

Maps Should Include Israel

How much sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a feckless publisher. The firm of Harper, formerly known as Harper & Row and now as Harper Collins, has had a long and distinguished career as a publisher. Personally, I am grateful for the firm having published five of my own books and a series of 15 others that I edited. But did I really know the firm?

Alas, we now know that the firm has disgraced itself by allowing its subsidiary, Collins Bartholomew, in May 2014 to publish a misleading and indeed dishonest *Primary Geography Atlas for the Middle East*. The Atlas claims to be an ideal school atlas for young primary school geographers and to be designed for schools in Middle East countries. It also disingenuously claims to enable students to learn about the world today by exploring clear and engaging maps.

That claim of clear or correct maps is false, because the country of Israel is omitted from them – and does not exist, according to the Atlas. The Atlas is supposed to provide in-depth coverage of the region and its issues. Instead, in the map of the disputed area of the Middle East, the “countries” of Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Syria, now a failed state, and Jordan do appear.

Harper Collins has acquiesced to the fallacious Palestinian Narrative of History. It implicitly accepted the Palestinian version of politics that Israel either does not exist or is illegitimate, and the Palestinian claim that Jews have no historic rights in or ever belonged to the area of what is now known as Palestine.

One can rationally and legitimately differ on the desirability of a Palestinian state or on a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli issue, but recognition of the existence and legitimacy

of the State of Israel is the logical starting point for any solution. Harper Collins, in a measly form of apology for its dishonesty in eliminating Israel from its map, said it had acted on the basis of "local preferences," meaning that the existence of Israel is unacceptable to its Middle East customers.

The Harper Atlas accepted that "local preferences" were more important than the truth and the facts on the ground. Its lame excuse for publication is a damning indictment confirming the hostility toward Israel from so much of the Arab world, and the refusal to accept and live in peace with the State of Israel. That refusal is an appropriate issue for the International Criminal Court as well as the World Council of Churches and Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Amnesty International to consider.

It was propitious that fair-minded Christian spokespersons should have taken the lead in indicating the disgraceful behavior of Harper Collins. Declan Lang, bishop of Clifton and head of the Bishop's Conference Department of International Affairs, is no extreme Zionist or apologist for the State of Israel. On July 7, 2014, he condemned the "violence of both Israel and Palestinians" during the conflict in Gaza. In what he considered a balanced statement, he called for an "end to occupation of Palestinian territories."

Nevertheless, Lang criticized the Harper Atlas for its omission of Israel. This, he argued, would not help build a spirit of trust leading to peaceful coexistence.

Another sharp criticism of the Harper Atlas came from an Anglican Christian, Dr. Jane Clements, founder and former director of the Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine, and now director of the Council of Christians and Jews. She had on May 12, 2009, in quoting the message of *Nostra Aetate* of 1965, remarked that Christians must reject centuries of anti-Judaic rhetoric and enter into a new relationship with Jews. Her comment on the Atlas is that it had delegitimized

Israel. All atlases everywhere, she sensibly remarked, should reflect the official international position on nations, boundaries, and political features.

It is disheartening for all who genuinely desire a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict that this sensible advice given by Clements has been so disregarded by other publishers, as well as by Palestinian organizations. Perhaps the most notorious recent non-Palestinian publication was *Thea Stilton and the Blue Scarab Hunt*, a book in the popular Italian Geronimo Stilton children's series, published in 2009 by Scholastic. It makes no claim to be a serious commentary on the Middle East, as does the Harper Atlas, but it does contain a map of the area in which the State of Israel does not exist. Instead, the map conveys an area covered completely by the country of Jordan, and painted in bright red.

Most important in this dishonest and misleading portrayal of the area are the maps distributed by the Palestinian Authority, by Fatah, and by Hamas, all ignoring the existence of Israel or any hint of the bond of Jews to the Holy Land.

The maps, as Hamlet might have said, are documents "within which passes show." All of them, whether they are the Palestinian textbooks, *National Education* for the third grade, or *The Geography of Palestine* for 7th grade, or are maps circulated by Hamas, show Palestine as a single entity. Most disappointing, in view of alleged moderate policies stated by Palestinian President Abbas, is the map issued by Fatah on December 17, 2014, *The Main Page*, which has a photo of Yasser Arafat and a rifle covering all of "Palestine."

The saddening reality is that the fallacious maps omitting Israel are not accidental. They indicate a particular necessity voiced by those Palestinians and others. The maps are part of a larger pattern for those eager to eliminate the State of Israel. Harper Collins has said it has removed the Atlas from sale in all areas, but it should be ashamed that it

helped endorse this larger pattern by publishing it in the first place.

First published in the