CHAPTER 6

Shifting Missions: Languages, Texts, and Experiences between Jews and Roman Catholics in Israel (1940s–1970s)

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Introduction

The discussion over the meaning of the concept of "mission" has marked historical relations between Christians and Jews in Palestine since the nineteenth century. The interpretation of the "mission of the Church to the Jews" and the "mission of the Jews within the Church" dominated the theological and pastoral reflections of the Catholic Church in late Ottoman and then Mandate Palestine, and, after 1948, in the State of Israel. At the same time, in the traumatic wake of the Holocaust, Jewish Israeli public opinion elaborated a vision of the Christian churches in Israel as essentially missionary enterprises devoted to conversionist attempts toward the Jews, so that in the press and in political debates the word "Churches" was often replaced with the term "the Mission" (*ha-Misyon*).

Through different forms, during the same period the construction of a discourse on the Jew as the "other" took shape within the various Christian confessions and in Jewish Israeli public opinion from the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, redefining preaching and missionary activities. This process of construction was used by Israeli governments during the early years after the establishment of the new State as a partial and precarious unifying and federating element of the extremely diverse and fragmented Jewish Israeli society, with limited results, as we will see. This production of a narrative around the Christian world was also influenced by the history of Jewish-Catholic relationships outlined during the late Ottoman period, the foundation and growth of the Zionist movement, and the process of sectarianisation during the Mandate decades (1918–1948).[1] In parallell, for the Roman Cath-

1 This research has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 835758. I am deeply grateful to the editors of this volume and to Sarah Irving for their meticulous editorial work and for their insightful comments and remarks. On Christian-Jewish relations in the modern Middle East and Christian-Zionist connections in Palestine and later Israel, see Sasha

olic Church in Palestine—and, in many ways, also for non-Roman and non-Catholic Christian communities—the war for Palestine and the establishment of the Israeli State represented a turning point that redefined political, theological, pastoral and humanitarian actions and perceptions in the new geopolitical, social and religious context that emerged from these years, influencing also ordinary faith practices on and towards the Jews, and particularly teaching and preaching.

This discourse cannot be presented as a linear evolution: as scholarship has extensively reconstructed, the late Ottoman period was characterised by a substantial mixing and connectivity in Jerusalem and the whole of Palestine, which included Jewish-Christian relations.[2] Jewish children regularly attended Christian schools, considered by some sections of the population, especially among new immigrants, as better and cheaper than Jewish schools. At the same time, from the turn of the twentieth century, education became a field of anxiety and fears for the success of the Zionist educational project, and the Christian missionaries were the main target incriminated as responsible for its failure. British Mandate (1918–1948) policies, which assigned important significance to religious confessions and sectarianisation, accelerated this polarisation, developing new boundaries between communities also in the educational field.[3]

Goldstein-Sabbah and Heleen Murre-Van den Berg (eds.), *Modernity, Minority, and the Public Sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Uri Bialer, *Cross on the Star of David: The Christian World in Israel's Foreign Policy, 1948–1967*, trans. Haya Galai (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005); Paul C. Merkley, *Christian Attitudes Towards the State of Israel* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Silvio Ferrari, *Vaticano e Israele dal secondo conflitto mondiale alla guerra del Golfo* (Florence: Sansoni, 1991); Sergio Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism: Conflict in the Holy Land, 1895–1925*, trans. Arnold Schwarz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Meir Mendès, *Le Vatican et Israël* (Paris: Cerf, 1990); Andrej Kreutz, *Vatican Policy on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: The Struggle for the Holy Land* (New York: Greenwood, 1990); George E. Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East: The Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1962–1984* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

2 Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Erik Freas, *Muslim–Christian Relations in Late Ottoman Palestine: Where Nationalism and Religion Intersect* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

3 Liora Halperin, "The Battle over Jewish Students in the Christian: Missionary Schools of Mandate Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50, no. 5 (2014): 737–754. On the role assigned to confessional categories and the British Mandate policies over religious communities and especially Christians, see Karène Sanchez Summerer, "Missionnaires britanniques en Palestine, experts/ contre-experts du Mandat?," in *Experts et expertise dans les mandats de la Société des Nations: figures, champs et outils*, ed. Philippe Bourmaud, Norig Neveu, Chantal Verdeil (Paris: INALCO, 2020), 259–286; Noah Haiduc-Dale, *Arab Christians in British Mandate*

In the Roman Catholic Church, preaching has a crucial role in missionary practices. This intersects languages in the choice of terms, and in the learning and use of languages of the preacher(s) and the population toward which the proselytising activities are directed. Within the Roman Catholic Church in Jerusalem and Israel, the creation and renegotiation of terms passed through a new approach to the Hebrew language and through the creation of a lexicon in Hebrew for Catholic doctrine.

Preaching is also entangled with theological developments concerning the relationship with other cultures and religions. In the Israeli/Palestinian case, preaching activities reflected different and sometimes conflicting stances related to the theological vision of the Jewish people within the Catholic Church. Pastoral activities toward the Jews pursued by Roman Catholic missionary congregations, the Latin Patriarchate clergy and the Franciscan Custody institutions conceived preaching as a tool of proselytism aimed at conversion, although privileging the strategy of "example" and "testimony" through the secularised form of charity and educational work. This approach was revised by an association devoted to Jewish converts, founded within the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem—the Saint James community—that adopted the review of Catholic-Jewish relations promoted in post-Holocaust Europe by some Catholic circles and applied it in the new context created by the establishment of the Israeli state, elaborating forms of preaching that were not oriented to proselytism and conversion.

Through the interconnection of sources from ecclesiastical archives in Jerusalem, the Vatican, Rome—including the Pius XII archives on the period 1939–1958—and the United States, and the examination of articles from different political and religious expressions in the Israeli Jewish press—from the socialist Zionist vision expressed in *Haaretz*, to the ultra-Orthodox nationalist stances disseminated via *Herut*, *Ha-Tsofe* and *She'arim*—this chapter aims to explore the mutual construction of a discourse on the Other by some Roman Catholic and Jewish sectors in Israel—especially among public opinion and religious and civic authorities—during the first three decades after the establishment of the new state. The drafting of a Catholic catechism in Hebrew during the 1940s, the press campaign against the Catholic Church in the Hebrew press in Israel during the 1950s, and the renewal of the attitude toward the Jews promoted by the Association of Saint James are elements of the complex interaction between language, religion and the process of identity formation and

Palestine: Communalism and Nationalism, 1917–1948 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011).

nation building within the new state, and the effects of this relationship in the elaboration of new forms of preaching within the Roman Catholic Church, not without inner tensions.

This doesn't mean to obliterate or deny the role and the centrality of Palestinian Christians, that constituted the large majority of faithful and clergy, in a period marked by major and shattering events, the 1948 *nakba* and the 1967 *naksa* with their immense humanitarian and polical consequences. The study of numerically marginal—but culturally relevant and with transnational ties—experiences related to Jewish-Catholic relations provides a more complex appraisal of Christianity in Palestine/Israel, with significant consequence on the relationship with the Vatican, included the forms of preaching and missions among Palestinians.[4]

1 Teaching the Catholic Faith in Hebrew

Since the emergence of the political and religious centrality of Jerusalem and Palestine and the birth and growth of the Zionist movement in the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church has not pursued a conversionist-centred activity toward the Jews, if compared with Protestant Churches and congregations in Palestine.[5] This differentiation remains valid despite the foundation of

4 Although they are not at the core of this chapter, I devoted various contributions to these subjects, included the Palestinian refugees, the relations between the Israeli government and the Holy See, the question of Jerusalem and the Holy Places, as well as the dynamics across the various Christian communities in Palestine. See *A Liminal Church: Refugees, Conversions and the Latin Diocese of Jerusalem, 1946–1956* (Leiden, Brill, 2020); "Catholic Humanitarian Assistance for the Palestinian Refugees: The Franciscan Casa Nova of Jerusalem in the 1948 Storm," in *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in The Middle East, 1850–1970: Ideologies, Rhetoric, and Practices*, ed. Karène Sanchez Summerer and Inger Marie Okkenhaug (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 253–275; "1948 Between Politics and Cults: Liturgies and Calls for a Crusade During the War for Palestine," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà*, 32 (2019), 175–190.

5 *L'enseignement français en Méditerranée. Les missionnaires et l'Alliance Israélite universelle*, ed. Bocquet, Jérôme (Rennes: Presse Universitaire de Rennes, 2010); Charlotte van der Leest, *Conversion and Conflict in Palestine: The Missions of the Church Missionary Society and the Protestant Bishop Samuel Gobat* (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2008); Roland Löffler, *Protestanten in Palästina: Religionspolitik, Sozialer Protestantismus und Mission in den deutschen evangelischen und anglikanischen Institutionen des Heiligen Landes 1917–1939* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008); Sarah Kochav, "'Beginning at Jerusalem': The Mission to the Jews and English Evangelical Eschatology," in *Jerusalem in the Mind of the Western World, 1800–1948*, ed. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 91–109; Mayir Vereté, "The Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1790–1840," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 8, no. 1 (1972): 3–50.

congregations[6]—such as the Fathers and Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion, established by the Ratisbonne brothers Marie-Alphonse and Théodore—specifically addressing the apostolate to the Jewish people in the second half of the nineteenth century. This situation started to change slightly in the early twentieth century, with the foundation of the Association of Prayers for Israel, whose goal was to pray for the conversion of Jews.[7]

However, this apostolate was not codified along clear pastoral lines and was left to the initiative of single members of the clergy, especially European or American, who mostly did not speak or read Hebrew. In the extensively multilingual context of Jerusalem, where Christian congregations were generally active in educational activities to answer the need to teach European languages to local families, this lack of linguistic knowledge was not uniquely related to Hebrew, but also to Arabic, whose training and use was far from homogenous among congregations and clergies, and rather confined to some orders specialising in Semitic studies.[8]

The issue of language was crucial in this activity. Although there was a general scarcity of linguistic knowledge, some Catholic groups were already producing content and publishing in Hebrew. This includes the case of the Franciscan Printing Press, established in 1847, which quickly became one of the most active and multilingual publishing houses in Jerusalem.[9] From its

6 On this congregations in Palestine, especially for the topics of this chapter, see Karène Sanchez Summerer, "'Ouvrir les trésors de la charité aux enfants dévoyés d'Abraham': L'action éducative des sœurs de Sion en Palestine ottomane et mandataire (1860–1948)," in *L'enseignement français en Méditerranée: Les missionnaires et l'Alliance israélite universelle*, ed. Jérôme Bocquet (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 207–238.

7 On the history of this community, see Olivier Rota, "L'association de Prières pour Israël (1903–1966): une association révélatrice des orientations orthodoxes de l'Église face aux Juifs," *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, 13 (2003): 6–21. On other conversionist enterprises within the Roman Catholic Church in Jerusalem, see Paule Marx, "Les Ancelles à la recherche d'une modalité de présence chrétienne en milieu juif," *Sens*, 410 (2017): 5–52.

8 See Paolo Pieraccini, "Catholic Missionaries of the 'Holy Land' and the Nahda: The Case of the Salesian Society (1904–1920)," *Social Sciences and Missions*, 32, 3–4 (2019): 311–341; Annalaura Turiano, "Une mission catholique en mutation. Les salésiens dans l'Égypte nassérienne," *Social Sciences and Missions*, 32, 3–4 (2019): 393–419.

9 The history of the FPP, its management and editorial activities, as well as its linkage with civic and political milieux in the city and its multilanguage effort has been object of rediscovery and valorisation by Professor Edoardo Barbieri of the Catholic University of Milan and of research within the ERC Open Jerusalem project directed by Vincent Lemire, see Leyla Dakhli, "Between Local Power and Global Politics: Playing with Languages in the Franciscan Printing Press of Jerusalem," in *Arabic and its Alternatives: Religious Minorities and their Languages in the Emerging Nation States of the Middle East (1920–1950)*, eds. Heleen Murre-van den

foundation, the Franciscan *Stamperia* [Printing Press] published books and liturgical documents in Arabic, including an important catechism that spread across the Middle East through Franciscan convents and libraries. However, during its first century of activities, the FPP mainly published short texts in Hebrew, such as visiting cards and cards of invitations to marriages and *bar* and *bat mitzvot*.[10] This lack contrasted with the intense activities of Jewish publishers during the same decades, as well as the editorial efforts enacted with the foundation of newspapers as part of the vernacularisation of Hebrew in order to make Hebrew not only a liturgical language but also the everyday language in the Yishuv, deployed by the Zionist movement in its cultural and political enterprise.[11] On the Christian side, the minor investment in Hebrew by the Franciscan Printing Press also contrasted with the relentless action led by Protestants with bulletins and devotional texts translated in order to promote proselytism and increase conversions.

However, within this framework some exceptions started to appear within the Roman Catholic Church during the 1940s. At this time a French Carmelite Father, Jean-Marie Paul Bauchet, started to reflect on the need for a catechism for catechumens in Hebrew. At this time Bauchet was consolidating his Hebrew studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, established in 1918. He applied to the Latin Patriarch, Luigi Barlassina, to found an apostolate to the Jews. The Latin Patriarch, well known in Jerusalem for his troubled relations with British and Zionist authorities due to his opposition to Jewish emigration to Palestine and to the Mandate authorities' attempts to increase government rule over Christian institutions,[12] asked to the Carmelite Father to prepare a

Berg, Karène Sanchez Summerer and Tijmen Baarda (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 287–302; Marion Blocquet, "L'Imprimerie franciscaine de Jérusalem au service de la Terre sainte (1846–1969)" (MA dissertation, École nationales des chartes, 2019), and Margherita Camorani, *Il primo secolo della Tipografia Francescana Franciscan Printing Press dal 1846 al 1947* (MA dissertation, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, 2013).

10 Maria Chiara Rioli, "Introducing Jerusalem: Visiting Cards and Urban Identities at the Turn of the 20th Century," in *Ordinary Jerusalem, 1840–1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global City*, eds. Angelos Dalachanis and Vincent Lemire (Leiden: Brill), 29–49.

11 Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014); idem, "Modern Hebrew, Esperanto, and the Quest for a Universal Language," *Jewish Social Studies*, 19, 1 (2012): 1–33.

12 On the Catholic Church and the Zionism and notably on Barlassina's initiatives, see Paolo Zanini, "Vatican Diplomacy and Palestine, 1900–1950," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 71 (2017): 120–131; Paolo Pieraccini, "Il patriarcato latino di Gerusalemme (1918–1940). Ritratto di un patriarca scomodo. Mons. Luigi Barlassina," *Il Politico*, 6, 2 (1998): 207–256; *Il Politico*, 63, 4 (1998): 591–640.

presentation on Catholic doctrine.[13] Bauchet undertook this task, not simply translating the Arabic catechism issued by the Custody friars in 1847 but mixing the catechism of the Trier diocese with other sources, and finalising a book in modern Hebrew, entitled *Or va-Osher* (Light and Happiness), followed by other devotional books again published by the friars.[14] As noted by Augustin Arce, librarian of the Saint Saviour convent from the 1930s to the 1960s and an essential figure in Franciscan scholarship in the Holy Land, "the composition of these books in Hebrew was extremely difficult since it required the expression of ideas or concepts that didn't exist in any other previous books, or, if they existed, they didn't express exactly the same meaning".[15]

Drafted and crafted during the Holocaust but without explicit reference to it, *Or va-Osher* was issued by the Franciscan Printing Press in early January 1945 (fig. 6.1). Bauchet announced this publication to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome, where Cardinal Eugène Tisserant was attentively following Catholic-Jewish relations in the Middle East and notably in Palestine.[16] Bauchet sent two copies of the catechism to Rome, asking Tisserant to present the work to Pius XII. As specified by Bauchet, the book had to remain anonymous "in order not to harm my action".[17] The preparation of *Or va-Osher* was part of the pastoral activism undertaken by Bauchet. He lamented the inaction by

13 The Latin Patriarchate archive in Jerusalem (APLJ) contains traces of the correspondence between Barlassina and Bauchet and of the editorial phase. See APLJ, file "Bauchet." The ASCTS contain some traces of the correspondence between Bauchet and Arce on the use of specific terms in Hebrew.

14 According to the comments on *Or va-Osher* published by the Jewish Israeli politician and theologian Pinhas Lapide, "the spirit of Jewish mission is apparent on nearly every page" (*Hebrew in the Church: The Foundations of Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 101). For Lapide, in his choice and creation of terms, Bauchet "avoided neologisms as much as possible, deriving Christian expressions which were foreign to Hebrew from familiar Hebrew roots, and resorting to Hebrew transcriptions instead of translations only when the alternatives were obscure or ambiguous" (ibid., 102).

15 Historical Archives of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land (Archivio storico della Custodia francescana di Terra Santa, ASCTS), *Fondi personali dei religiosi*, *Augustin Arce*, "Lexicografia hebreo-cristiana", manuscript notes by Augustin Arce, undated but probably referring at 1940s–1950s.

16 Tisserant had studied biblical Hebrew at the École biblique et archéologique française in Jerusalem and was one of the few members of the Roman curia not dominated by anti-Jewish feelings. See Étienne Fouilloux, *Eugène, cardinal Tisserant (1884–1972): une biographie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2011), 421–454.

17 "In reality it is your servant who composed the work helped by the R.P. Jean de Jesus Hostie", Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches (Archivio della Congregazione per le Chiese orientali, ACO), *Latini*, *Palestina e Transgiordania: Patriarcato di Gerusalemme*, 855/49, 1, Bauchet to Tisserant, Jerusalem, January 28, 1945, doc. 1.

FIGURE 6.1 Cover of *Or va-Osher*, copy held at the New York Public Library

Catholic congregations and Patriarchal clergy, especially if compared to Protestant initiatives towards the "Jewish Christians", those Jews who converted to Christianity or the Christians with Jewish origins who moved to Israel. Writing to Tisserant, he expressed his fears that "if the Protestants continue, as they do, to assimilate modern Hebrew and to retain a monopoly on the Hebrew apostolate, the young Jewish generation in Palestine will know Christianity only through them and their publications."[18] The focus on young Jews as potential converts to Christianity was repeated in Bauchet's other letters. According to him, the only way to address this generation was to move pastoral attention from the sacraments to other tools, in particular forms of written preaching transmitted through the press, editorial initiatives and writings to dissemin-

18 ACO, ibid., Bauchet to Tisserant, Jerusalem, undated letter but to be placed in early 1945, doc. 2.

ate across Jewish audiences, and an editorial missionary strategy to be pursued through a precise choice: the adoption of Hebrew.

One of the fundamental tools for Bauchet was indeed language: for the Carmelite, learning, writing and preaching in Hebrew was one of the main keys of what the Roman Catholic Church depicted as "Protestant success" among the Jews. In Bauchet's mind, the problem of Catholic congregations not being able to read one single journal article or document in Hebrew and the lack of attention to the language could be stemmed by founding a centre for Hebrew studies, with classes to be taught in modern Hebrew, and the establishment of a pastoral centre for the apostolate toward the Jews on Mount Carmel near Haifa.

Tisserant was apparently attentive to the observations sent by Bauchet from Jerusalem. He wrote to Barlassina congratulating him on the "diocesan catechism" and asking to remain updated on the difficulties and obstacles encountered in its dissemination and application.[19] He also addressed the Superiors of the Congregation of Notre Dame de Sion in Rome and in Paris on the "nagging problem of the conversion of the Jews", recommending to these religious authorities the apostolate to the Jews through (in French) the "modern methods and tools" targeting young people "who would then become dedicated to convert people".[20]

The reply from Paris was not overly encouraging: while listing the concrete limits to pastoral care toward the Jews, Fr. Henri Colson described several "circumstances" preventing the little community of Notre Dame de Sion from developing an effective programme. Among them, in a report entitled "The apostolate to the Jews", Colson stressed what he called "Jewish pride", the "sentiment of the Jewish race", "the bitter memory of persecutions", "the horror of what they call proselytism"—reiterating the accusations of forced baptisms during the Second World War—and only in his last point "the hostility they unfortunately encounter among Christians".[21]

The chronology of this correspondence, situated in the final months of the Nazi extermination of the Jews, is crucial. It is difficult to evaluate how much at this precise stage the Holocaust entered into Bauchet's reflections: the understanding of the extermination of the Jews and the accusations of forced baptism during the Second World War probably influenced Bauchet and other

19 ACO, ibid., minute of the letter of the Congregation for the Oriental Church to Barlassina, Jerusalem, 7 April 1945.

20 ACO, ibid., minute of the letter of the Congregation for the Oriental Church to the Superiors of the Fathers of Sion in Rome and Paris, Rome, 7 April, 1945, doc. 4.

21 ACO, ibid., "L'apostolat auprès des Juifs", doc. 8.

Catholic representatives in Jerusalem only some months later, to be then reinterpreted under the lens of the conflict erupting among Jews and Arabs in 1947, furtherly complicating the framework.

The reception of Bauchet's work among Catholic congregations was generally cold, and after Barlassina's death Bauchet's projects were abandoned by the Patriarchal hierarchy. However, through the Franciscan network, his publications reached different audiences beyond Jerusalem.[22] In 1947 the Italian edition of the Franciscan Custody magazine *La Terra Santa* reported that "Professor Eugenio Zolli", the controversial Israel Zoller, later Eugenio Pio Zolli, the Chief Rabbi of Rome during the Second World War who converted to Catholicism in 1945, "deeply appreciated the books printed in Hebrew by the Stamperia, judging their translation as excellent".[23]

Bauchet's editorial activity signalled a new attention toward the production of tools for preaching in Hebrew, as the catechism and books with stories of the lives of the saints show. This was not merely a mimicry of Protestant missionary strategies, because it partially involved the first steps of a revision of Catholic-Jewish relations in Palestine, in order to overcome anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic stances amongst European clergy. In teaching Roman Catholic doctrine, interaction between Palestinian Arab Roman Catholic faithful and Jewish converts was neither explicitly encouraged nor overtly considered. While during the late Ottoman and Mandate decades, Palestinian—Christian and Muslim—and Jewish students attended education institutions run by the Roman Catholic diocese and congregations, during the 1930s and 1940s the increasing tensions among communities drastically reduced this multiconfessional mixing. The publication of *Or va-Osher*, almost one century after the issue of the Franciscan catechism in Arabic, indicates that a growing distinction and separation was also maturing in teaching and preaching, with Jewish converts identified as recipients of specific contents and missionary activities by Western congregations and Patriarchal clergy, while a review of the anti-Judaic tradition was not yet part of this apostolic effort.

The outbreak of the war for Palestine in November 1947 and the foundation of the State of Israel in May 1948 produced major changes in the political, social,

22 Copies of this book are preserved in the New York Public Library, in the Brandeis University Library in Waltham, Massachusetts, and in the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. In Jerusalem the National Library of Israel and the Franciscan Library in the St Saviour monastery have copies.

23 *La Terra Santa*, March–April 1947, no. 2, 69. On Zolli's interest to Jews converted to Catholicism in Israel, see Shalom Goldman, *Jewish–Christian Difference and Modern Jewish Identity: Seven Twentieth-Century Converts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 95–112.

and religious landscapes. The process of nation building and the creation of state institutions, especially in the educational sector, provoked within the new state a confrontation between Israeli government and public opinion and the Christian churches, and reopened the debate over missionary activity.

2 Naming the Other: "The Mission"—"ha-Misyon"

The discussion over the Christian presence in the new country spread quickly immediately after 1948. Amongst the traumatised post-Holocaust Jewish public opinion in Israel, confronted by the consequences of the war for Palestine and religious and social fragmentation, a focus targeting schools run by church institutions and the Jewish children attending them rapidly developed. This was a new iteration of the long-running controversy that dated back to the early 20th century over accusations of proselytism by Catholic institutions, strengthened and heated by the battle over the custody of Jewish children kept by Catholic institutions or families during the Holocaust—and in some cases baptised—and their reclamation by Jewish institutions, especially the international echoes of the Finaly affair.[24]

In the representation of the Catholic Church formed in the Israeli Jewish public opinion after 1948, the word "mission" became central. It was widely used in the Israeli Jewish press in the 1950s and 1960s, taking on the linguistic sense of the Christian churches, and especially the Catholics, by the press. In the framework of the opposition between the Roman Catholic Church and the Israeli government over the role of Christian education in the country, the press started to use the word "the Mission" (*ha-Misyon*) to identify the churches in a broad sense in Israel and accuse them of converting Jews *en masse*, with a specific focus on Jewish children enrolled in Roman Catholic schools.[25]

24 On the dispute over the orphans Gerald and Robert Finaly and other Jewish children saved and baptised by Catholic congregations during the Second World War, see Philip Nord, *After the Deportation: Memory Battles in Postwar France* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020), 264–286; Catherine Poujol, *L'Église de France et les enfants juifs: Des missions vaticanes à l'affaire Finaly (1944–1953)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2013); Catherine Poujol, *Les enfants cachés. L'affaire Finaly (1945–1953)* (Paris: Berg International, 2006); Jacob Kaplan, *L'Affaire Finaly* (Paris: Cerf, 1993), and on the first appraisals in the light of the newly released Pius XII archives see David Kertzer and Roberto Benedetti, "The Vatican's Role in the Finaly Children's Kidnapping Case," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, 15, no. 1 (2020): 1–21, and Kertzer, "The Pope, the Jews, and the Secrets in the Archives", *The Atlantic*, August 27, 2020.

25 The British Mandate statistics referred to 182 schools run by Christian institutions in

This identification between church and mission appears clearly if we look at the number of recurrences of the Hebrew word "ha-Misyon" in the Israeli press, particularly through the "Historical Jewish Press" database.[26] The data emerging from this database attests the rapid growth in the occurrence of the expression "ha-Misyon" in the two decades 1945–1964, with its use mostly related to the Christian churches in the country (fig. 6.2). In 1949, for example, the newspaper *Herut*, expression of the homonymous political movement that continued the paramilitary organisation *ha-Irgun ha-Tsva'i ha-Le'umi*, led by the Revisionist Zionist Menachem Begin and founded the day after the establishment of the Israeli State, wrote in an article that 500 Jewish pupils were at that moment attending "the schools of the Mission".[27]

A few months later, in November 1949, the Franciscan Alberto Gori was appointed as the new Latin Patriarch of the see of Jerusalem. On the occasion of his first visit to Israel, in Spring 1950, the press highlighted that he "was welcomed by religious and by a great number of students of the schools of the Mission" and had later a "cold" meeting with the Israeli government.[28]

The discussion over the State Education law, approved by the Knesset in 1953 and ruling the educational system in the country through the creation of separate, independent systems between state secular and state religious schools,[29] determined the rapid increase of the use of the term "ha-Misyon" in the press in the years 1953–1954.[30] The terms used to describe "the Mission" rapidly degraded. The "Mission" was depicted through a sprawling image and its members de-humanised: according to multiple authors, through its tentacles it was

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Palestine, attended by some 30,000 pupils. After the war for Palestine and the creation of Israel, this number was reduced to around 9,000 pupils, of whom were 1,500 Jews, mainly in Catholic schools.

26 Elaborated by the National Library of Israel in partnership with Tel Aviv University, the Historical Jewish Press website contains 316 digitised Jewish journals, from 1783 to 2014, for a total of 242,774 issues and 2,303,366 pages, including a large selection of the Jewish press printed in Mandate Palestine and in the State of Israel. It can be accessed at: https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/newspapers/jpress.

27 "Hamesh me'ot yeladim yehudim lomdim be-mosadot ha-misyon" [500 Jewish children study in the Mission's institutions], *Herut*, August 9, 1949. The article also presented the actions of the Histadruth Centre in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Acre and Ramle, about "the danger to the education system" run by Christian Churches.

28 "Patriarch Gori arrived for his first visit to Israel", *Ma'ariv*, March 23, 1950.

29 Aurélia Smotriez, "Frontières externes et fractures internes entre Juifs et Arabes: Aux sources de la ségrégation scolaire en Israël (1947–1953)," *Vingtième Siècle*, 103, no. 3 (2009): 133–147; Sami Khalil Mar'i, *Arab Education in Israel* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1978).

30 Bialer, *Cross on the Star*, 97–106.

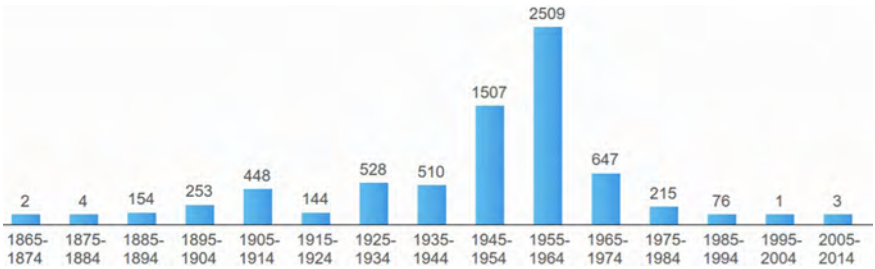

FIGURE 6.2 Historical Jewish Press, occurrences of the word *ha-Misyon*

trying to "hunt" and "grab" Jews across the whole of Israel and to mine the "Jewish soul" of the country, conjugating this representation at the same time with a religious and a nationalistic rhetoric. The idea of missionaries active in distributing "temptation in the form of clothes for children and adults" was widely disseminated.[31] The metaphor of the tentacles was particularly powerful and controversial, applying exactly the same image as used to describe 'international Jewry' in earlier anti-Semitic cartoons since the 19th century, but this time by Jewish authors against.

According to an article published by *Haaretz* in 1953, during the peak of the political and social clashes over the Education Law, "a very difficult role has been imposed upon the Jewish public in Israel: on the one hand, it has to defend itself against the Mission, which spreads networks to every embittered and vulgar person in Israel, and on the other hand, we must warn of any harm to the body and homes of the soul hunters".[32]

In some cases, Catholic leaders directly engaged with the press in reaction to this campaign. In 1954 there was a public confrontation between Antonio Vergani, the Latin Patriarchate Vicar for Galilee, and the *L'écho d'Israël*, after the refusal of the Nazareth authorities to broadcast the Christmas mass on the *Kol Israel* radio channel. Vergani sent the journal a letter protesting against the manner in which this news was presented in the journal. In his reply the editor Ya'akov Ben-Zvi of *L'écho d'Israël* refused this accusation and asked: "Would you tolerate Jewish proselytism in a Christian country?".[33]

31 "Hem lomdim lihyot yeladim" [They are learning to be children], *Davar*, December 1st, 1955.

32 "Pirhahut mesukenet" [Dangerous hooliganism], *Haaretz*, April 13, 1953. "No body or homes of the sould hunters [the Mission] has to be harmed", Haaretz claims to defend the Jews against Christian proselytism but at the same time to avoid any violence.

33 The transcribed copy of this article was sent by Vergani to the members of the Saint James Community. Archive of the Association of Saint James (Archives de l'Œuvre Saint Jacques, OSJ), December 28, 1954.

The ultra-Orthodox press furtherly de-humanised the Christian side and converts from Judaism to Christianity, who at this stage were estimated at around 2,000 people, probably including Catholics with Jewish origins. In 1956, the newspaper *She'arim*, which took an ultra-Orthodox position and was the official press organ of "Po'alei Agudat Yisra'el" (Workers of Agudath Israel) party, published an article devoted to the "problem of the mission": "This problem bothers many and causes concern and anxiety. It is not only a religious problem but also a national, political and security one. (…) The fatal outpouring, the Mission, continues to poison Israeli blood."[34] Of the missionary societies mentioned, most were Catholic, spreading "poison" and "polluting the atmosphere of our holy land". In this text, missionaries and converts were depicted as a severe danger: "Over one thousand agitators and instigators roam the cities of YHWH and the streets of Jerusalem, among them many converts from Judaism, the parasites sold to Satan".[35]

The issue of conversion dominated political and juridical discourse in Israel in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Rather than being a widespread phenomenon, in numerical terms conversions from Judaism to Christianity were limited to Christian families with Jewish origins, mainly from the Soviet bloc countries who had applied using the Israeli Law of Return. This issue amplified the limited dimensions of the issue in reality and turned it into a political argument to mobilise and orient Jewish public opinion in a nationalist sense.

The new resurgence of the debate against "the Mission" in the Jewish press provoked a reaction within the Catholic press in Israel, expressed in the Franciscan magazines—the trilingual edition of *La Terra Santa*, *Terre Sainte* and *Tierra Santa*—and in the bulletin of the Latin Patriarchate *Le moniteur diocésain*, but also in correspondence between the Apostolic Delegation in Jerusalem and Palestine and the Vatican curia, judging the Israeli state as dominated by anti-Christian—and notably anti-Catholic—"fanaticism". The "who is a Jew" governmental crisis in 1958 opposing Mapai to the religious parties on the registration of children born from non-Jewish mothers also impacted relations with the Roman Catholic Church.[36] In summer 1958, Patriarch Gori

34 "Silon mam'ir" [A fatal outpouring], *She'arim*, September 28, 1956.

35 In Hebrew "mumarim, meshumadim, ha-paraziṭim she-nimkheru le-Shaṭan".

36 On the 1958 events Ofer Shiff and David Barak-Gorodetsky, "Pan-Jewish Solidarity and the Jewish Significance of Modern Israel: The 1958 "Who Is a Jew?" Affair Revisited," *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 6, no. 3–4 (2019): 266–279, and Eliezer Ben-Rafael, *Jewish Identities: Fifty Intellectuals Answer Ben-Gurion* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). In the extensive bibliography on the historical relations between Zionism and Jewish tradition and on the costruction of the discourse on Israel as a "Jewish state", see Yaacov Yadgar, *Israel's Jew-*

addressed a six-page memorandum to David Ben-Gurion lamenting discriminations against Christians from mixed families and Jews who had converted to Christianity. In this text he also proposed to "reserve a purely religious meaning for the word "Jew", and to use the term "Hebrew" (*ivri*) to indicate ethnic and national belonging".[37] Some months later, Ben-Gurion replied in a letter that "there's no difference between the term Jew and the term Hebrew". Ben-Gurion highlighted in this response that no discrimination existed against converts and denied that the government obstructed "Christian missions".[38]

The international reverberations of the case of Oswald Rufeisen, better known as Brother Daniel, added a significant chapter to these complex relations and reactivated debates on the "Mission" in the Israeli press.[39] The daily Ha-Tsofe, supporter of the idea that only Jewish religious education could underpin the new state, wrote: "The Mission, which has hitherto acted among the Jews by hunting individual souls, wants now to engage in a national hunt. It is no longer a matter of setting a trap for the Jews, but of trying to conquer entire units by establishing an "Israeli Catholic Church", as there are already Armenian, Syrian, Greek and other churches" (fig. 6.3).[40]

This overlap between the Church and the mission continued during the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). In the troubled genesis and formulation of the *Nostra Aetate* declaration, issued on 28 October 1965, on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, and particularly the section devoted to

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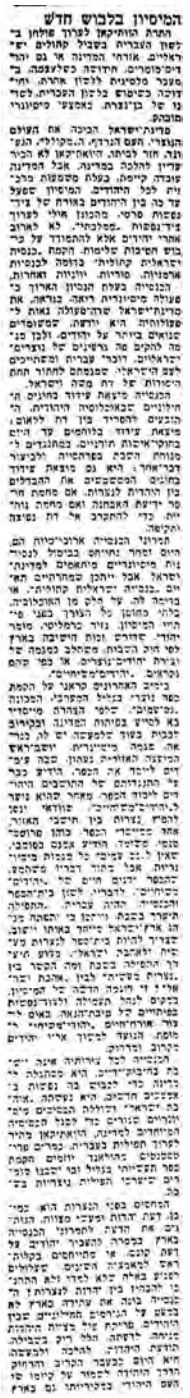
ish Identity Crisis: State and Politics in the Middle East (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Naftali Rothenberg and Eliezer Schweid, eds. *Jewish Identity in Modern Israel: Proceedings on Secular Judaism and Democracy* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute; Urim, 2002).

37 French Foreign Office Archives (CADC), *Levant, Israël (1953–1959)*, 49, *Relations avec les églises chrétiennes*, "Mémoire," presented by Gori to Ben-Gurion, copy, Jerusalem, July 31, 1958.

38 CADC, ibid., Ben-Gurion to Gori, copy, Jerusalem, December 21, 1958.

39 Oswald Rufeisen's life sums up many issues related to the confrontation between Judaism and Christianity since the Second World War. A Polish Jew, during the Holocaust he prevented the capture by the Nazis of hundreds of Jews from the Mir ghetto. During the war he converted to Catholicism and then he entered the Carmelite order and was sent to Israel. He claimed Israeli citizenship as a Jew but was rejected since he was a convert. Rufeisen's case reached the Israeli Supreme Court, which confirmed the decision to deny to him permanent residency. For the juridical debate see Aaron R. Petty, "The Concept of 'Religion' in the Supreme Court of Israel," *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities*, 26, no. 2 (2014): 211–268, while for Rufeisen's biography see Nechama Tec, *In the Lion's Den: The Life of Oswald Rufeisen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

40 "Ha-Misyon be-levush hadash" [The Mission in new garb], *Ha-Tsofe*, January 15, 1962.



המיסיון בלבוש חדש

FIGURE 6.3
"Ha-Misyon be-levush hadash", *Ha-Tsofe*, January 15, 1962

the Jews, the word "mission" was problematic for multiple reasons.[41] Prominent Jewish organisations and personalities were concerned to find the echo of the "Jewish mission" in the drafts of the *De Iudaeis*.[42] At the same time, the Council itself produced a deep revision of the notion of "mission", included the mission/function of Jews toward the Church, whose consequences on relations with Jews is still matter of debate among theologians. An example of this is the shift from a theology of "salvific mission of the Jews toward the Church" to a theology of the "salvific function".

The following decade witnessed the apex of the tensions between not only the Roman Catholic Church, but also other churches in the country and the Israeli government over missionary activities. In 1977 the amendment to the Penal Code entitled "Enticement to Change Religion" law was approved by the Knesset and came into force.[43] The law prohibited promising money or other material advantages to induce someone to change their religion and similarly to receive material advantages in exchange for a promise to change one's religion. It was largely criticised by the Christian authorities in Israel and abroad as a way to obstruct the churches' educational, health and pastoral activities. On March 10, 1978, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Benedictos, the Latin Patriarch Giacomo Beltritti, the Armenian Patriarch Yeghishe Derderian and the Custos Giovanni Battistelli—in one of the first joint documents issued by Jerusalem's churches—wrote to the Israeli president Ephraim Katsir, expressing their rejection of the new legislation, which they judged to be "a serious limitation of Human Rights and religious freedom in a country claiming to be the most democratic in the Middle East" and considering this law as "an indirect legal

41 See Uri Bialer, Neville Lamdan, and Alberto Melloni, ed. *Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish–Catholic Relations* (Münster: LIT, 2007).

42 On 21 November 1963, the Jesuit Father Hasso Jaeger wrote to John Maria Oesterreicher at the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity during the Second Vatican Council: "From Jewish friends (especially Mr Zakarias Shuster, Director in Europe of the American Jewish Committee), who have long been in contact with Cardinal Bea and his Secretariat, I have learned that this text is on the whole very beautiful and very satisfying for serious Jews (from a religious point of view), contains (roughly towards the middle) two sentences pointlessly recalling a state of mind close to that of the "Jewish mission", marred by a will of proselytism and condescension (Judaism "far from Christianity", marked with a curse) fortunately outmoded, and which is moreover more of a Protestant than a Catholic current". See Seton Hall University Archives, John M. Oesterreicher papers, 52, 6.

43 *Laws of the State of Israel: Authorised Translation from Hebrew Prepared at the Ministry of Justice*, 32, no. 62 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1977–1978); Ruth Lapidoth, "Freedom of Religion and of Conscience in Israel," *Catholic University Law Review*, 47, no. 2 (1998): 441–465.

coercion, banning all kinds of social, educational and charitable activities of the Church".[44] One month later, on April 10, 1978, Katzir replied to Beltritti that "the law does not, as you know, specifically relate to Christian bodies, and may be applied to adherents of all faiths, including Jews, who resort to material enticement with a view to conversion."[45]

On the one hand in this document the churches resorted to the vocabulary of "human rights" and "religious freedom", a lexicon with a problematic history of rejection, interpretation and appropriation by the churches and not univocally interpreted by the different Christian denominations.[46] On the other, Katzir stressed that the law fully responded to the spirit of Christian documents, quoting a statement on "Common witness and proselytism", prepared by a Joint Theological Commission, and received by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches in 1970–1971, which condemned "every open or disguised offer of temporal or material benefits in return for change in religious adherence."[47]

This strategy of mutual quotation reflects the confusion between the churches and the Israeli authorities but also within the churches on the core meaning of the words "mission" and "missionary". Moreover, and significantly, the legislation over conversions and aiming at limiting missionary activities was common to other processes of state-building in the Middle East. The Israeli case presented further complexity due to the presence within a State aiming at self-defining as Jewish not only of Jewish converts, but also of a Palestinian population, composed not only of Palestinian Muslims but also Christians, the profound difference among the different Jewish groups and identities, and the effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This complicated the elaboration of missionary activities by the Church and the juridical and political response by the Israeli government.

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44 Archive of the Saint James Association, folder "Loi antimission". The texts of this correspondence were published in the Latin Patriarchate bulletin *Le Moniteur diocésain*, March–April 1978, 89–91.

45 Ibid., 90.

46 On the tortuous historical path of the confrontation with the notions of human rights and religious by the Catholic Church, but with interconfessional perspectives, see Daniele Menozzi, *Chiesa e diritti umani. Legge naturale e modernità politica dalla Rivoluzione francese ai nostri giorni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012) and Silvia Scatena, *La fatica della libertà. L'elaborazione delle dichiarazione "Dignitatis humanae" sulla libertà religiosa del Vaticano II* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).

47 *Faith and Order Paper*, no. 59, 1971, 165.

3 A Non-missionary Mission? The Discourse of the Association of Saint James

This reflection on the concept and practice of mission accompanied a related process within the Roman Catholic Church in Israel: the foundation and development—within the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem—of the Association of Saint James, a community devoted to Jewish converts to Catholicism and, especially, to Catholics with Jewish origins.[48] Approved in 1955 after some years of private meetings between Catholic religious and lay and converted Jews active in a review of Jewish-Catholic relations and in a reversal of the traditional anti-Judaism within the Church, the Association of Saint James addressed the issue of mission from its inception. Although it fell under the jurisdiction of the Latin Patriarch, the Saint James community was permitted greater freedoms, allowing the members to experiment with new forms of preaching and prayer.

The delicate search for a new role within the Church was already evident during the drafting of the Association's statutes. The authors explicitly avoided the words "missionary" or "mission", replacing them with "apostolate". Moreover, in the first French-Hebrew lexicon of Catholic doctrinal terms prepared by the members of the Saint James community, no translation into Hebrew was provided for the word "mission", revealing the difficulty of elaborating an alternative vocabulary not influenced by the use in public debate of the Hebrew expression "ha-Misyon". These two linguistic choices exemplified the awareness of the Saint James Association members of the controversial meaning of the word "mission" toward the Jews, especially in the Israeli context, and their adherence to a reformulation of Catholic-Jewish relations that in those years was elaborating new theological reflections. In its first decade, the main goal of the Saint James was "a community rooted in Israel."[49]

The review of the paradigm of missionary organisation was also expressed by the importance of the laic component of the community and the desire

48 Rioli, *A Liminal Church*, 213–255. This chapter contains biographical information on the founders of the community, and among them Joseph Stiassny and Jean Leroy, whose preaching activities will be mentioned in the following pages of this chapter. See also Danielle Delmaire, Olivier Rota, *La fondation de l'Église catholique d'expression hébraïque en Israël, 1947–1967* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2021); Claire Maligot, "Cesser d'être étranger? Les stratégies de reconnaissance identitaire de la communauté catholique hébréophone en Israël (1948–1967)," *Siècles*, 44 (2018). http://journals.openedition.org/siecles/3311.

49 Archives of the Augustinians of the Assomption in Jerusalem (Archives des Augustians de l'Assomption à Jérusalem, AAAJ), *Jean-Roger Héné, Œuvre St Jacque*s, committee meeting, September 17, 1958.

FIGURE 6.4 Joseph Stiassny (on the left) with Paul Gauthier, 1957, Archives of the Sisters of Notre-Dame de Sion (Archives des Sœurs de Notre-Dame de Sion), ʻAyn Karim

to create a broader lay network with other Catholics abroad, in order to "contribute to the creation, adaption and consolidation of an Israeli Christianity", although without clearly implicating in the very first phase the Arab component of the Catholic Church, who represented a large majority within in, and other Christian confessions, instead focusing on converts or faithful with Jewish origins.[50]

From its establishment, the founders of the Association of Saint James promoted reflection upon the questions of preaching and liturgy. On 24 June 1962, the community devoted a day of study and prayer to the topic of mission. In his preaching, one of the founders, the Father of Sion Joseph Stiassny (fig. 6.4), traced the notion of Catholic mission since the institution of the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* in the 17th century, then focusing on an analysis of the encyclical letters on this subject by Popes Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII.[51] Stiassny stated that "until recently, we were taught to save little negroes in order to ensure their eternal salvation". Stiassny highlighted deep changes in this attitude, among them the preaching and life of Charles de Foucauld and his hermitic spirituality in Nazareth (1897–1900), and his translation

50 APLJ, *Opera S. Giacomo, 1954–1959*, report of the foundational meeting for the ASJ: "Opera S. Giacomo ap. Seduta I," Jerusalem, November 12, 1954.

51 *Maximum illud* (1919); *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926); *Evangeliæ precones* (1951); *Fidei donum* (1957); *Princeps pastorum* (1959).

of the Gospel into Tamasheq for the Tuareg in the Sahara, which were among the main references for Stiassny's vision of "mission".[52] Thus, mission had to result in the "constitution of a visible church in countries where she has not yet reached adulthood", without European impositions: "You no longer speak of indigenous clergy but of local clergy", continued Stiassny. Moreover, reinterpreting the letter of John XXIII to the Indonesian bishops, dated March 4, 1961, for Stiassny one of the goals of mission was to "make the Church truly indigenous", since it "is nowhere foreign in the world".[53]

During this spiritual retreat at ʿAyn Karim, the notion of mission was also discussed in its relationship with nationalism.[54] For Stiassny, three principles had to be embraced by the Saint James community: "Missionaries are not to be nationalist in any way. Missions are only to deal with the things of God". Moreover, a strong accent was put on the study of the language of the country of mission: the language was conceived as a "*conditio sine qua non* to respect cultures". In the profile of the missionary portrayed by the Father of Sion to the members of St James, the missionary was meant to study in depth the language of the country to which they were sent, avoiding spreading their national language, and to confess in a non-local language, as well as praying and singing in the new language.

Again, Charles de Foucauld was also presented by Stiassny as a model of education, study and love of the culture of destination. Conversion was interpreted as a free choice of the catechumen, that could be inspired by the affection of the missionary for his people.[55] The training of a local clergy was not to be

52 This frequent reference to Charles de Foucauld was also due to the presence among the founders of members of the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus.

53 A quotation from the *Summi Pontificatus* encyclical letter by Pius XII, dated October 20, 1939, and already quoted in the Association of St James statutes, was also reported: "All that in such usages and customs is not inseparably bound up with religious errors will always be subject to kindly consideration and, when it is found possible, will be sponsored and developed", AAS, 31(1939), 538–564: 548.

54 In the extensive scholarship on nationalist positions taken by clergies and missionaries in Palestine/Israel, see Konstantinos Papastathis, "Missionary Politics in Late Ottoman Palestine: The Stance of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem," *Social Sciences and Missions*, 32, no. 3–4 (2019): 342–360; Karène Sanchez Summerer, "Linguistic Diversity and Ideologies among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine: Fear of Confusion or Powerful Tool?", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 43, no. 2 (2016): 191–205; Karène Sanchez Summerer, "La réception et les impacts de l'action éducative et sanitaire des sœurs de Saint-Joseph et des sœurs de Sion par les populations musulmanes rurales et urbaines en Palestine ottomane et mandataire (1870–1940)," *Histoire et missions chrétiennes*, 2, no. 22 (2012): 163–195.

55 "'To convert it will be enough to love'! The Lord asks for deeper immolations: respect as

considered an opportunist move or a narcissistic enterprise, but as part of the essence of the Church itself. Stiassny also highlighted the importance of creating a movement of the laity, forming a lay élite ready to witness the spirit of the community among non-Catholic people.

The community founders were aware of the distance between this model and the concrete reality of the attitude of the religious personnel of the Roman Catholic Church towards Jews. In another document dated 1958, Stiassny noted that: "despite their numbers, the priests don't have many relations with the [Israeli] population", since "many come from Arab countries, spend three years in Israel and leave. They don't even know the language of the country (…). Ultimately, only a dozen priests have chosen Israel not only as their material and temporary domicile but spiritual. These religious have learnt Hebrew and they can be considered as Israelis or at least as "assimilated"". For Stiassny these religious "don't carry out proselytism nor, properly said, missionary activities, considering that for the moment the converts are exposed to many difficulties in—with some exceptions—living a regular Christian life".[56]

Through their publications and activities, the few dozen members of Saint James, men and women, religious and lay, managed to mark the difference between their approach and the conversionist attitude they attributed to Protestant congregations or missionary societies.[57] However, Stiassny insisted on what he considered a disproportionate Jewish reaction and the violent nature of the antimissionary campaign.[58]

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appropriate, study and learn, abdicate this secret pride which hides under the appearances of compassion (Fr. Charles)" (AAAJ, *Jean-Roger Héné, Œuvre St Jacque*s, committee meeting, September 17, 1958).

56 Joseph Stiassny, "Le dialogue entre juifs et chrétiens en Israël (1958)," in *Recueil en hommage à Joseph Stiassny*, edit. Elio Passeto (Jerusalem: Religieux de Notre-Dame de Sion, 2007), 27.

57 "Their noisy activity, their lack of tact, and indiscreet material assistance provoked a violent reaction towards them in the general population. However, many fail to distinguish between Protestant and Catholic missionaries and include them in the same condemnation." (ibid.).

58 "The fear of spiritual "rape" is one of the constants of the Jewish psyche and hatred for the "missionary" becomes for some a real obsession of the paranoid type. During the ten years of existence of the State of Israel we have witnessed anti-missionary campaigns of rare violence. In an official statement the Chief Rabbi Herzog did not hesitate to qualify all the religious men and women residing in the country as 'messengers of Satan'; you could read in the newspapers that Jewish children are kidnapped, baptised, and then secretly sent out of the country. Children were warned against religious and it was not uncommon to see them run away at full speed when approaching a cassock" (ibid.). Here Stiassny is maybe referring to declarations issued in 1952 by Israeli chief rabbis, who, according to the

FIGURE 6.5 Bruno Hussar and lay members of the Association of Saint James, Easter 1961, AOSJ

The Association of Saint James organised some forms of community life: in the 1950s they opened what they called "foyers", a few apartments for community life, prayer and meetings, attended by some dozens of religious and lay men, women and families (fig. 6.5). The study of the material and ordinary life of this community attests how daily practices were elaborated and justified by a system of concepts: the construction of the community identity around reference to the Acts of the Apostles meant, for example, the choice of a common fund shared by some members.

Conclusion: Wording the Separation

The first decades after the establishment of the State of Israel were a laboratory for the formation of political institutions and of the repositioning of the Catholic Church in the new scenario determined by the war for Palestine. In this changing landscape, languages played a central role in the construction

press, had issued a declaration denouncing Christian missionaries, called "Satan's messengers" (*shaliḥe Shaṭan*), declaring that people were "selling their children's souls to Satan", and claiming that the needy were driven to the Mission's doors by hunger and poverty. The document demanded a "battle against Mission", to be conducted not by religious Judaism alone, but in which the entire public should take part. See "Reshet ha-Misyon" [The Mission's network], *Ha-Tsofe*, December 22, 1952.

of collective identity within fragmented and historically different communities within Jewish society, and at the same time in shaping a new vocabulary on how to name other components of Israeli society, as witnessed by the use of the term *ha-Misyon* in the identification of the Church by the Israeli Jewish press. During the same decades, some members of the Catholic Church engaged in a work of discovery, learning and appropriation of Hebrew with different and sometimes contrasting scopes: on the one hand, to teach Catholic doctrine to Jewish converts, as in the case of the Bauchet's work *Or va-Osher*, and, on the other, to reconceive and de-nationalise the role and the identity of missionaries in Israel, as in the case of the pastoral action promoted by the Association of Saint James, in the light of the Vatican II *aggiornamento*, and to reinterpret some spiritual experiences of "inculturation"—as in the case of the reading of the Charles de Foucauld's spirituality and in the following interpretation of the conciliar document *Ad gentes* in the Middle East[59]—promoted by the Association itself.

This latter acted to present itself as a counter-model of missionary community within Israel. This sparked conflicts and tensions with the Roman Catholic Church of Jerusalem in the following decades, notably with the Latin Patriarchate, which was reluctant to accept a community of converted Jews within a mainly Arab diocese. The various receptions and understandings in the Jerusalem diocese of the new interpretations contained in the Second Vatican Council documents concerning the relations between religions, the inner connection between Judaism and Christianity, and the meaning itself of the Catholic mission still continue to be open to historical appraisals.

The St James community experimented with forms of preaching in Hebrew: before Vatican II and the vernacularisation of the liturgy and worship opened up by the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* constitution, the translation into Hebrew of the Roman Catholic missal, with Tisserant's authorisation, was realised during the 1950s by one of the founders of the Association of St James, the French Brother of Jesus Jean Leroy, who had previously collaborated with Bauchet to translate liturgical texts into Hebrew.

What differentiated Bauchet and Leroy, *Or va-Osher* and the retreat preached by Stiassny, was not the crucial importance of language, but the issue of anti-Semitism: for Leroy and Stiassny the scope for eradicating anti-Semitism elements in the Roman Catholic preaching and liturgy guided their

59 Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, "Le Vatican II des catholiques égyptiens. Au temps de Nasser, l'espoir d'un monde meilleur", *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 3, 175 (2016): 361–386.

actions in two ways: firstly, preaching had to be "purified" of anti-Semitic linguistic terms and theological contents and, secondly, it had to actively take part in creating a new framework of relations between Roman Catholics and Jews.

This discourse is also tied to the anti-nationalist attitude that, according to the Association of St James founders, the missionary had to adopt and perform. The anti-nationalism meant by Stiassny was essentially a rejection of the nationalism traditionally pursued by Western congregations not only in Palestine but in the whole region and beyond. However, the purpose of a "community to be rooted in Israel" found its logical conclusion, for some of the founders, in nationalism, in this case Israeli. Some members of the community became philo-Zionist or declared themselves openly Zionist, acting—as in the case of the Dominican Father Bruno Hussar—as advisors to the Israeli government, defending its policies and actions concerning the Palestinians, especially in the new geopolitical scenario following the June 1967 war. During a more recent phase of the community these tendencies had been reviewed, in a complex process of self-critique and rapprochement with the Palestinian—Arabic-speaking and praying—component of the Roman Catholic congregation. This case reaffirms the entanglement, sometimes inextricable, of the relations between nationalism, languages and mission, even in present-day Israel.

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