

their homeland, basing themselves on the theologically-fraudulent claim that God gave the all the land to the Jews, and that expelling the Palestian Arabs, and rebuilding the Third Temple, will hasten the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The treacherous role of the Christian Zionists, exacerbated by their grip over the Bush Administration, was a recurring theme of the conference. Bishop El-Assal noted how the Christian Zionists raised millions of dollars for Israel and for the settlers, and he particularly singled out the Televangelist Pat Robertson, who came to Israel for the Festival of the Tabernacle, with 4,000 people. "They embarrassed us local Christians, as they do everytime," El-Assal said. "He challenged the Israelis; 'God gave this land to you, don't give back an inch of land to those wretched Arabs.' "

Bishop Younan denounced Christian Zionism as heresy and as a "sick ideology," in his address to the conference. (See *Interview*.)

"In some Christian churches," he said, "the whole Bible, or the Old Testament, is used in an eschatological way, using the Apocalyptic books, to justify the destruction of the Dome of the Rock, and the building of the Third Temple, as a way of hastening the Second Coming of Jesus, and the Armageddon War. . . . These sick ideologies—not theology—grounded not in grace, but in fear, masquerade as Christianity. The Catholic Bishops in Illinois called this ideology a 'false teaching.' I call it heresy. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a pri-

marily political problem, not a religious one. Religion should be used positively, for a solution, and not to inflame the situation further.

### A New U.S. President?

Although President Bush meets frequently with leaders of the Religious Right in the U.S., he has refused to meet with Palestinian Christian leaders, and in fact he does not even meet with the heads of the so-called "mainstream" churches in the U.S. *EIR* asked about this at the press conference. Bishop El-Assal said that they had attempted to meet with both President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair; they were eventually able to meet with Blair, but "there was no real reaching the President," and they never had a meeting with Bush, "for reasons we've not been told."

Bishop Younan said that after the upcoming U.S. elections, "a new President will hear from us, what we really think." He urged American Christians to take the responsibility, to see that such a meeting takes place. "To meet us is not a luxury," he continued, "it's really to speak about the needs of Palestinian and Arab Christians, and the Palestinian people, at this time."

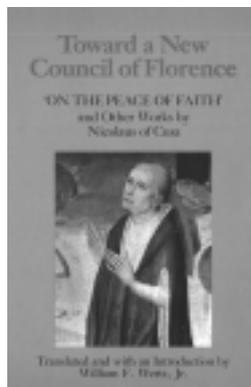
Although Sen. John Kerry has not distinguished himself with regard to the Middle East conflict, there was still hope among many conference participants, that Kerry might bring a fresh approach to dealing with the region, if for no other reason, than that he is not in the thrall of Christian Zionists and the Religious Right in the United States.

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## Interview: Patriarch Michel Sabbah

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# The Christian's Role Is Reconciliation

*His Beatitude Michel Sabbah was born in Jerusalem, and has been the Patriarch of Jerusalem since 1987; he is the Bishop of the Roman Catholics in the Middle East, that is, those who follow the Western liturgy. H.B. Sabbah was interviewed by Edward Spannaus during the Holy Land Ecumenical Foundation conference in Washington, on Oct. 23.*

**EIR:** You mentioned that the Holy Places should be a place to pray, and for conversion, not to make war. Are you referring to the fact that some of the Christian Zionists, when they come to the Middle East, have a different purpose?

**Sabbah:** The reference is to what is going on in the Holy Land. Both the Israelis and Palestinians are making war because of their holy places. Everyone wants their holy places.



*His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, visits Jenin, on the West Bank. The war against Iraq, he said, "opened the gates of hell, and who knows who will be able to close these gates now."*

. . . Jesus Christ did not call on anyone to make war.

**EIR:** What about the people such as Pat Robertson, or some of the so-called Evangelicals from the United States?

**Sabbah:** To these people I say, you have to be Christians. You go back to your main basic commandment: Love your neighbor, love your enemy. It is good to love the Jews, very good. It is also good, very good, to love the Palestinians, so your role is not to make one stronger than the other, that means to make one more able to make war against the other. Your role is to bring both to reconciliation—to make them equally loving each other. This is the role of a Christian. . . .

**EIR:** How do you see the relationship between what is going on in Iraq, the occupation there, and the occupation in the Palestinian territories? Do you see a connection?

**Sabbah:** Of course. The war of Iraq was meant to demolish a potential enemy to Israel. . . . Iraq was the only country that could present a real threat against Israel, and therefore it had to be demolished. And therefore it was not done for the benefit of the Iraqi people, to free them from their dictator, because after the war they put the Iraqi people between hands harder than the hands of Saddam, conditions harder than those from which they suffered under Saddam. So they opened the gates of hell in Iraq, and who knows who will be able to close these gates now.

**EIR:** Do you think the threats now being made toward Iran are of the same order, the same thing?

**Sabbah:** The same thing. Because again, it is a force, a potential force, which is not going in the line of the United States, and the Israel situation. And so that's it. It is an effort to reduce all these forces, to put them get in line; if you're

in line, you can get all the weapons you want, or the money you want. If you are not in line, you are not allowed to have any arms.

**EIR:** Do you think the United States invasion of Iraq has made the situation worse for the Palestinians?

**Sabbah:** Much worse, for both the Iraq people and the Palestinians. . . . It was more and more perceived, that the fight and the question in Palestine was only a question of fighting terrorism, not of a people who asked for its freedom. So fighting terrorism, means you can do whatever you want.

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## Interview: Bishop Munib A. Younan

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# Palestinian Christians Can Serve as a Bridge

*The Right Reverend Munib A. Younan was born in Jerusalem, and has been the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jerusalem since 1998. Bishop Younan was interviewed by Edward Spannaus during the Holy Land Ecumenical Foundation conference in Washington, on Oct. 23.*



**EIR:** You mentioned yesterday the sharing of water as a necessity, which is something which our organization has been very active in.

**Younan:** Well, I think that the war in the Middle East in the future will not be a war over land, because we already know what the solution is—the two-state solution—I mean every state is now established in the Middle East. But I think the water resources are really the problem now in the Middle East. We noticed now there are tensions, maybe between Turkey and other neighboring countries, on the water issue. And once you really make a two-state solution, you cannot give one state more resources than the other. You cannot give one state more water resources; otherwise they will flourish [and the other will not]. This country is not so much blessed with water as the United States of America, or other parts of the world. So this is the reason we insist also that in any political solution, there must be a political solution for sharing water resources, among the two states—the Palestinian state and the Israeli state.

**EIR:** Yesterday you spoke of the significance of the Palestinian Christians, and of the importance of their existence, and