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THROUGH TRAVELOGUES IN THE HOLY LAND (XVI-XIX CENTURIES): THE DEVOUT, THE CURIOUS, THE ERUDITE

The ternary division of this article is both chronological and thematic: in the Middle Ages, a pilgrimage was an act of penitence associated with the doctrine of indulgences, and devout motivation dominates travels in the Holy Land up to and including the 17th century. Curiosity was kindled along with humanism and the return to the Scriptures, but it did not really expand until the end of the seventeenth century, in a political context characterized by the stagnation and decline of the Ottoman Empire. Scientific knowledge of the Holy Land followed, quite naturally, the development of natural and historical sciences in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, this chronological division is overlaid by a thematic division, since at the end of the nineteenth century there were still travels to the Holy Land in the form of pilgrimages, whereas curiosity about the Moslem religion and the Eastern Orthodox Christians is chronicled early on. Furthermore, if we accept Kepler's dictum that "to know is to measure", the measurement of distances, the sizes of monuments, and changes in temperature began in the seventeenth century. This paper emphasizes the thematic division, but will take differences in perceptions of the Orient prompted by cultural changes in the West into account in each part. This overview begins with the production of printed books and finishes at the end of the pioneering phase of archeology in the Holy Land, defined as the founding of the Ecole Biblique (later archeological and biblical) by French Dominicans. The library of this school contains a collection of books concerning travels to the Holy Land, which I consulted to write this article. Obviously this collection does not contain all the books listed in bibliographical references, but almost all of the significant works can be consulted there. The history of the foundation of this library remains a mystery: there must have been a major donation by a priest in the Latin Patriarchate, Mgr. Poyet.

A. The devout journey

Pilgrim travelogues from the paleo-Christian era have been studied extensively in articles on "Pilgrimages" in several dictionaries: *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*,

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Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément. In addition, several manuscript accounts dating back to the Middle Ages were published at later dates. These medieval narratives and those printed in the 16th century are good illustrations of the orientation of Western piety: compassion for Christ's wounds and Mary's suffering, fear of judgment and anxiety about salvation, compensated for by meritorious acts - devotion to saints. All these pious acts are placed on the same level, with no hierarchization. Their naive formulation is moving. Overall, this Western devotion is painful, fairly unmoved by the Easter message, and the testimonies of Orthodox Christians on this point is rejected: we shall see why later on.

Among the devotional books, *Bouquet sacré ou voyage de Terre Sainte* deserves greater attention. It was written by the Franciscan Jean Boucher, and was reprinted frequently in the 17th century (1614, 1618, 1622, 1625, 1640; the journey took place in 1611). The author was known for his devout writings and the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* contains an entryabout him. Appalled by the state of the Holy City, the Franciscan imagines a dialogue between the city and a pilgrim, at the end of which the City recognizes that this desolation must be interpreted by passages from Jeremiah: the Holy City is punished for its sin (disbelief in Jesus' message).

Almost a century later, "confessionalism", in other words, preparation of the faithful through the catechism of the Catholic reform, is apparent in pilgrim narratives, whose content becomes more didactic (it teaches catechism). At times, this educational concern is mirrored in the structure of the book itself. For instance, in *Voyage au Levant*, by Father Pacifique, a Capuchin, the holy places are not positioned according to their geographical location, but rather as a function of their time in the story of salvation. The purpose is less to move the reader than to convince him.

Later on the "devout" travelogue would distance itself from this catechismal and dogmatic orientation. Rather it would capture the powerful 'return of the religious' movement that emerged after the skeptic assault of the Enlightenment, but the spiritual quest has rid itself of its traditional forms. This emancipation appears clearly in the writings of Lamartine, whose travel diary scandalized "establishment" thinkers. The interpretation of the journey undertaken by Chateaubriand, the most famous pilgrim in the Romantic period, is not exempt of ambiguity: it tends to interpret his emotions as being more poetical than mystic. In the Romantic view, isn't it a form of intellectual and spiritual reductionism to privilege a single religion as worthy of man, his thirst for happiness and his appetite for life? Although the evangelical message remains the most worthy and should occupy the supreme place in the hierarchy of religions, there is nevertheless a need to invent a 'new Christianity'.

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Nationalistic feelings, which glorified the memory of the Crusades further reinforced French travelers' ties to the Holy Land. The only Christians worthy of being buried near the tomb of Christ were French barons, notes Chateaubriand with pride. This feeling of pride also extended to French attempts to exalt its role as the protector of Orthodox Christians. Shouldering this heritage, Father Lagrange, in 1917, called for a French mandate over Palestine in his obituary of the famous archeologist Melchior de Voguë, the patron of the Ecole biblique.

B. The Travelogues of the Curious

The curiosity of the Western traveler was whetted by three topics: the Christian 'sects' (the term is taken directly from these narratives), Moslem religion and customs, and the natural features of Palestine.

1. The Christian 'sects'

The variety of churches in the East was not viewed with the same scandalous eye as it is in our ecumenical age, but it intrigued and amused the Western traveler. The various forms of Eastern Orthodox Christianity were correctly listed, but variously appreciated, some were seen as clearly heretical whereas others were given better marks because they aligned themselves with Rome. The Protestant travelers added another sect: the Fransiscans, the only Latinate Catholics to be seen in Jerusalem. The irony and reproaches of the Western travelers was concentrated on the "Easter Fire" ceremony: on the night of the resurrection, a flame descended miraculously from the sky and all attempted to light their candles from this flame. The overcrowding of the Saint Sepulcher, on this 'very holy' night, the rivalry between the Armenians and the Greeks, transformed the ceremony into an unrulyjostle despite the intervention of the Ottoman police. The event was described frequently, as late as 1854, in a book by Melchior de Voguë.

The Jews of Palestine are rarely mentioned by these travelers, except to mention their 'low' and 'humiliated' status, the result of their great sin (the rejection of Jesus).

2. Islam

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, anti-Turk sentiment still dominated. Bolstered by the victory of the Venetian and Spanish fleets against the Turks at Lepanto in 1571, the Western powers decided to take the offensive. Father Joseph tried to draw Richelieu and Louis XIII into a vast crusade against the Turks to liberate Palestine. However the kings of France took no interest at all in the Turkish threat to Vienna. The Turkish advance was only halted in 1683 by an army led by the Polish prince John Sobieski. Following this, the Western powers elaborated a policy of

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protection of their citizens and economic interests in the Middle East. Despite the failure of the plan to create a French consulate in Jerusalem, France reinforced its presence in the "ladders of the Levant", which led it to view the Turks less severely. In the *Mémoires* of the Chevalier of d'Arvieux (1735), the consul at Aleppo, there are positive comments on the Turk's skills on horseback, their architectural talent, their respect for the Koran and Koranic law. D'Arvieux also praises the nobility of the Arab population of Damascus.

In the nineteenth century, because of the Greek problem, the French began by manifesting great hostility towards the Turks, but Lamartine had already changed his opinion. He admired their administration of Jerusalem and their relative tolerance. If a Christian nation had taken over Mecca, he asked, would it have allowed the Moslems free access?

3. Western Scientific Curiosity

As early as 1553, Pierre Belon, the apothecary of the Cardinal of Tournon wrote a volume on 'several singularities and memorable things found in Greece and in the Orient' which contained detailed descriptions of Turkish hygiene. Another medical journey, an important one, was made by Hasselquish, a Swedish physician and friend of Carl Linné, who used his nomenclature to classify the plants and animals of Palestine. He remained in Palestine from 1749 - 1753.

Of the Western efforts to enhance scientific knowledge of Palestine, certainly the greatest contributor was the Royal Society of London. The reports written by English travelers during the eighteenth century show remarkable precision as regards the languages, geography, architecture of the monuments of Palestine (journeys undertaken by Henry Maundrell, Thomas Shaw, Richard Pococke). However, in Anglo-Saxon culture, scientific knowledge of the Bible and the world of the Bible was hampered by religious respect for 'sacred text'. The English envied the scientific freedom of German piety.

C. Scientific Journeys

Clearly from the above, the scientific approach to the land of the Bible did not arise in the nineteenth century. It however expanded enormously at this time due to complementary advances in philology and archeology. The key event which would trigger this progress was obviously the expedition to Egypt, crowned by philological works by the young Champollion, the final phase in the deciphering of hieroglyphics. The West was shaken: with works by Bopp and Burnouf on Sancrit, the horizon further enlarged, and Edgar Quinet announced a second Renaissance, the "Eastern Renaissance." Interest in the East was concretized by the founding in the Holy Land of specialized institutes, and in Germany by the creation of

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numerous research seminars in the universities. French archeology was less well structured than its German and English rivals. However it was nevertheless held in great esteem, because of its encouragement of interdisciplinarity.

The remarkable progress made in philology encouraged epigraphy. Aside from Champollion, Eugene Burnouf, the teacher who fascinated the young Renan deserves mention. His works on the Avestan language helped decipher cuneiform writing (using inscriptions on monuments written in several languages such as the Rosetta stone). Another intersection: archeology and prehistory, a field where French research, with Boucher de Perthes, was pioneering. The use of prehistorians' methods of excavation renewed interest in ancient civilizations and promoted the exploration of daily life (in contrast to the almost total emphasis by earlier archeology on art objects).

Scientific exploration in Palestine in the nineteenth century continued against a background of national rivalry. The German scientific establishment engaged a Swiss physician, Titus Tobler (1806-1877). In addition to geographical and archeological books, he published a *Bibliographia geographica Palstinae* in 1867, reprinted in 1964 and still useful today. Aside from Tobler, Johann Nepomucene Sepp (1816-1903) a German lay professor in Munich, wrote the seminal work of refutation of Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu* (published in 1835) as well as a book on Jerusalem: *Jerusalem und das heilige Land,* Schaffhausen, 1863, 2 volumes.

England, after a number of attempts, succeeded in founding in 1865 a solid and efficient research institution, the Palestine Exploration Fund, which illustrated itself in particular by the underground exploration of Jerusalem, and the cartography of Palestine (for instance, *The Holy City,* by Williams and Willis, 1845, a pioneering volume by English science; *The Recovery of Jerusalem,* by Wilson and Warren, 1849, and *The Survey of Western Palestine* by Conder and Kitchener, 1884). The first American work on the Land of the Bible was written by Edward Robinson, a professor at the Union Theological Seminary (the author, who studied in Berlin, used the vast resources of the Royal Library of Prussia *: Biblical Researches in Palestina*, Boston, 1841, 2 volumes. As in many of the works published from the eighteenth century onward, the author is highly critical of traditional locations and views them as fables invented by monks.

Among the French archeologists who explored Palestine, only one, Victor Louis Guerin, was a university scholar. The others were aristocrats, imitators of Chateaubriand, but more knowledgeable: the Duke Albert de Luynes (who brought a dismountable boat made in Marseille to the Dead Sea), Felix de Saulcy, Melchior de Voguë. The latter wrote a remarkable

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work on the churches of the Holy Land, in which his experienced eye often discerned the traces of Frankish crusader architecture.

For the Catholic "intransigent" groups, the critical philological and archeological view of the Biblical universe was nothing short of scandalous. Mgr. Jacques Mislin's book, *Les Saints Lieux,* 1876, acclaimed by the Catholic authorities, was very aggressive towards Lamartine's statements on the Holy Land and towards authors who raised doubts as to the historical truth of certain Bible stories (for instance the story of Jonas). However, among the Catholic thinkers, criticism and faith united in the work of Voguë, as in the works of his friend Father Lagrange.

The impact of this victory of the intelligence over religious fanaticism can be seen clearly in the archeological studies by Vincent and Abel. In his forewords to *Jérusalem antique* and *Jérusalem nouvelle,* Father Vincent, a professor at the Ecole biblique, explicitly acknowledges the existence of cultural legends in the history of various "holy places' in Palestine and argues for the researcher's total freedom since issues of dogma are not involved. The Protestant scientist Gustave Dalman, director of the German Archeological Institute in Jerusalem differentiates the older, hence Palestinian, tradition and those which proliferated later on: in his view, the former serves to anchor the story of Jesus in a time and a place (foreword to *Les itinéraires de Jésus. Topographie des Evangiles,* Paris, Payot, 1930; French translation by Jacques Marty of the third German edition). The French Durkheimian Maurice Halbwachs would base himself simultaneously on Abel and Vincent, and on Dalman to write *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre Sainte*. This book completes, on a specific point, earlier research by the author on the function of the memory of religious groups (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris PUF, 1925, chapter VI).[1] Even though the exegesis is somewhat brief (Halbwachs mainly quotes Renan and uses his "history or legend?" framework), Halbwachs, in the French tradition of the history of religion, handled his subject with agnostic respect. "If the goal of humanity throughout the ages has been to create or recreate gods in order to surpass itself, these stones upraised and preserved by the crowds, by successive generations of men, enable us to discover the traces of the essence of the religious phenomenon. These traces were not made by a

[1] *La topographie légendaire*, published in 1941, was to be Halbwach's last book. Arrested in the Spring of 1944, he died of typhoid in Buchenwald the following year.

single being, human or supernatural, but by groups motivated by a collective faith, inspiring regardless of its actual nature, who have evoqued this being in every era, it and those associated with it." (p.205-206)

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