

THE LINK

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WHY VISIT THE MIDDLE EAST?

For those who seek to understand the threatening Arab-Israeli situation, nothing is more edifying than a personal visit to the Middle East—to both sides.

Unfortunately for progress to understanding, many persons of goodwill make the mistake of joining a tour or taking a private journey to one side only. Many advertised and promoted tours are subsidized and promoted by the Israeli government or its agencies, and go only to Israel. A few tours go only to the Arab world. Few of us are intellectually tough enough to make such a one-sided visit and get a balanced perspective. Consequently much of Middle East travel contributes to misunderstanding and polarization of views.

For a decade my paper—The United Church Observer, in Canada—has conducted tours to the Middle East, and we have always visited several Arab countries — usually Cairo, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan — and Israel. We make our tours a combined pleasure-study visit. We learn of the past and of the present. Those who go with us have broad interests. They enjoy the camel rides at the Pyramids, the beauties of Baalbeck and the shopping in Damascus. In Israel they see the Holy Places, listen to Israeli officials, and talk to Christian leaders and Palestinian refugees.

They find it imperative to do some homework before they go and on the way. But what is more important, when they return their reading comes to life, and whether it be from the Bible, ancient history or newspaper comment on Middle East politics they read with new understanding and interest.

So I recommend it for others. Go in good company under an organization devoted to acquiring understanding rather than making propaganda.

We have been repeatedly warned that the Middle East is the most threatening explosive situation in the world

More Americans are traveling to the Middle East this year than in the last four years. To give them background on things to see, much of the LINK information normally centered around people and issues has had to be crowded out. We hope that those who travel among the Middle East's historic sites will make up for this by on-the-spot study of issues and conversations with the people involved.

today. We have been urged by such important organizations as the World Council of Churches to seek understanding and communicate objective information.

Yet the Middle East is a safe and pleasant part of the world in which to travel. There are good hotels and competent guides and fine food. Each of the countries is interested in the tourist business, and makes travellers welcome and comfortable. The Middle East understands its visiting students, old and young, and knows how to cooperate with travel seminars, study groups and religious pilgrimages.

Whatever one feels about the policies of the governments, the common people are wonderful to their guests. The Arab is probably the most hospitable person in the world; the Israeli is western-oriented and graciously caters to the visitors to his country.

I'm an editor and I have often visited that part of the world, sometimes during very troubled times. I have become involved in controversy and written forthright things. But during all my visits I have never had an unpleasant experience or been treated with discourtesy, or even had a bad meal or an unpleasant night.

Back home I have often been troubled by the appalling ignorance, prej-

udice, and misinformation about the Holy Land. We have too often been badly served with misinformation, prejudices, and myths and distortion of the Scriptures. It is so sad when for the want of a little foresight travellers become deepened in their prejudices by a propaganda tour.

On the other hand I am often encouraged by the insights of those who have been to the Middle East for only a brief visit. Two or three weeks will not make one an expert. But a brief two-sides tour when attended by some objective study can contribute vastly to our understanding.

And understanding of the issues is what we need above all else in the western world. It may help us eventually to contribute a little to that just and peaceful settlement so badly needed in that part of our world.

So take a trip if you can, to both sides, or assist someone else to go.

by A. C. Forrest



VIA DOLOROSA . . . The Cross lifted above these pilgrims on the Way of Sorrows in Jerusalem is a fitting testimony to the condition and the hope set before the Christian community in Jerusalem today.

U.S. Relations With Israel and the Arabs

The Commonwealth Club of California is to be congratulated on its 1971 lecture series on "Our Relations with Israel and the Arabs." Not only did it seize a nettlesome subject boldly, it had presentations from all three sides, including—and this is the strangely special rarity—the views of an American diplomat with Middle East experience.

Abba Eban, who emigrated from South Africa to Palestine before the establishment of Israel as a State and has been pleading the Zionist case ever since, was the first speaker. Next came Fayeze Sayegh, Palestinian son of a Presbyterian minister, who gave an Arab view of American policies toward the Middle East. The series concluded with David Nes who, after a distinguished diplomatic career (including heading the U.S. Embassy in Cairo during the June, 1967, war), retired from the State Department with its Superior Honor Award. It is to his presentation that we shall limit ourselves here.

He made a concrete proposal for U.S. participation in the establishment of a "rational peace" in the Mideast. In his estimation "the only outside security guarantees under which Israel would be willing to entrust her future would be to include a formal bilateral treaty with the U.S., ratified by the Senate and providing, as evidence of credibility, an appropriate deterrent force in Israel as we now maintain in West Germany, Berlin and South Korea. *Such a treaty,*" he emphasized, "would become effective upon Israel's renunciation of expansion, withdrawal to her pre-June 1967 frontiers, and agreement to implement outstanding U.N. Resolutions on the Palestine refugees and the status of Jerusalem."

Whether or not you accept his thesis as a platform, it makes an excellent springboard for diving into the real issues. He himself is optimistic about its acceptance by all parties to the conflict. "Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and eventually Syria would make their peace with Israel on this basis. The Palestinians could then choose between returning home, or establishing by plebiscite a new State of their own in pre-1967 Jordan plus, perhaps, Gaza. . . . Israel's future depends in the long run upon her acceptance—like an organ transplant—by the peoples and countries of the area, regardless of our degree of identification and support. To enable her to take the initiatives essential for such acceptance, it seems to me that we should be willing to formalize and to give teeth to our long and close attachment."

His full text is available from the American Committee for Justice in the

Middle East, P.O. Box 3211, Boulder, Colo., 80303. If you are interested in having him debate or simply present his proposition, you may reach him at Route 2, Crestline Court, Owings Mills, Maryland, 21117. His views at least come to grips with what *The National Observer* calls "the likely setting for the great world crisis of 1971," namely, exclusive U.S. responsibility for Israel's security without corresponding control of developments.

"It would be tragedy-within-tragedy," the *Observer* editorializes, "if America after 25 years of acutely difficult dealings with the Soviet Union, should finally plunge into a nuclear war over actions it is powerless to restrain and issues it is powerless to resolve."

"Most Favored Nation"

Most of Nes's California talk outlined, not necessarily with endorsement, what he meant by "our long and close attachment to Israel." For 50 years, he noted, our politics "seemingly have reflected a national commitment to the proposition that the Jewish people constitute, by race and religion, a unique national group entitled to an identity and a sovereign political state of their own." President Truman declared in October, 1948, that, "we are pledged to a state of Israel, large enough, free enough and strong enough to make its people self-supporting and secure."

Such views were complicated by our post-World War II commitment to the rehabilitation of devastated Europe. Its economic recovery and defense required access to Middle East oil on favorable terms, air and Canal transit, and a favorable political and military position in the Eastern Mediterranean and North African littoral.

To achieve this necessitated the cultivation of Arab friendship which in turn called for approval of Arab aspirations for unity, national defense, social and economic progress, and justice for the Palestinians. Yet each of these Israel regards as a threat. Our consequent attempt at compromise has ended normal diplomatic relations with all Arab countries except Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and Kuwait in the Mideast.

Do Supporters Have Privileges?

At the same time, "Israel has become virtually an integral part of our nation with ties to Washington closer in many respects than those of Alaska and Hawaii." Our dollar transfers to Israel "in 1970 reached 800 million and in 1971 will approximate \$1.5 billion, including Government assistance more than double *per capita* that granted our own 50 states under current 'revenue sharing' proposals."

In international affairs no other nation is accorded the privileges we grant to Israel. "We have, since 1967, become the exclusive purveyors of arms to Israel. Of greater significance is the fact that, qualitatively, we have provided aircraft, missiles and electronic systems of greater sophistication and greater strike capability than those furnished our NATO and SEATO allies. . . . During the years when we were pressing over 100 nations . . . with whatever diplomatic, economic and military leverage we might have, to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Israel alone was exempted from strong representations . . . Its nuclear reactors at Dimona and Nahal Sorek are reported for several years to have been producing plutonium sufficient for ten 25-kiloton bombs a year."

Nes seems to be speaking from personal experience when he notes, "During the months prior to the June 1967 hostilities, the military intelligence requirements levied by Washington on our Embassy, CIA, and military intelligence staffs in Cairo were very largely based on Israel's needs."

Can America exercise any legitimate control over what Israel does with all this defense and other aid? Nes hopes his proposal provides a constructive answer.

—L. Humphrey Walz

A QUESTION ANSWERED

"I have been mystified," writes Dr. J.A.K. "by the continuing unwillingness of the wealthy Arabs to underwrite the elevation of their own people . . . (and) . . . to provide aid to their own."

We referred his letter to Dr. Harry N. Howard, former State Department liaison officer with UNRWA. He replies, in part, "Since 1948, according to my calculations, Arab governments have contributed some \$150,000,000 in direct and indirect assistance to Arab refugees."

Libya, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia report, between them, contributing \$434,000,000 annually since 1967 to help Jordan cope with its new refugees and to make up for some of Egypt's loss of Sinai oil revenues and Suez Canal tolls.

In addition, most of the oil income of the petroleum exporting countries goes to public projects including schools, hospitals, housing, utilities and roads. That they are doing all they should—any more than 'oil-rich' Texans, Oklahomans or Pennsylvanians—"to provide for their own," we are not prepared to insist. That they are doing more than Dr. J.A.K.'s news sources imply is beyond question.

LEBANON: Milk, Honey and History

The Republic of Lebanon is a small strip of land 135 miles long and little more than 40 miles at its widest. It nestles on the eastern Mediterranean beside the ribbons of blue and green waters that stretch along the rocky and sandy coastline, its spine of haze-covered mountains everywhere present. With a population of less than 2,500,000 — a melange of Christian and Moslem sects that has managed to diplomatically balance the political seesaw—this Biblical “Land of Milk and Honey” is undoubtedly one of the world’s most beautiful countries.

Beirut—A Western Orient

Its capital, Beirut, is a large, bustling metropolis into which has come more than one-third of Lebanon’s population seeking work, education, and excitement. Internationally, it has a reputation as an important banking and business center, often called the Switzerland of the Middle East, and is a veritable tourist’s paradise.

A visitor may often stop to wonder whether he is in the Orient or in the Western World, for the city intermingles both the best and sometimes the worst features of each. At its center, ancient buildings huddle together bisected by narrow lanes and streets that wander onto little squares and courtyards of heavy stones and archways. The ancient “souks” (street markets) offer an endless profusion of oriental wares where bargaining is a way of life. But then at the sea’s edge and elsewhere, the skyline is dominated by ultra-modern hotels, skyscraper apartments, and office blocks — some well-designed, some badly — that stretch from the fine beaches south of one of the city’s fashionable quarters, Raouche, north well beyond the port. To a Beirut, his city of ten years earlier is often described as having been a village. But, while this may reveal somewhat social patterns that have existed (but are evolving rapidly today), it certainly does not accurately describe the physical changes of the city. Indeed, Beirut is one of the world’s fastest growing capitals with the typical modern urban problems that accompany progress.

A Culinary Experience

Dining in Lebanon, and particularly in the capital, is a gourmet’s delight. The only real problem is that there are too many good dining spots to choose from. The selection is one vast culinary rainbow: American, German, Italian, British, Balkan, Indian, Chinese, Greek, and last, but certainly not least, Middle Eastern.

The dish usually associated with Leb-



CEDARS OF LEBANON . . . Deep roots in native soil nourish life in these ancient cedars of Lebanon.

anon is something of a glorified feast of hors d’oeuvres known as “mezze” which may be one course or several or the whole Arab meal itself. The favorite dishes are “hommos” — a mixture of chick peas, garlic, lemon and oil; “tabbouleh” — a salad of finely chopped mint and parsley combined with onions, wheat germ, and tomato; and “baba ganouj”—a mouth-watering concoction of egg plant, garlic, and sesame oil garnished with mint and a splash of Lebanon’s own olive oil, a dip that you scoop up on a small bit of Arabic bread.

Bread forms a large part of the Lebanese diet, one observes. One person may eat as much as three pounds a day and still have room for other foods as well! The natural separation of the round loaf into two layers when cool makes it ideal for a sandwich. Stuffed with seasoned, barbecued meat; sprinkled with peppery spices; or spread with labneh, cheese, or jam, it often becomes a meal in itself.

Baalbek—City of The Sun

Beyond the quilt of ripening vegetables and vineyards that spreads its patchwork across the Bekaa Valley floor, is a majestic complex of Roman ruins. It is Baalbek. Every summer, in July and August, its temples, bathed in golden lights, play host to a festival of international importance. Some of the world’s finest orchestras, ballet ensembles, theater groups, and great singers perform there in the cool night breezes while its history is told in a stunning “Son et Lumiere” spectacle.

Its site was said to be a Phoenician sanctuary dedicated to the god Baal. During the period of Greek dominion, the town was called Heliopolis (“City of the Sun”), Baal being one of several names for the Syrian sun-god Hadad. The magnificent Roman Temple of

Jupiter, its columns rising to Corinthian crowns, was named after Heliopolitan Jupiter, it is believed yet another pseudonym for Hadad.

Tyre—A Charioteer’s Challenge

Less impressive, but gradually emerging from the debris of centuries, are the ruins of Tyre, today a pleasant, sleepy fishing village south along the coast. Its closely shuttered houses of fading pastels and its narrow cobble-stoned streets hardly whisper its past greatness.

Excavations on the site have now yielded the remains of Crusader, Arab, Byzantine, and Greco-Roman cities. Tyre was famed for its beauty in the ancient world. Maritime trade, rich colonies in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, and purple dye industries made the city prosperous and wealthy. In fact, it became the most important center in the eastern Mediterranean world for land and sea borne trade.

Some of yesterday’s importance appears to be returning to Tyre. One of the largest (if not the largest) hippodromes of the Greco-Roman period was recently uncovered. Built during the Second Century A.D., it was buried under six meters of wind-swept sand.

According to the archeologists, this particular hippodrome was used for chariot races and was built with parallel sides and semi-circular ends (an elongated horse-shoe) all fitted with tier seats which could hold thousands of spectators. The exact dimension of the hippodrome is 450 meters long and 160 meters wide. An axial rib (the spina), marked at each end by stone pyramidal turning posts (the metae), divided the course into two runs. The race consisted of making the circuit seven times. Rounding the metae at top speed was the most dangerous part of the chariot race causing severe spills.

The Lebanese Government recently inaugurated the hippodrome and staged the same type of chariot races held back in the days of the Roman Empire. Exact replicas of the chariots were built, the rules of the competition being the same as they were in ancient times, with all the dramatic flavors of old recaptured. Tourist officials are planning to make the race an annual tourist spectacular.

But Tyre has much more to offer the visitor as well with its evolution of history and its attendant archeological finds. Its castles, the remains of a city paved with mosaics, and its ancient cemeteries tell of its period of greatness and bear witness to the skill of its artisans. It is a long period that extends and spreads beyond through the entire country. —G. Alan Klum

EGYPT—THE OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

Despite the staccato of news reports and the sounds of sabre-rattling that emanate from the Middle East, Egypt continues to open its arms more and more in welcome to a growing volume of tourists. Surprisingly, it is the Americans who are the favored ones “spreading money and smiles,” as Raymond H. Anderson puts it in a recent Cairo dispatch to the *New York Times*, “among hotel managers, airline officials, camel drivers, and shopkeepers.”

Certain areas, as around the Nile Delta and in New Nubia near Aswan, have been placed off limits for security reasons. But the country is filled with such an abundance of incredible relics from its rich past and endless scenes of its changing present that even in three weeks, no foreigner would find his wanderings unrewarded.

Memphis and Sakkara

An hour's drive from Cairo is one of the world's most fascinating sites, the great necropolis of ancient Memphis known as Sakkara. The road to Sakkara runs along a deep canal sparkling in the sun, past fields of sugarcane and wheat and of maize and clover. Villagers wave in greeting as you pass while they tend their flocks of sheep and goats or lead their laden camels into market. Where this fertile land merges into the desert, the road winds its way higher on to a plateau. Spread below is a haze of green and purple, while in the distance the great Nile moves slowly on.

Here on this plateau is the world's oldest stone-building—the famous Step Pyramid of King Zoser from the Third Dynasty who lived before 3000 B.C. It is of interest to historians and architects because it served as the prototype for the great Pyramids that were to follow.

Spread among Memphis' rich funerary complex are some of the best preserved tombs (“mastabas”) in the country that have revealed much about the life of her ancient people — their dreams, their pursuits, their loves and their fears. Among the finest which can be visited are those of Ti, Ptahhotep, and Mererouka (of the Fifth Dynasty)



PYRAMIDS ... Out of the past these symbols speak of hope for new life in the world of tomorrow.

with their beautiful bas-reliefs and paintings.

At the foot of the Sakkara plateau Ancient Egypt's great capital, Memphis, once stood. In the shade of a rich palm grove washed in the dust of rainless days, is one of two colossal statues of the Pharaoh Ramesses II. Another was taken by the Government into Cairo to stand in the square beside the capital's main train station, a symbol of Egypt's past and future glory. The first, and larger of the two, remains at Memphis, as witness to her former splendor.

Since the first discoveries made at Sakkara more than a century ago, Egyptologists have found it a fertile area for continued exploration. Early in 1970 a spectacular discovery was made of an unfinished pyramid said to belong to one of King Zoser's successors. Inside was an alabaster sarcophagus, ancient papyri, and a fine collection of jewelry and gold ornaments. Sakkara's sands no doubt have much more to reveal.

Mena House

If one is searching for a hotel bargain, there is probably none better than Mena House that sits a short distance from Cairo at the foot of the great Pyramids. It is a name which conjures up intrigue and espionage and scandals and tales of kings and queens, statesmen and generals. The hotel celebrated its 100th anniversary last year amid local pomp and ceremony.

While Egypt changed at a head-spinning pace in those hundred years, Mena House hardly did at all. Originally built to accommodate, in comfort and style, Empress Eugenie at the time of the inauguration of the Suez Canal, it has today the same exquisite “mushrabiyya” wood-work of screens and terrace awnings, a dining-room in the style of a mosque's arcaded inner court, and spacious balconies still soaking up the sun of every day. Some travel writers who visited recently asked to see the hotel's grandest suite. The manager, delighted to oblige, directed them to three huge rooms on the top floor. A sign on the door announced, “General Montgomery slept here.” The original Victorian furnishings were still intact. The bathtub was sphinx-sized while the terrace had a table with an umbrella. Cost for this former opulence was less than \$10.00 while humbler lodgings start at \$2.30! There is even an 18-hole golf course that one can play for another 85 cents right there in the backyard of the Pyramids!

Upper Egypt—Cradle of A Great Civilization

The giant museum of Egypt spreads well beyond the frenetic capital and her



NILE AT CAIRO ... Beside the timeless Nile are signs that a new day is dawning for Egypt.

nearby environs of Giza, Memphis and Sakkara. In Upper Egypt are truly the most splendid temples, ever dedicated by man to his gods: deeply-tunnelled tombs of ancient pharaohs and their queens with their amazingly well-preserved wall paintings and reliefs; funerary temples and chapels; magnificent monuments and statues glorifying conquerors and victories — statues and monuments that inspire such awe in the beholder by their gigantic dimensions and unearthly quality — that one wanders about thinking he is on some Cecil B. DeMille stage set that has been abandoned. It just does not seem real.

Upper Egypt, strictly speaking, is that narrow strip of green which stretches from the apex of the Delta, 24 kilometres north of Cairo, to the first Cataract at Shellal, about 10 kilometres south of Aswan. The names of Abydos, Karnak, Luxor, Edfu, and Komombo are part of its history. Luxor and Aswan enjoy a near perfect climate with warm, endless sunshine and a dry, exhilarating breeze. Whether by road, train, plane or boat—all are possible—it is a trip well-worth taking.

But it is on a Nile boat—and there are many types—from the comfortable floating hotels of the Hilton chain, the s.s. Isis and Osiris, to the tiny picturesque “feluccas” with their long, sloping spars supporting a billowing threadbare sail—that one seems to be inspired most by the journey. Fares on some of the more suitable boats range from \$92 for three days in a triple in the hot summer to around \$310 for seven days in a single in the pleasant 70 degree winter. (Meals are extra.) Most of the tours start from Luxor, site of ancient Thebes, 420 miles from Cairo, reached easily by a short daily plane ride from Egypt's capital.

Camels plodding along ancient caravan routes, desert spilling over the farmland, gossiping women washing clothes while children frolic with laughter at the edge of the river bank, the sudden coolness of an oasis — all are part, among the temples and monuments, of the continuing kaleidoscope of the river.

—G. Alan Klaum

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land is not simply a pilgrimage into the past. A pilgrimage is far more experimental than that. It challenges you with the present, but the present is always held within the perspective of the past. Jerusalem suddenly becomes not just "a place in the Bible," but part of modern life, peopled with common folk like the rest of us who are caught up in the terrible pressures of hopes and fears.

At the same time, the tender beauty of ancient remembrance that Jesus walked just here or just there, and looked down this rocky ravine or up that craggy hillside two thousand years ago—such remembrances are roughly linked to the hard contemporary fact that right here and now in these same places his people and his Church are struggling daily against enormous odds to live in witness to him in the ancient places and homes where they have been since he walked in Palestine. This small Christian community lives among the larger Muslim and Jewish communities, for whom also Jerusalem and other sites are holy, and who also feel a special blessing in this ancient land.

Jerusalem is like no other city. Perched on the Judean uplands, built on dry and rocky hillsides, by-passed by the great trade routes of history, it could never be a natural center for agriculture or commerce or industry. It has one superlative claim to fame, its spiritual history. In the Old City, the area surrounded by the crenelated walls and battlements of Soliman the Magnificent, few streets are wide enough for car traffic.

The Old City is a town for pedestrians. The ancient limestone pavements climb up and down between the houses and shops, often little more than a series of steps. In the market areas the street may be arched over, the small shops close along both sides, and a busy flow of pedestrian traffic jostling along in both directions. But a walk through those markets at night is a wholly different thing. You plunge into the deep gloom of a long, black empty tunnel, where a street lamp glimmers under an archway here and there. The heavy silence is cut by the far clatter of someone's feet on the pavement of a cross alley somewhere. Only a whiff of spices may tell you that by day this is the bustling spice market.

Holy City of Three Faiths

The three most sacred sites of the three great religions lie not far from one another within the walls. Islamic devotion centers around the Dome of the Rock, one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Its golden dome

crowns an octagonal structure gleaming with colored tile, ancient mosaics, and colored glass, and this encloses the great, bare rock on which the altar of Solomon's Temple was raised almost three thousand years ago. This gem of a building, along with the Aksa Mosque just to the south of it, also within the ancient Temple Area of Solomon, is one of the holiest shrines of Islam, second only to the Kaaba of Mecca, being associated with the prophet Muhammad's "night journey to heaven."

The center of Jewish devotion today is close by, along the outside of the western wall of the Temple Area, where, in the open space popularly called the Wailing Wall, services are held and private devotions are continually being said in remembrance of the ancient glories of Judaism and in supplication for the return of those glories. Jewish services are thus conducted outside the ancient holy precinct rather than within it, partly because strictly orthodox Jews would have a horror of treading upon the sacred spot where the Holy of Holies stood in ancient times, that exact spot being today not precisely identified. On the other hand, the Wailing Wall does include amidst all the reconstructions superimposed throughout the centuries, the actual stones of the enclosure of the ancient Temple, at least in the lower courses of huge limestone blocks which are undoubtedly from the time of Herod the Great.

Throughout the centuries, Christian devotion has centered on the Church of the Resurrection, often called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is also within the Old City walls. Built over and around a rock-cut tomb, it includes other holy sites, among them a lofty chapel on a rocky protuberance known as Golgotha, the hill of the crucifixion, and a dim low-built chapel underground at the bottom of a long flight of steps, with a second flight leading still deeper into a small cave where St.

Helena according to tradition found the pieces of the true cross. The Church is largely from Crusader times, and was built on still earlier edifices. Chapels have been added, and different churches eastern and western have responsibility and privileges in various sections; yet throughout the conglomeration of the whole runs the single golden thread of the devotion of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who have worshipped here as at the heart of their Christian world.

For the traditionally minded, the very center of devotion is the tiny chapel that covers the rock-cut tomb, and the marble slabs that enclose and hide the tomb itself, and the gold and silver lamps and candlesticks that fill the small space. For the historically minded, or for those who seek to recapture the natural mood of that first Easter morning, it may have a deeper devotional meaning to visit later the Garden Tomb outside the city in the walled garden at the foot of a cliff.

Some believe this to be the true tomb of Christ; but whether or not it is so, it is a tomb of that period, cut into the hillside and still in its natural state, with only a quiet garden round about with olive trees and cypresses. In the early morning, or in the evening, this is a quiet place for meditation, as one sits on a bench under the trees facing the rock or as one steps within the little rock-cut chamber to muse upon the tomb niche at one side.

Beyond The City

The Mount of Olives has a magnificent panorama view over the whole of Jerusalem. Lying to the east of the city and separated from it by the valley of the Kidron, it dominates the whole area. From its summit, where the bell tower of the Russian Church of the Ascension is the loftiest outlook for miles around, one overlooks not only the Holy City, but in the other direction, to the east one sees the deep gash of the Jordan valley, the upper end of the Dead Sea, and the pale blue mountains of Moab beyond it. These are views that Jesus knew well.

The road to Bethany, where he stayed so often at the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, curves around the shoulder of the Mount of Olives, and he often took that road on the way to Jerusalem or on the way out from the city in the evening. On the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives lies the Garden of Gethsemane, where in the darkness he turned aside for prayer on the night in which he was betrayed. The ancient olive trees in the garden enclosure today are centuries old and may be the descendants of the trees growing



HOLY SITES IN HOLY LAND

PILGRIMAGE (Continued)

there two thousand years ago. The stony pathway that slants down the Mount to the Garden is the same sort of dusty, stony path that Jesus followed. Indeed the rocky paths of Judea bring us very close to our Lord, as we walk today where he walked.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Bethlehem lies close to Jerusalem, fifteen minutes by car on the road southward. Its houses lie along a ridge overlooking the green Shepherds' Field below to the east. It is a town of Christians, and has been so for at least seventeen centuries. It has some beautiful new buildings, and many beautiful old ones. The homes and churches run up over the top of the ridge, thick-clustered along the open roadways and around the narrow passages of the older part of town. Red tiled roofs, flat roofs, domes of churches and convents, climb one above the other to the irregular skyline.

The town's chief interest centers in the great paved square in front of the Church of the Nativity in the lowest part of town. No church in all Christendom is older, or at least has older parts. The great blind walls of ancient stone, medieval and even earlier, line portions of the square, and the single narrow entrance is so low that no man may pass into the church without bowing his head. It was not always so; the outlines of the lofty, pointed portico, now walled up and filled in with stone, indicate an earlier magnificence. Only in later centuries, when conditions became unsettled, and security was endangered, did the low small door become necessary as the only entrance, to prevent armed riders from charging into the sanctuary and desecrating it.

Unless you want to see the pageantry of a high festival, the best time to visit the church is on a quiet morning when few people are there. As you enter, stooping through the western gateway, the whole church is in gloom, and the enormous monolithic pillars, two rows on the right and two rows on the left, march away through the half light toward the altar. The lofty roof, the strange old mosaics on the walls, the huge pavement stones underfoot—all combine to lead your thoughts back to what it might have been like to worship in such a place in the early days of the Christian church. Just here the crowds worshipped their Lord in the sixteenth century, in the eleventh century, even in the fourth century. Best of all in the church are the caves that form a lower level and are entered down a flight of steps from one side of the transept. The first is a natural cave in the lower rock, traditionally the spot where Jesus was born and laid in a manger. At almost any time of day or night, even when visitors

in the church are few, there is usually at least one pilgrim here, kneeling close to the silver star in the pavement or standing aside in the shadows, eyes bent on the spot, lost in devotion and meditation.

A connecting cave nearby was the dwelling place of St. Jerome in the fourth century, for all the latter part of his life, as he translated year by year the Scriptures into Latin, and completed at least that great official text of the Roman Catholic Church which men came to call the Vulgate. Here he lived, as close to the birthplace of His Lord as he could possibly get, and from here he carried on his correspondence with other saints and scholars of his time, often very virulently and bitterly, striving in those early days of Christian thought to scotch any dangerously heretical trend as men tried to explain in words the inexplicable wonder of God come to men in Christ at Bethlehem.

Driving back to Jerusalem from Bethlehem, if you take the longer, lower road you may see caves where refugee families are living, having been forced to flee from their homes in Israel. Babies have again in recent years been born in a cave in Bethlehem or near it, because there was no room for them in an inn, or anywhere else.

Galilee of the Gentiles'

In Galilee the rounded hills are more gracious than the abrupt and rocky mountainside of Judea. Galilee was Jesus' home, whether he was in Nazareth itself or whether he was working and teaching along the shores of the Sea of Galilee fifteen miles to the east. Galilee seems more open and free than Jerusalem and Judea. In spring the flowering hillsides are world famous: sheets of blue and yellow and pink are spread among the green fields of young wheat, and the roads are lined with red anemones. On any one of these slopes it is easy to imagine our Lord surrounded by his followers listening to the Sermon on the Mount, or the disciples walking through the wheat fields plucking the ears of wheat and eating the grains as they walked.



NO ROOM AT THE INN . . . A cave shelters a family in refugee status in Palestine today.

Nazareth looks like a good, neighborly town to be born into, built up along the slopes of the hill, with interesting paths for a boy to explore both uphill and downhill. Of course, there are many traditional sites that through the centuries have been pointed out to pilgrims as being the carpenter shop of Joseph, the home of the Holy Family, and so on. Of the authenticity of one spot there is no question. One village fountain has served the town throughout its existence, and indeed is the reason for its existence in that place. Its name now is the Virgin's Fountain. As in ancient times, it is a center of village life. To it the women come in the morning and at evening, filling their water jars and pausing to chat, and around it the children play. There can be no question but that Mary came every evening to this same richly flowing fountain, and that Jesus when a boy came with her time and again. You can almost see her today in a dignified matron stooping to fill her jar, or her son in one of the care free youngsters splashing water on a friend.

Kibbutzniks and Refugees

What of Capernaum? and Jacob's Well at Sychar? What of Jericho? What of the Roman city of Jerash, and Petra in her rocky desert, the "rose-red city half as old as time"? These and more too await the modern pilgrim. And the pilgrim must also seek out the modern life of the people of the Holy Land. Two examples are enough here. He must see the kibbutzim, those communal agricultural experiments where men and women, persecuted as Jews in other lands, have come to make a living together cooperatively from working with their hands in this ancient land. In them is a fire of pioneering, a hope of a new life, a new dignity, and a new safety together as they build a new country, Israel. On the other hand, the pilgrim must not fail to visit and understand the Palestinian refugee camps, the tragic communities of those pushed out of their homes and lands by the magnificent experiment represented in the kibbutzim.

These refugees, for twenty-three years clinging to the hope of finally returning to their homes in Israel, include members of the old Christian communities as well as the Muslim population. The churches of the west have from the beginning been involved in their assistance and rehabilitation through many programs. In the reconciliation of these two very human situations, the joyous success of the kibbutzim and the bitter homelessness of the displaced refugees, lies the only hope for peace in the land made holy by the Prince of Peace.

—H. G. Dorman, Jr.

Some of the later paragraphs of this article appeared in last December's *Response*.

Christians in The Holy Land of 3 Faiths

To a billion Christians, half a billion Muslims and 14 million Jews, Palestine is uniquely the Holy Land. It is both the soil in which their faiths are anciently rooted and the symbol of their dreams of a better world to come.

Like Dixie and Araby, its borders have been vague and varied. Its name comes from the Philistines who, in King Saul's time, inhabited the Mediterranean coast from the Eastern borders of Sinai up through Gaza and Jaffa to Mt. Carmel (Haifa). It came later to apply to the 150 mile inland stretch from Dan to Beersheba as well. The Palestine of the British Mandate went eastward to the River Jordan and southward through the Negev desert to the Gulf of Aqaba, Archaeologists speak of the region beyond the Jordan as East Palestine.

Christian Exodus & Church's Genesis

However you define that area, certain developments in it are causing distress among many church leaders today. Pope Paul VI was expressing a widely-felt anxiety when, in addressing the College of Cardinals on December 15, 1969, he deplored the outflow of Christians from the Holy Land. "The number of the faithful of Jesus", he told them, "has diminished, and continues to diminish daily, from the land which was sanctified by His preaching and His sacrifice". Without in any way downgrading the rights or sentiments of Muslims and Jews, he added, "the situation makes one wonder whether the beautiful and majestic religious edifices which recall the events of Christ's life on the very spot where they occurred will not be deprived one day of the living presence of their own ecclesial communities" (See LINK, Mar./Apr., 1971, pp. 5-7).

This exodus contrasts markedly with the Church's genesis, phenomenal early growth and prolonged vitality in Palestine. Starting as a movement for renewal within Judaism, it quickly burst its ethnic bonds and opened its arms to all who would take its Gospel seriously. Its message — underlined by martyrs who made clear the faith, hope and love they were willing to die for — spread throughout the Roman Empire, beginning "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria" (i.e. Palestine). Even before the first Christian emperor, Constantine, was converted in 312 A.D., most Palestinians had become Christians. They remained in the majority for about nine centuries thereafter.

Palestine as Special

The Christian community of Palestine prospered for two special reasons: Its Orthodox patriarchs were masterly administrators. And, having a "most fa-

vored" status with the Emperors, it did not feel discriminated against like the Oriental Orthodox who, in other countries, went their separate ways. The presence of churches and shrines on the traditional spots of significant Biblical events may have provided an added factor. The "on-site feel" they give to religious history and to the compact phrases of the Apostles' Creed is a common experience. From them, too, can come a sense of continuity with the past to add necessary spiritual dimensions for the "now generation".

Realizing this, Constantine's mother, Helena (called 'Saint' by the Eastern Orthodox), gave new importance to Palestine among Christians world-wide. In 326 she went there to identify the scenes of New Testament events, built churches at Bethlehem and on the Mount of Olives, reportedly unearthed the True Cross, and endowed various Christian centers. Later emperors, especially Justinian (483-565), erected churches and monasteries at significant spots in the Holy Land. These and later structures are sensitively described and beautifully illustrated in Father Gerard Bushell's *Churches of The Holy Land* (Funk and Wagnalls, N.Y., 1969). But the Pope urged us to think of Palestine's churches as people, not just buildings. So it is well to follow up with Sir Steven Runciman's *The Historic Role of the Christian Arabs of Palestine* (Longmans, London, 1969).

This succinct little volume adds a sense of the on-going religious currents that have swirled among them through the ages down to the present day.

Muslims and Crusaders

The Seventh Century brought the Holy Land under Muslim conquerors. This, strangely, turned out in some ways to be easier to bear than the Twelfth Century domination by European Crusaders. The Koran requires Muslims to give Jews and Christians special privileges as *Dhimmi*, 'People of the Book'. Hence Bethlehem and Nazareth remained wholly Christian, Safad and Tiberias mostly Jewish, and *millet*-style self-government was accorded the communities of both faiths.

On the other hand, the Crusaders after capturing Jerusalem in 1099, not only slaughtered Muslims but imposed Western bishops, doctrine and liturgy on the Palestinian Christians, undermining local customs and authority. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that native Christians later helped the Muslim Saladin (c. 1138-93) against the Crusaders. The Crusaders, nonetheless, did re-enforce among Western Chris-

tians the idea of Palestine as *the* Holy Land of their faith.

From Saladin until recently Palestine has been predominantly Muslim, with Christians as a *millet* community, their civil affairs largely under the religious leaders of their own choosing. After Sultan Mohammed II conquered Constantinople in 1453, ending the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, he put all the Holy Land's Christians into one huge *millet* with Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. The Greek Patriarch in Constantinople was made answerable for all of them. This, together with the facts of Palestine's commerce with Greek merchants and its desirability as a retirement abode for Greek clergy, has placed the Greek Orthodox in the ascendant among the Holy Land's Christian communities ever since.

Nationalisms: Arab and Zionist

The present exodus from all Christian communities of Palestine has a complex background fraught with emotion and partisanship. One of the most balanced and readable accounts is Dr. Frank H. Epp's *Whose Land Is Palestine?* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1970). To oversimplify the modern history: Nineteenth Century nationalism sparked both the Arab Awakening and the (Herzlian) Zionist Movement. Both laid claim to Palestine. In the doubletalk of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 both felt that their claims were being honored and planned accordingly.

The Zionist program made very little progress at first. Then Nazi atrocities so deepened Western Jewish wariness toward all gentiles as to make many of them feel insecure unless they had their own state under Jewish control and with as large a Jewish majority as possible. Once that state was created, it resorted to methods reminiscent of Joshua and David's militarism—and patterned on modern gentile examples—to prompt non-Jewish Palestinians to go elsewhere. Commandeering or blowing up thousands of Arab homes with inadequate warning, imprisoning Muslim and Christian breadwinners without charge or trial, and exiling Palestinian leaders without recourse continue to be reported to the U.N. The Israeli government calls such reports prejudiced but has not permitted either a U.N. commission or Amnesty International to investigate on the spot. Church agencies and the Red Cross find bureaucratic obstacles in the way of helping the families of those so "punished".

It is important to realize two things about all of this: The procedures followed do have their precedents under

3 CHRISTIANS (Continued)

both British and Arab rule. Also there are Israeli Jews who, feeling the un-Jewishness of such behavior, are sacrificing much to remedy the situation. One of these is The Israel League for Human and Civil Rights, P.O. Box 144192, Tel Aviv.

Palestine's Spiritual Resources

In the Holy Land itself, more than anywhere else, are the scenes of events and teachings which can inspire Muslim, Christian and Jew to work separately and together for peace with justice, integrity, mutual forgiveness and mutual trust. Here the Old Testament prophets (honored alike by all three faiths) preached and obeyed God's message of righteousness and compassion. Here God promised Abraham, the "father of many nations", that through him "all families of the earth" would receive blessing. And in Isaiah 2: 3-4 we read the vision of an ideal community in Palestine which will influence the nations to beat their implements of war into instruments for peace.

For Muslims Jerusalem is *al-Quds*—The Holy—and was their first *qiblah*, or point toward which the faithful turn in prayer. To religiously sensitive Jews it is a focus for living as "a light unto the Gentiles." (Isaiah 49: 6-10). In Christian hymnody it is both Christ's homeland and the earthly reminder of promised eternal life.

It is the people who live there that are faced with the challenge to make the Holy Land holy. They can't do it by leaving—or by staying on without backing. Whether Christians will remain on the spot, steadfast in the practice of the highest faith they know, will depend in part on the degree of support and encouragement they get from fellow-Christians outside.

—L. Humphrey Walz

CONDOLENCES

Our sympathies go out to the 4,000,000 Coptic Christians of Egypt in the death of their patriarch, Pope Kyrillos VI, the "116th successor to St. Mark." We wish them all blessings, too, as they seek to find the very best replacement.

FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

The Ecumenical Week of Peace sponsored annually by the Lay Franciscans will this year focus on the Middle East, October 3-9. In the past this group has worked with Armenian Orthodox, Baptists, Presbyterians and the Community Church of New York as well as Roman Catholics in making this occasion significant. For details write: Peace Apostolate, Third Order of St. Francis, 135 West 31st St., N.Y., N.Y. 10001.

PALESTINIAN FILM

We've just received word from the Fifth of June Society, P.O. Box 7037, Beirut, Lebanon, that its new 45-minute 16mm. black-and-white sound film, "Resistance — Why?", has been completed and prints are available at \$100. Featuring English-language interviews intercut with news shots, it indicates how the Palestinians think of themselves, their plight and their homeland. The producers "think it will appeal to Westerners because it is low-keyed and reflective."

ARSON AT AFME

The fire that broke out in the Washington headquarters of American Friends of The Middle East in the "wee, small hours" of April 16 has definitely been established as arson. The rumor that its superb reference library was destroyed is, however, fortunately only 25% true. AFME is back again in high gear in its service to students from abroad and to educational institutions overseas.

THE LINK

aims at maintaining contacts among Americans who believe that friendship with the people of the Middle East is essential to world peace, who would contribute to this goal by spreading understanding of the history, values, religions, culture and economic conditions of the Middle East, and who would—in this context—press for greater fairness, consistency and integrity in the U.S. policy toward that area.

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