

*Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. (Francis Bacon)*

## **The History of the Middle East Conflict Max Frazier's Book Review**

Recently I have been privileged to conduct several classes where our focus was the history of the conflict occurring in the Middle East. The response to these classes has been overwhelmingly positive. The interest has been keen in seeking to understand why the conflict continues to persist. As I shared with the classes, it is an area of conflict that most of us have grown up with, for the Middle East has often been a battle zone since the British Mandate governing the area went into effect in 1922.

In doing my research in preparation for this class, I was privileged to read several volumes that greatly helped me in my own understanding. In this brief column, I would like to recommend a few of those to you. I will begin with a book titled, **Israel: A History**, written by Martin Gilbert, one of the foremost historians of our time. William Morrow and Company of New York published the book in 1998. I have read several histories of Modern Israel, but this is the best. Dr. Gilbert documents his facts thoroughly and does not hesitate to cite opinions from Palestinian as well as Jewish sources. I believe the book is now available in a paperback format so the price should be less than that of the hardcover edition.

The title of the next volume caught my attention. **The Complete Idiots Guide to Middle East Conflict** was written by Mitchell Bard, and published by Alpha Books, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1999. This book will give you a very succinct overview of the history of the Middle East conflict. The author is the Executive Director of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, so there is some bias in the book, but it is not an overpowering bias. If you are familiar with other books in the Complete Idiots series, you will understand the nature of this work.

Perhaps the one book that was most helpful to me is titled, **War Without End**. It was written by Anton La Guardia, stationed in Jerusalem for several years as a reporter for the London Daily Telegraph. Thomas Dunne Books, which is located in New York, published the book in 2001. I found this book to be an excellent study of the history of the region. The author is careful to record the observations of both Palestinians and Jews to the various problems that confront them. It was refreshing to read an author who was mostly unbiased in his writing. If you only had time to read one book, this would be the one I would recommend.

A final historical volume, recommended to me by the Jewish guide our 2000 Village School Tour had in Israel, is titled **O Jerusalem!** It was written by Larry Collins and Dominique LaPierre and was published in 1972 by Touchstone Books,

which is located in New York. The authors carefully document and describe the years immediately preceding and following the independence of the State of Israel. It was a book I found very difficult to put down. Its story will grip you in a moving way.

There are two series of fictional work that I also would highly recommend. Bodie Thoene has researched and written a five-part series entitled, **The Zion Chronicles**, which describes the Jewish struggles up to the days of independence. Bethany Fellowship published these books between 1986 and 1988. She and her husband have co-authored a second series, **The Zion Legacy**, published by Viking Penguin Group (2000-2002) that continue the story through the days of the war of independence. I can assure you that once you begin a book you will not be able to stop until you have completed it. Although the story line is fictional, the events described were very real. It is a good read of the history of that particular time.

Friends, the situation in the Middle East is not going to disappear any time soon. It is good that we become better educated as to the history and nature of the conflict. Any of the above resources will help you down that road. Happy reading!