



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

The press conference in Jerusalem had not gone well. Our purpose for being there was to attend the World Conference on the Holy Spirit, a meeting which would host a total of 4,500 Christians from 42 nations. Because this was the largest group of any type ever to assemble in Israel, the Jewish press was interested. We had been briefed, however, that the questions would probably be baited. We were warned to steer clear of political answers, especially those dealing with the Jew-Arab controversy.

The Arab, of course, is as much a part of Israel as is the Jew. It's the Jewish state of Israel, but the Arabs have lived in the land for most of the centuries since the exile of 1,900 years ago. Their dispossession, in fact, is the basic cause of the five wars since 1948.

The representatives of the pro-Jewish press, radio and television wasted no time as the conference got underway. Their questions were pointed, almost brazen. "Why have you Gentiles really come to Israel? Is it not to convert the Jews? Whose side are you on, Jew or Arab?"

It was up to Corrie ten Boom, 81-year-old Dutch heroine who had almost died in a German concentration camp for protecting Jews during the Nazi extermination, to put the questions in perspective.

"I am here," she said quietly, yet with deep conviction, "because this was the land of my Messiah, the Jew-Jesus. I have come to His land because I love His people."

The once-arrogant eyes of the reporters looked at the floor as the old woman spoke. Few among them had suffered as she had suffered for their people. There were no other questions for the panel. Tante Corrie had answered them all. But the reporters were not through, they were still pressing for some kind of controversial statement to print.

One reporter, a short, balding man with hawkish eyes framed with dark, horn-rimmed glasses, turned and pointed his finger at a Christian-Arab pastor who was sitting behind me. Unlike the Jews, most of whom had lived in the land only since 1948, Fahed Karmout had been born there. Although his home and property had been confiscated by the nation of Israel during the Six-Day War, he continued to minister to his small flock of Arab-speaking believers.

"Do you agree with the Dutch woman?" the reporter asked. "Does this land belong to the nation of Israel or to the heathen Arabs?"

My blood boiled. This was not a fair question. The press was supposed to be interviewing the conference leaders, not the local pastors. Any way he tried to answer he would be trapped. I wanted to object but the meek, brown-skinned man was rising to his feet.

"I do not speak English very well," he said slowly. "But since the question has been asked, I shall try to answer it. As an Arab I was trained from birth to hate the Jew. I was taught this land was given to us by Allah. But when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, entered my heart, He took away all my hate. Now I love both Arab and Jew as my brother. No longer do I make my dwelling place on this earth. No longer do I cling to rocks and dirt and call them mine. Now I have a new home, a place with many mansions. I am a pilgrim, on my way through this land to a promised land beyond Jordan. Heaven."

It was too much. The room broke into spontaneous applause. Even the Jewish reporters were on their feet clapping. The man who had asked the question was wiping his eyes furiously with a large handkerchief. This simple, uneducated Arab pastor had given us all, Jew and Gentile, the secret to peace. Jesus!