of the world,”* the festival’s proximity to Christmas is entirely apt. Hanukkah is an eight-day festival marking God’s intervention during the reign of the ruthless Syrian-Greek emperor Antiochus Epiphanes who desecrated the Jewish Temple by sacrificing a pig there and blasphemously proclaimed himself God. Judah Maccabee led a brave and successful revolt against the tyrant in 139 BC and re-established temple worship (Hanukkah means “dedication”) with the aid of the menorah which burned miraculously for eight days despite having only enough oil for a day. The Greeks had polluted the rest.

I loved going for walks through the ancient, winding alleys of the Old City, trying not to linger too long through the shuqs (market routes) as most salesmen are very persistent, and won’t take “no” for an answer, but it was all so fascinating. As I traipsed along the Via Dolorosa along which, according to tradition, Jesus carried his cross to Golgotha, it was awesome to think my Lord had tramped these paths for me—and you! I was particularly intrigued by the tiny doors to many of the apartments off these ornate stone streets, and only learned much later that they are known as the “eye of the needle,” a phrase used by Jesus to explain that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. However, nothing is impossible with God.

But I hadn’t come only as a tourist. I also had my work cut out in terms of meeting up with key staff at their various centers across the country and, in some cases, getting my “marching orders” for ongoing work connected with the conference in Jerusalem the following May. The work/life

balance proved a tricky juggling act, made more challenging by the fact that I was having to get used to mobile phones (not one, but two) for the first time in my life, having studiously avoided them until now in a bid to protect my space and sanity.

When Linda, my wife, realized I was going to Israel she insisted that one investment of paramount importance would have to be a mobile—chiefly so we could keep in touch via texting. I am now in possession of a Smartphone, which can “sing and dance” though I have yet to discover all its many talents; just happy to have been in touch with my beloved through simple messages. My new boss, Don Stanley, also loaned me a spare mobile for making local calls and arranging meetings, and on duly discovering my technological ineptitude, teasingly branded me as “low-tech,” though hopefully useful in other ways.

Martin and Margaret Hall turned out to be my guides as well as sponsors. Veteran visitors to Israel, they had also booked a flight for themselves for a trip without an itinerary. They knew they should go, but had no specific reason for doing so—until they discovered CMJ had asked if I could come out at the same time! It’s wonderful how God prepares the way. They were renting an apartment on the Hebron Road from a Messianic Jewish speaker they supported. They showed me around many of the amazing sights, though I am also indebted to two other experts in this field for their inspiring guidance: Ariel Keren-Or, a Jewish Brazilian international speaker, and Netanel, a Jewish New Zealander.

Despite hardly a wink of sleep on the flight, I continued sampling the sights, sounds, and smells of Jerusalem. Wide-eyed, I beheld the magnificent vistas before me: looking over

* John 8:12

a deep valley towards the Mount of Olives, standing on the very stones where Jesus stood trial (all excavated in recent years), and being shown around the apparently genuine location of the Upper Room, still to be formally announced by the Israeli Department of Antiquities. I touched the Western Wall (the remains of the Temple destroyed by the Romans which makes it particularly holy to Jews), tasted delicious meals at Arab and Jewish-run restaurants and bars (as well as in the Christ Church center itself), and made some deep friendships.

Getting to know the people I would be working with and their organization was, of course, the highlight of my trip. However, before I introduce all of the new (and old) friends I made, let me tell you about the extraordinary organization to which I now belonged.

3

An Amazing Ministry

Working behind the scenes in putting together the *At the Crossroads* conference is a 200-year-old Anglican organization known as the *Church's Ministry Among Jewish People* (CMJ) whose influence and accomplishments are very impressive, as I learned from Robin Aldridge, former CMJ-UK director, during an in-depth interview back in 2009.

There have been times in the past when mission organizations influenced the ruling authorities of nations. David Livingstone, for example, became an adviser to the British Government and has since been remembered possibly more as an explorer than a missionary, which is unfair because his primary aim in Africa was always to preach Christ. In today's Britain, few are aware of the part played by CMJ in one of the most significant political changes of the modern world.

Conceived in 1809, CMJ is a Church of England society, whose founding fathers included such luminaries as William Wilberforce and the Earl of Shaftesbury. The organization has steadfastly worked among Jewish communities around the world, and has been instrumental in fulfilling many ancient Biblical prophecies. Chief among these is the restoration of Jews to the Holy Land from all corners of the globe, a phenomenon foretold by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others.

Such a scenario, the prophets indicated, would be regarded as a greater miracle even than the crossing of the Red Sea in their escape from slavery in Egypt as God's chosen people would return to their roots from the north, south, east, and west. After nearly 2,000 years of dispersal in countries far and wide, Israel would be reborn and once more take its place among the nations.

It was politicians (and preachers) like Wilberforce, responsible for the abolition of slavery in the UK, whose far-sighted understanding of the Scriptures helped to found CMJ. The French Revolution left the British aristocracy nervous (in view of royalty axed at the guillotine), while the middle classes generally recognized that the dark days in which they were living matched some of the signs Jesus said would precede His coming again. But they also understood that the Master would not return before His people, the Jews, were a) back in the land and b) worshipping Him as Messiah.

Jeremiah, for example, speaks both of their return to the land and to the Lord, "See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth" shortly followed by "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people'" (31:8, 33).

So, in view of the fact that many Jews had already taken refuge on their own doorstep in the East End of London, fleeing persecution in Europe, the CMJ founders decided to make a start on reaching them with the message of Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah.

It's not as though Jews had never been part of the Church, of course, as the first-century "Christians" were almost entirely Jewish. But tragically, as Gentiles came to predominate, they cut themselves off from their Hebraic roots and some even came to believe they had replaced Israel in God's affections, a diabolical "theology" which in turn planted the seeds of the Holocaust as anti-Semitism spread like gangrene. But thanks to the Puritans and subsequent evangelical revivals under Wesley and others, a Biblical understanding of God's plan for the Jews was recovered.

The so-called Messianic Jewish movement itself has just marked its bicentenary, having effectively begun in London's East End with the formation of Benei Abraham (Children of Abraham), on September 9, 1813, as a result of the work of CMJ. Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah encountered difficulties that Gentiles did not, such as rejection by their families and community, and even loss of employment. So this was a forum enabling them to relate to each other in a Jewish cultural setting. And an initial "trickle" of 41 members has since turned into a torrent encompassing hundreds of thousands that, in fulfillment of the Scriptures, will eventually become a mighty river.

The level of interest in the work of CMJ—of taking the message of Jesus "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16)—was such that earlier that year (on April 7, 1813), 20,000 people watched the laying of the foundation stone by the Duke of Kent (father of Queen Victoria) for a large complex in Bethnal Green known as Palestine Place, which was to comprise a chapel (where Benei Abraham held their meetings), a school, housing, and more.

CMJ established centers all over Europe and the Mediterranean, and in the 1840s built a church in Jerusalem—the only Protestant church in what was then the Ottoman Empire—which doubled as a consulate for the British Government. It was on the basis of the consul needing a “chapel” that permission was eventually granted to build Christ Church, which is still an important focus for the society’s activities.

Through influence in high places, which had marked its progress from the beginning, CMJ came into its own when, almost a century ago, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 spelled out the British government’s promise to provide a home in “Palestine”—still then under Turkish control—for the Jewish people. Within weeks General Allenby’s forces liberated Jerusalem, and the way was open to fulfill the promised declaration.

More than partly mindful of Arab opposition to these plans, however, Britain wavered on their obligations and forcefully prevented Jews returning to the Holy Land. It wasn’t until 1948, after another war and the murder of millions of God’s chosen people—many of whom could otherwise have escaped to safety—that finally even the United Nations recognized the new state.

Meanwhile, as CMJ focused on reaching Jewish communities all over Europe and North Africa with the Gospel, specifically through establishing schools, significant progress was made. It is estimated that by the time of the outbreak of World War II in 1939, there were as many as 100,000 Jews who believed Jesus was their Messiah.

The excellence of their education is well demonstrated by the fact that one man living in Morocco sent his child to the CMJ School in Cairo, a thousand miles away!

There were large Jewish communities in Europe—some 500,000 in Warsaw alone, most of whom were wiped out by the Nazis, and about a million in Hungary. But they had also settled in Cairo, Tunisia, Ethiopia, and Morocco. For example, in 1939, Jews represented a quarter of the population of Casablanca, making it the “New York” of North Africa. Growing Islamization, however, caused many to emigrate to Israel, where the believers among them helped to form the embryo of the Messianic movement there, while many of the European believers were victims of the Holocaust.

Among CMJ’s key areas of operation were the Falasha Jews of Ethiopia, many of whom came to recognize Jesus as Messiah and later took part in Operation Moses—the secret airlifting to the Promised Land. This too helped to boost the then fledgling Messianic movement which has now become a significant worldwide phenomenon with thriving fellowships (many a mix of Jew and Arab) scattered all over Israel.

Among those who have facilitated the work of CMJ over the years was Russian aristocrat Baron von Ustinov (grandfather of British actor Peter Ustinov) along with various kings and kaisers. In fact, Germany was particularly helpful over the years, all the more ironic in view of the Jews’ fate at the hands of the Nazis.

In Rumania, a young Jew called Richard Wurmbbrand turned from communism to Christ through the efforts of CMJ and became their foremost evangelist who subsequently suffered extensively, spending many years in prison being tortured for his beliefs.

Speaking at Auschwitz in 2010 at the 65th anniversary of its liberation, Binyamin Netanyahu said he saw the modern Jewish state emerging from the Holocaust as a fulfillment of

Ezekiel's prophecy of dry bones coming back to life.¹ Nearly a century earlier, CMJ made exactly the same comparison in a May 1918 publication that followed the collapse of the Turkish Empire.² And at CMJ's Annual General Meeting the following year, the Bishop of Armagh said, "No reader of prophecy, I think, can fail to see that God is working out in our time the fulfillment of the latter-day promises regarding the Jew ... I believe that ... we are preparing for the great future that God has for the Jews..."³

And when Britain was then officially offered the mandate over Palestine, it was fully endorsed by CMJ who said:

"As citizens of the Empire we are ... thankful beyond measure that, in the Providence of God, our nation has been chosen for preparing the Holy Land for the great future that lies before it.... We regard the incorporation of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in the Peace Treaty with Turkey ... as one of the most wonderful instances on record of the working out of God's promises to the nation he loves with an everlasting love.

"Why is it that the Christian public today is so deeply interested [sadly, hardly the case in 2014] in the coming return of the Jews to the Holy Land? Because students of Holy Writ know... that a time is coming when 'all Israel shall be saved,' and when the Jews will rejoice in their Messiah, and that previous to the turning of the nation to Christ must first come the re-establishment of the Chosen Race in their own land....

"It is our duty as a society to send missionaries in and out amongst the Jews, bringing the remnant according to grace into the fellowship of the Gospel, and preparing the nation as a whole for that great day when the Jews shall 'look on him whom they pierced' and acknowledge him as their Messiah" (Zechariah 12:10).⁴

CMJ endured much opposition over the years, especially from Jewish rabbis. In one extraordinary episode in the 1860s a group of missionaries in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) had to be freed from four years of captivity by the British Army after the Emperor was apparently snubbed by Queen Victoria over a request to send an ambassador to England. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury had called Britain to prayer for the release of the prisoners.

One of those imprisoned in the cliff-top fortress, known as Magdala, was a man named Moritz Hall, whose Ethiopian wife gave birth to a daughter on the day Magdala was stormed by General Napier's troops. The baby was named Magdalena, and was destined to be the future wife of Baron von Ustinov (who subsequently settled in Jaffa, Israel, where he facilitated CMJ work) and grandmother of Peter Ustinov, the famous British actor. In fact, the Baron's palatial property is now a CMJ center and guest home known as Beit Immanuel.

There will be more battles to come, no doubt, but CMJ will have fulfilled its task when the Jews, already now back in their ancient homeland, take a big step further by demonstrating national recognition for their Messiah.

1 Netanyahu Auschwitz Speech Parts 1 and 2, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAuZA17genk>

2 Kelvin Crombie, *Restoring Israel: 200 Years of the CMJ Story*, 2008, p. 133.

3 Crombie, *ibid*, p. 134.

4 Crombie, *ibid*, p. 134.

Note: Read more CMJ history at their various country websites. See bibliography for the web addresses.

Abraham can together help build a “highway” of blessing in the region.¹

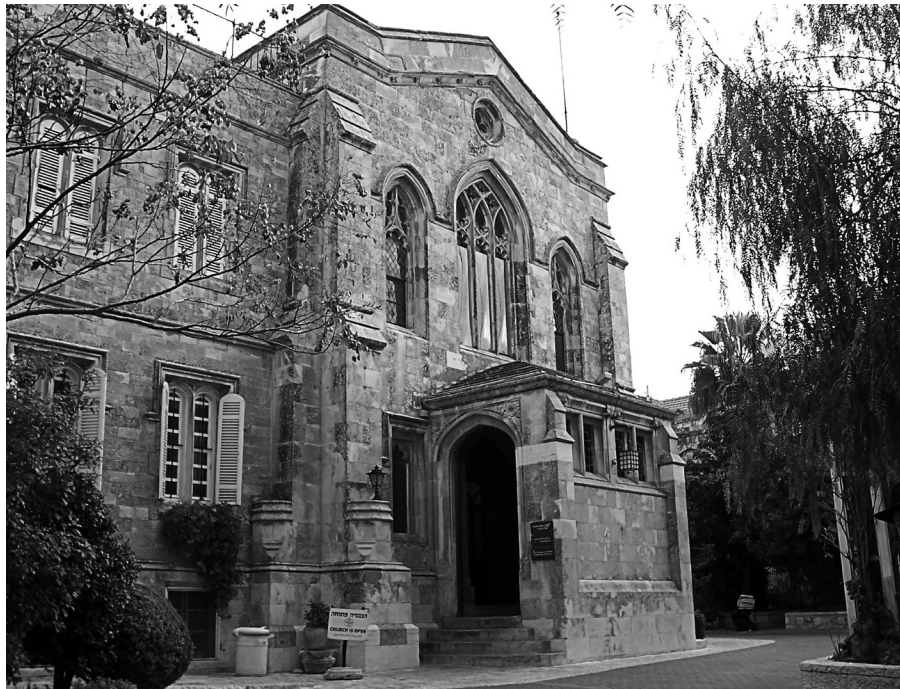
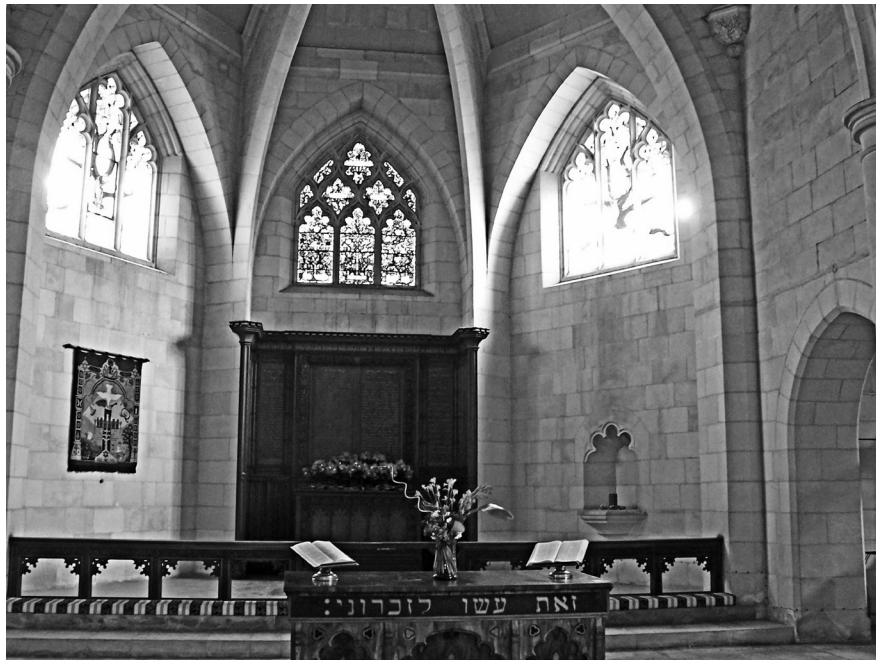
After finishing the article, I joined other volunteers for a “chill-out” time, which is a monthly treat in which Don organizes a film showing with drinks and snacks provided. They also sing to anyone who has had a birthday that month and say goodbye (with gifts) to those who are leaving. But before the main feature, he showed some very funny clips from the *Two Ronnies* (a classic British comedy duo to which I have already referred) as a warm-up. The film itself, *One Chance*, was fabulous and is the true story of how opera star, Paul Potts, finally made it big despite the crushing blow of drying up in front of Pavarotti during a “master class” at the school he was attending in Italy.

6

Crisis at the Customs

I woke up next morning (a Saturday, three days before the event) to the very disturbing news that nine of the Iranians who were coming to the conference from Britain had been sent back. I had met some of them at the one-day conference in Nottingham a couple of months earlier, and there seemed no doubt about the genuineness of their faith. What’s more, they all had British passports. Don, my host and boss, initially informed me of the news over breakfast, saying they had turned up the previous night and had been immediately deported. Of course, this put a whole new slant on things, though the details were not as we had first heard. It turned out that five Iranians were being held at Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion Airport where they were being interrogated with a view to deportation. They ended up being held there for 48 hours before being sent on the next plane to London. However, one young lady was allowed through, for reasons we could never work out, and proved to be one of the stars of the conference. And her pastor, who was also to play an important part in the event, later followed her into the country and was waved through customs apparently unhindered. All of this presented me with a double dilemma: finding accurate information as to exactly what was happening, and knowing what to do with it.

¹ Published in *Israel Today*, *Encounter Gospel News*, and *Gateway News*, May 12 and 14, 2014. See the Bibliography..



Christ Church, Old City Jerusalem

7

The Real Middle East Peace Process

So it is that, amidst the turmoil of the Middle East with virtual civil wars erupting all around, a remarkable peace process was taking place in which Arabs, Jews, and Christians were embracing one another in the name of Jesus.*

As part of an ongoing spread of the Gospel in this volatile part of the world, *At the Crossroads* was held to inspire pastors and other leaders from the region who have discovered that Christ is the ultimate reconciler and that the “Prince of Peace” holds the key to a stable future in the area. The event was scheduled for May 13-16, Tuesday evening to Friday evening, with morning, afternoon, and evening meetings Wednesday to Friday. It was held in Christ Church, a beautiful 165-year-old building within the walls of Jerusalem’s Old City.

I have to confess that before the conference officially started (it was an evening session), I met up with my friend Keren Pryor (widow of well-known Hebraic roots teacher, Dwight) at the Dublin Bar, where a liter (not just a pint) of Guinness provided ample fuel for the journey ahead!

* In chapters 7, 8, and 9, unless otherwise stated, the sections consist of previously published articles written by the author about the *At the Crossroads* event, reworked and, in some cases, re-titled for this book. See the Bibliography.

I was so glad when the conference finally got underway that evening, and it was all I hoped it would be, and more! This was clearly something very special. The presence of God was tangible, and there was an expectancy among the hushed congregation of something truly awesome about to take place. And yet there was no big fanfare, glitz, or hype. Opening the conference, Christ Church rector David Pileggi said, “It was always the vision that this church should actually be a refuge for the people of Israel and a place where the nations find healing.”

David was calmness personified as he warmly welcomed all the delegates—or at least all who had managed to make it through customs. A big man with a mop of curly hair and a broad smile, he gives the impression of being completely unruffled despite the organizational rollercoaster ride from which he had just emerged. His quiet, yet firm, leadership certainly injected an added sense of peace to the whole event, and we were soon somewhat lost in the wonder of praise as the musicians struck up on piano, guitar, and keyboard. Their skills were undeniable, but it was especially moving to hear how our voices blended into a heavenly-sounding chorus, even though some were clearly unfamiliar with the language. We sang, alternatively, in English, Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi as the words were projected onto a screen. Those like me who were unfamiliar with most of the various languages did their best to follow the words at least phonetically.

Thus I was surrounded by men and women from many nations, most of whom could not speak my language. But we knew we were family worshipping a common Father, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We somehow understood each other: that we were brothers and sisters belonging

to Jesus—Yeshua in Hebrew and Yesu in Farsi! And so throughout many heart-thumping moments of sheer joy and exhilaration, I witnessed the breaking down of barriers which St. Paul describes as the effect of the cross of Christ, “His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Ephesians 2:15-16).

Israel and Iran Pray for Each Other

It was especially moving to witness a profound gesture of peace between Israel and Iran as the event gathered momentum.

The UK-based Iranian pastor who successfully made it through customs was among those present. But when a conference organizer reminded his audience that Iran had not always been a sworn enemy of Israel vowing to destroy them—in fact, they used to be allies—he took the opportunity to pray a blessing over that country, asking God to re-open the gates between them so they would once more be friends.

This pastor, Youhana Darvishi,* then returned the favor by praying a blessing over Israel.

Another conference spokesman said many had paid a high price for attending. Indeed, it was at risk to their lives in some cases as Christians are undergoing tremendous persecution in a number of Muslim-background countries.

The previous—and inaugural—*At the Crossroads* event in 2012 has already borne much fruit as those who attended began to help each other in various ways. One Israeli believer

* not his real name as requested for security reasons