



In Their Image

Jerusalem in Nineteenth-Century English Travel Narratives

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I propose to discourse here, for a little while, on a body of men whose works form a staple ingredient in the supply of literary food consumed by our friend the "reading public." Every now and then a young gentleman returns from Greece or Egypt, with a beard and an M.S. In a week or two, the new journal of Travels in the East is announced, and a new "oriental traveller" takes his place among the "wise men" who have preceded him.¹

-The Illustrated London News

Jerusalem in European Travel Writings

European travellers to Palestine in the nineteenth century arrived with certain attitudes about the land, its history, people and sites that were essentially a product of European knowledge and imagination regarding Palestine and the East in general.



Nineteenth century Western travelers to Jerusalem often visited the sites toured by previous travelers, or those they read about in the Bible. This quasi-map of "Palestine or The Holy Land Exhibiting the Principal Places mentioned in the Old & New Testaments," drawn and engraved by W. Warwick and published by William McKenzie in approximately 1850, is one example of how the textual was made real.

Such knowledge was not only a result of Europe's historical encounters with Palestine, but was continuously shaped and reshaped by what the visitors themselves were writing. Nineteenth-century visitors to Palestine were often looking for the things they read about in previous travel narratives. For example, when Benjamin Disraeli arrived in the port city of Jaffa in 1831, he visited a person whose grandfather had been mentioned by Comte de Volney in *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte* more than forty years earlier. The grandfather was Jean Damiani, described by Volney as a descendent of a Venetian family that had migrated long ago to Palestine. However, according to Disraeli, the young Damiani was far from thrilled by Volney's mention of his grandfather. In fact, as Disraeli noted, he "was so appalled by our learning" of his grandfather "that had we not been Englishmen, he would have taken us for Sorcerers."²

Since neither Damiani was an individual of any importance in the political or religious life of Palestine, it is striking that they appeared in the narratives of two of the most famous European visitors to Palestine. It is also significant to note that in the same letter Disraeli chose not to describe Jerusalem in detail, but referred his sister to Edward Clarke's 1801 description of the city. Disraeli's references to earlier travellers imply not only that he - and his fellow travellers - were assigning authority to the earlier texts, but also indicate that his choice of places to visit was based on the books he had read before his departure. In a sense, his visit to Jerusalem was taking place in the context of earlier visits by his compatriots.

Disraeli was but one of many travellers who employed and incorporated earlier texts into their own. It is important to keep in mind that such a construction of knowledge was occurring within the larger context of



European colonialism and domination of large portions of the earth's surface. This expansion was justified not only on the basis of the economic and political needs of Europe, but was often explained by the rhetoric of racial and cultural differences. Therefore, it is important that a distinction be made between the knowledge on Palestine - or what Michel Foucault refers to as the "discourse" - and Palestine itself.³ Since discourse presents narratives and disseminates through social institutions, its production is linked therefore with the context - social and political - in which it is produced and with the procedures through which it is distributed.⁴

In this sense the attitudes of the British visitors towards Jerusalem must be placed less in the context of Jerusalem itself and more in the context of Britain, its social institutions, and its - and Europe's - relation to, and ambitions for, Jerusalem at the time. It is only through this context that it is possible to speak of a general European - in this case British - attitude towards Palestine. Edward Said refers to "textual attitudes"⁵ which grant certain authority to texts over the material reality itself. To explain his point, Said wrote that this attitude is the kind of "view attacked by Voltaire in *Candide*, or even the attitude to reality satirized by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*." These writers knew well, he argued, "that it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books - texts - say."⁶

The attitude of nineteenth-century European travellers to Palestine can be described as "textual," because it stemmed primarily from a body of already-existing European texts. For most travellers at the time, the real Palestine was the one described in the books rather than the one they saw before them.

Said explores the relationship between European colonization - or plans to colonize - the eastern Mediterranean and the holding of textual attitudes. He argues that Napoleon's attitude towards Egypt was an example, in that Napoleon's knowledge of Egypt came from books, i.e., Volney's *Voyage*, as previously pointed out. Said maintains that it was precisely the knowledge that Napoleon received from books that made him desire to colonize Egypt: it taught him about an Orient that is silent, open to European dominion, and available because Europeans alone can understand it. Said wrote:

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual . . . is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it . . . Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.⁷

Henceforth, texts not only represent other regions, but in a sense *create* them inasmuch as they assign meaning to them. As Napoleon's Egypt was originally constructed in authoritative books, so was Palestine for the European visitor or pilgrim. And although arrival in the East itself represents a major leap from textual knowledge to real experience with the East, that encounter can confirm in the mind of the reader the authority of the originally textual source of knowledge.

Travel narratives written in the nineteenth century about Palestine indicate that visitors possessed a fairly detailed knowledge about the history of the places they visited.



However, this knowledge was limited only to certain sites in the land. Because their knowledge came from books, their choice of places to visit was limited to those they read about. In a sense, earlier narratives served as guidebooks and cultural references. This meant not only that visitors assumed that they understood what they saw, but also that they understood what they had *not* read about, as well. Events and places to which the visitors failed to find any textual references were often viewed as worthy of dismissal. They were considered to be unintelligible, backward, or, in the best case, a product of an outside intervention. In this sense it could be said that for its nineteenth-century European visitors, Palestine - and the Orient in general - was "a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seem to have their origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text"⁸ written or imagined previously by someone else.⁹

The "imaginaire" that was Jerusalem to the European visitors is a good example of Said's point regarding the *topos* vs. place. For in reality, it was a vibrant city with a diverse and large population - in regard to the standards of Palestine of the time. It was a district seat for the Ottoman administration and a centre of worship for people of many faiths who would arrive in the city on certain holidays from different parts of Palestine and the world. Yet, its image in the writings of British authors was that of another place, a place where a particular history comes to life. Everything the travellers saw in the city seemed to confirm something they already knew.

A number of primary attitudes and perceptions regarding Jerusalem appeared continuously in the writings of British travellers to the region in the nineteenth century. These perceptions were lucid enough to function primarily as motifs through which the visitor *viewed* the city, rather than

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learning about it. They included viewing Jerusalem as a holy city, as a biblical location, as a devastated desolate land, as an Oriental city, and as a land most relevant to fulfilling millenarian prophecies.¹⁰

A Holy City

Perhaps the most obvious image of Jerusalem in nineteenth-century English travel writing is that of Holy Land. The city has been viewed for centuries as a place of divine holiness by all three great Abrahamic religions. However, in the case of nineteenth-century English speaking visitors, this image of Jerusalem as a holy city did not translate fully into acts of pilgrimage as it had in previous centuries. Instead, the city was viewed primarily as a place that brought the visitor closer to the world of the Bible. As a holy city, Jerusalem was viewed as a timeless place in which events of the biblical past continued to be taking place despite the passage of centuries. It was as if the journey to the city was a voyage to the past, to the time of the prophets, Jesus, and His disciples. In a sense the traveller's experience in Jerusalem occurred in two different times simultaneously, the time of the visit and the narrative time of the Bible. This experience of dual time emerged in travel narratives through a concurrent reporting on the events relating to the travellers' arrival at each site, and the biblical event that had occurred at the site. In some instances the visitors, walking in the footsteps of Jesus, recited the biblical passages that mentioned the visited location. This was exactly what William Hepworth Dixon (1821-1879), who visited Jerusalem around 1860, did every time he passed by a site mentioned in the Bible. As he wrote in the introduction to his book *The Holy Land*:

In reading my camp Bible . . . on the spots which it describes so well, I was surprised to find how much good history lies overlooked in that vast



This 1840s print of "Modern Jerusalem" includes a pastoral scene in the foreground, and a shimmering city on the horizon. Source: J.C.Armytage, after a photo published in *The Christian in Palestine*.

*treasury of truth. My book is a picture of what I then saw and read.*¹¹

A key issue in Dixon's narrative is, therefore, the act of "seeing and reading" at the same time. Not only does it show what exactly he was interested in seeing in Palestine, but it also illustrates the kind of lenses through which he was viewing the country. Furthermore, not only did Dixon view Palestine "textually," but in writing about it in terms of "places and verses," he was participating in the production of an English "textual attitude" towards Palestine as well. In his preface to the book, the reader is told that Dixon's aim in writing "is to afford the untravelled reader a little help in figuring to himself the country and the events which occupy so many of his thoughts."¹²

It might appear that because of his reading of biblical verses at sites he considered holy, Dixon was, in some sense, on a pilgrimage. Nonetheless, even if this was the case, his was not a pilgrimage in the traditional - or

ritualistic - sense of the word. Unlike the Russian or Greek pilgrims who used to arrive in Jerusalem by the thousands during the Easter season to participate in the celebrations in Jerusalem, Dixon's visit to Jerusalem was an arrival into a certain past. This past was connected only to the Judeo-Christian tradition and had no room to include anything else.

The Scot traveller, Norman Macleod (1812-1872), visited Jerusalem around 1860 and described what he "saw" when he stood in front of the Dome of the Rock:

*Standing here one loves to linger on earlier days and to recall the holy men and women, the kings, high priests and prophets who came to this spot to pray-whose faith is our own, whose sayings are our guide, whose life is our example, and whose songs are our hymns of worship.*¹³

This kind of imagery led many travellers to



anticipate their arrival in Jerusalem and describe their first encounter with Jerusalem as the most ecstatic experience. Charles Bell (1818-1898) expressed his enchantment in his 1887 book by reciting the following verses:

*I count it, O Jerusalem, a joy,
A life's great privilege to gaze on thee;
This hope I fondly cherished from a
boy,
And thou art now a very part of me.*¹⁴

Precisely because an image of Jerusalem - and Palestine in general - was been fostered in the mind of the Christian since childhood that arrival in the city was an event long anticipated by the traveller. Rev. John Welsh Dulles (1823-1887) described how, despite his admiration for Egypt, leaving it was less agonizing because he was going to Palestine:

*Farewell, now, to Egypt! Her Nile, her
pyramids, her tombs, her temples, her
obelisks, her fertile fields, her poor
oppressed people, all dwell in our
hearts. But we leave them, not
reluctantly, since PALESTINE is before
us.*¹⁵

After such anticipation, the traveller experienced a great sense of joy, similar to that expressed by Eliot Warburton (1810-1852):

*It was indeed Jerusalem - and, had the
Holy City risen before us in its
palmiest days of magnificence and
glory, it could not have created deeper
emotion, or been gazed at more
earnestly or with intense interest.*¹⁶

It is perhaps due to these expectations that many travellers felt a certain level of disappointment after they toured the physical city. For the land in which they believed that "God Himself established laws and commandments, dispatched angels as emissaries, and conducted conversations with people"¹⁷ was not as glorious as they

expected. This disappointment is connected to another preconception of Jerusalem, namely that of a desolate and devastated Land.

A Biblical Site

To many of its nineteenth-century British - and American - visitors, Jerusalem was primarily a biblical land. This perception, although in some regards similar to that previously described, is, nonetheless, different both in causes and effects. The first is connected with viewing Jerusalem as a holy site inhabited by the divine and attainable through pilgrimage and devotion. The second is more of a theological position that relates to biblical history rather than to pilgrimage. Jerusalem was viewed as the historical site most relevant to understanding the biblical message. This perception of the place was not only common among biblical researchers and archaeologists, but was shared by many churchmen and other Protestant visitors.

Studying the geography and landscape of Jerusalem - and Palestine in general - was more than ever before viewed as a necessity for a Christian to better understand the Bible. Scores of biblical scholars and archaeologists started to arrive in Jerusalem - especially from the late 1830s on - to look for sites mentioned in the Bible that were as yet unknown or unmarked by shrines. In quite a few cases visitors were able to find or locate ruins connected to such sites. The American theologian turned archaeologist, Edward Robinson, identified the water spring known as the Virgin's Fountain or the Gihon spring outside the walls of the city and concluded that it was the dragon spring mentioned by the prophet Nehemiah.¹⁸ "I went out by night through the valley gate towards the dragon spring and the dung gate, and I inspected the places where the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down and her gates burnt. Nehemiah



2:13," write Robinson.

He, and others after him, arrived in Jerusalem with a copy of the Bible in hand and proceeded to look for certain sites. This phenomenon continued throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. The practice was not only to locate sites mentioned in the Bible, but went even further to include studies of nature, traditions, and customs of the people and even the climate of the country. The English missionary and scholar, James Edward Hanauer (b. 1850), studied the plants of Palestine and the folklore of its people in order to understand better certain Biblical references.¹⁹ Born in Damascus of Swiss and Jewish parentage, Hanauer became a canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem and an active member in both the Palestine Exploration Fund and the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews.²⁰ In a long letter sent to the PEF dated 24 May, 1906, Hanauer presented his observations about the type of figs growing in Palestine. As is apparent from the letter, he studied different kinds of figs, their seasons, and their Arabic names. Towards the end of his letter, however, his real motives for conducting such a study become apparent:

It seems to me that the point in our Lord's action with regard to the fig tree on the way to Bethany was this, that though the tree was at that early season, covered with leaves, He did not find any figs at all on it, either Nephel or deffur. The former do not ripen but as the name implies "fall off" early in May, unless, as I have been told, they are treated in a special manner with a drop of olive oil, when they enlarge and become the luscious "deffur." I shall however make further inquiries on this point, and let you know in case I ascertain anything new.²¹

Tourists also started to turn the Bible into a travel guide or a road map. In this case, the arrival at biblical sites was not only bringing the tourist closer to the world of the divine but was attesting beyond any doubt the authenticity of the Bible. This semi-psychological proof was attained mainly through the feeling that the visitor experienced upon arriving at a familiar place. This familiarity was connected with images of Palestine that had been formed in the minds of the believers since childhood. These images were attained through Bible readings, Sunday school attendance, and similar forms of Protestant upbringing. The search of English visitors for sites named in the Bible was often less connected with research and more with the desire to experience the biblical environment. One consequence of this desire was that Jerusalem and its people were viewed as essentially still living in biblical times. Travellers even visited houses that they presumed had belonged to people mentioned in the Bible. In fact it was not unusual for tourists to buy photographs of houses described as belonging to biblical characters. One house that appeared in a photograph by the Italian photographer L. Fiorillo from around 1870s was labelled as that of Lazarus', and another in Jaffa that appeared in numerous photographs was described as belonging to Simon the Tanner.

In a sense, Palestine in general had become more than just a land connected to faith, but one transformed into a heritage claimed by every visiting Protestant Christian. As an important consequence of such perceptions, Palestine itself was reduced to sites mentioned in the Bible. As far as tourists were concerned, Palestine was nothing more than Jerusalem and its environs. Consequently, in most travel narratives the small village of Al-Ezariyeh - referred to as Bethany - was mentioned, while Haifa, a large port city in Palestine with great



economic and political importance, was rarely named. Rev. David Austin Randall (1813-1884), author of *The Handwriting of God in Egypt, Sinai, and the Holy Land*, commemorated his arrival in "Bethany" with the following verses:

*And this is Bethany! and here abode
The favored family whom Jesus loved;
To whose warm, humble welcome, 't
was his wont,
Tracking the path that now I passed
along,
Oft to retire from foes and wavering
friends.*²²

As these verses suggest, Bethany's importance was due only to its being the place where "the favored family," i.e., the biblical Lazarus and his sisters, had once lived. In the same manner, Rev. Randall and other travellers ignored cities not mentioned in the Bible and largely ignored Jerusalem's Islamic sites and shrines as well as the entire social and economic setting of the city. Markets were rarely described, homes were not mentioned, and the cultural life of the city was largely ignored. One implication of this focus on biblical Jerusalem was the lack of interest in the history of the people who lived there. Jerusalem was presented as almost an empty place. This emptiness, however, did not necessarily mean that Palestine had no native population. Rather, it is possible that emptiness meant that it had no "civilized" population since it was not yet subject to European political control. An example of the "absence" of the local inhabitants can be seen in the account provided by the American John Lloyd Stephens who travelled to Palestine, Egypt, and Jordan in 1835. He had no problem recognizing the geographical landscape of Jerusalem as he stood on the Mount of Olives and the following thoughts went through his mind:

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*As I gazed upon the vast sepulchral
monuments, the tombs of Absalom, of
Zachariah, and Jehoshapat, and the
thousands and tens of thousands of
Hebrew tombstones covering the
declivity of the mountain, I had no
doubt I was looking upon the great
gathering place, where, three thousand
years ago, the Jew buried his dead
under the shadow of the Temple of
Solomon.*²³

The type of imagery Stephens enunciated here was sometimes sketched in the illustrations of the holy places and biblical landscapes done by visiting artists. The work of the artists - later on the photographers - occupied a part of every travel book published in the nineteenth century. William Bartlett (1809-1854) visited Jerusalem twice in 1842 and 1853 with the aim of writing "clear, connected and accurate view of the city."²⁴ His two books were filled with illustrations and sketches of Jerusalem he drew on site.²⁵ Eighty-one illustrations from Bartlett's first journey were also used by Henry Stebbing (1799-1883) in his book *The Christian in Palestine*.²⁶ Similarly, the drawings of David Roberts that appeared in a book of lithographs in 1842 also appeared in many publications written on Palestine by other travelling authors. The works of the two artists, among others, were appearing regularly in illustrated editions of the Bible.

One outcome of the artists' encounter with Jerusalem was that it furthered the process of displacement of the nineteenth-century landscape of the city. Images of the contemporary city were viewed as if belonging to the Jerusalem of the first century. In other words, the timelessness of the biblical message reached new heights through which a nineteenth-century image of a shepherd was seen as an accurate depiction of shepherds mentioned in the Bible. In the 1850s the English Pre-Raphaelite,²⁷ William



Holman Hunt (1827-1910), produced scrupulously detailed figural paintings of biblical themes.²⁸ Advocating accuracy and precision in depicting biblical scenes, Hunt argued that the artist must "visit the Holy Land and witness first hand the places and types of people mentioned in the Bible."²⁹

The result of the work of the artists - and later on photographers - was that in the minds of the general public a certain "fixity" was associated with Jerusalem and Palestine. The assumption was that the way people dressed and behaved in the nineteenth century was the same as that of biblical times. Countless images of events, people, and places were assigned new meanings most relevant to the Bible. This phenomenon was only confirmed in the narratives of many travellers who used such images in their books. In his *Wandering in Bible Land*, Daniel Long Miller (1841-1921) described how things had never changed in the Holy Land since the times of Jesus. After he saw a man working with a plough, Miller was reminded of the biblical verse: "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." What he saw was not merely a metaphor but an indication how things in Palestine had not changed since the days of the prophets, he explained:

Nine years ago when we rode across the plain of Sharon we saw men plowing and sowing as we see them today; no change has been made. [. . .] the plows that we examined were very simple in their construction. A strong, tough piece of wood about three and a half feet . . . This is the plowshare to which reference is made in Joel 3:10.³⁰

In his discussion of the construction of the concept of "fixity," Homi Bhabha pointed out that as a mode of representation "it connotes rigidity and unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition."³¹ The images of a static Holy

Land inspired the biblical imagination of the visitors and their outrage at the same time. For, while filled with a desire to see Jerusalem as an ancient city, travellers were at the same time disappointed that it was not as modern as cities in Europe.

Devastated Land

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! I do believe one sight of thee would nerve me to the sticking point. And yet to gaze upon thy fallen state, my uncle tells me that of the Temple not a stone remains. 'Tis horrible. Is there no hope?"³² Although this declaration was uttered by a fictional character, Disraeli's Alroy, it reflects nonetheless a sentiment common among English and American visitors to Jerusalem in the nineteenth century. The long-awaited encounter between the devout believer and the real Jerusalem often aroused in the visitor a grand sense of disappointment. The imagined glory of Jerusalem was contrasted with the squalor of a physical Islamic city. In such a comparison the earthly Jerusalem - or al-Quds - had little chance of impressing the visitor and was often described, as a result, as backward, undeveloped, devastated, desolate, and sparsely populated. This negative impression was due not only to a comparison of the actual city with its imagined glorious past alone, but was also a result of contrasting a small city with the famous and much larger cities of Europe, such as London or Paris. In his *Handbook for Travelers*, published in 1876, Karl Baedeker wrote that:

[T]o most travellers, [Jerusalem] is a place of overwhelming interest, but at first sight many will be sadly disappointed in the Holy City . . . It would seem at first as though little were left of the ancient city of Zion and Moriah, the far-famed capital of the Jewish empire; and little of it indeed is to be discovered in the narrow,



In 1905, Jerusalem's Damascus Gate was the entrance to a squalid city. After reading accounts of the Holy Land, travelers were disappointed to find scenes like this one; at the same time, that made it easier to seek a city transformed in the western mold. Source: Library of Congress.

*crooked, ill-paved, and dirty streets of the modern town.*³³

The response described by Baedeker can be seen in the narrative of Henry Baker Tristram (1822-1906), who visited Jerusalem around the middle of the century. Tristram was shocked at the extent to which "the Holy Land, the land of the Bible with such singular historical significance, had become devastated and desolate, and unfamiliar to the Western world."³⁴ Eliot Warburton went further to express his disapproval of even the physical landscape surrounding the city: "Not a tree or green spot is visible; no sign of life breaks the solemn silence; no smile of nature's gladness ever varies the stern scenery around . . . A broken and desolate plain."³⁵

After seeing Jerusalem for the first time, the artist William Bartlett also described it as a "bleak and desolate" place that had "nothing grand or striking" about it. He wrote that "all that meet the eye" after arriving in Jerusalem were "a line of dull walls, a group of massive towers, a few dark olives, rising from the dead and sterile plain."³⁶

That Jerusalem did not live up to the expectations of its English visitors was connected not only to their expectations, but also to the feeling that it was a site they already knew. Rev. Randall went even further than Bartlett, Warburton, or Tristram in comparing his vision of Jerusalem to what he found on the ground. In the context of his description of the Mount of Olives, Randall actually wrote that "of the palm trees of the



valley, not a single one is left, and the two gigantic cedars that once stood near its summit have disappeared."³⁷

This sense of losing Jerusalem's biblical landscape was also experienced by D. L. Miller. Arriving in Palestine for the second time, shortly after the completion of Jaffa-Jerusalem railway, Miller expressed irritation at the whole idea of reaching Jerusalem by train. He wrote:

*From Jaffa to Jerusalem by railway robs this most interesting journey of much of its old-time sentiment and brings it down to the common place of every-day life. The first feeling that comes to us as we stand on the platform at the depot in Jaffa and hear the bell ring and voice of the conductor shouting, 'All abroad for Jerusalem,' is that a great sacrilege has been committed in the very fact of building a railroad in the Holy Land.*³⁸

On the one hand, travellers were disappointed by the lack of modern industrial progress in Palestine, and on the other, they were expressing a sense of resentment against such progress. This kind of ambivalence towards Jerusalem confirms, in my view, that to the traveller the journey to Palestine was a journey back in time. The goal of the traveller was not to reach the Ottoman city of al-Quds but an imagined biblical past.

Oriental City

On a few occasions, Jerusalem was presented by nineteenth-century travellers as an exotic Oriental city belonging to the world of Islam. Although visitors to Jerusalem were no doubt aware that they were visiting a city that had been part of the Muslim world for more than a millennium, they often chose to ignore this fact. Those who mentioned Muslim Jerusalem often expressed their resentment over the presence of "Saracens" in their holy

city. In his description of his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1855, Captain William Allen noticed that, "the first thing that meets his [the visitor's] observation, and offends his piety, on passing the threshold held so sacred, is a party of Turks seated just within the door [of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre], playing at draughts and smoking."³⁹

However, in quite a few nineteenth-century narratives Jerusalem was presented as a largely Muslim Oriental city. William Dixon was one of the few English travellers to state this fact without hesitation. In his book *The Holy Land*, he wrote that "in its social and civil aspects, the Holy City is now Moslem and Arabic."⁴⁰

Nonetheless, neither he nor others saw Jerusalem as a Muslim city in the same manner as Cairo, Istanbul, or Damascus. In all these places, travellers wrote of a certain mystique associated with images taken from books such as *A Thousand and One Nights*,⁴¹ *The Perfumed Gardens*⁴² or even the *Kama Sutra*.⁴³ In the case of Jerusalem, no travellers wrote of any sexual adventures, harems, or even veiled women. Even the most secular-minded of the Oriental travellers turned religious when they arrived in Jerusalem. When the French Romantic author Gerard de Nerval wrote about his 1843 journey to Egypt, he dwelled primarily upon his encounters with exotic dervishes, hashish smokers, women, and homosexuals. However, his only reference to Jerusalem was connected to Solomon and his temple.⁴⁴

Those who viewed Jerusalem as part of the Orient saw it not as a site of exotic experiences connected with sexual desire, but as an ancient city belonging to a world unfamiliar to most Europeans. Authors who described the contemporary social and religious landscape of Jerusalem often focused on its Turkish and Arab leaders and their habits and traditions as if they had



known them intimately. Additionally, certain European visitors and dignitaries were also mentioned in conjunction with the Ottoman pashas. A. W. Kinglake (1809-1891) visited Jerusalem one year after the Egyptian leader Ibrahim Pasha conquered the city. In his *Eothen*, Kinglake describes how Ibrahim Pasha participated in the Easter ceremonies in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Speaking in an approving tone, Kinglake praises the Turkish role in protecting the peace at the church.⁴⁵ It is possible, however, that Kinglake's interest in Ibrahim Pasha was not rooted in the Pasha's tolerance towards Christians, but was also connected to Lady Hester Stanhope's descriptions of the Pasha.⁴⁶ Kinglake devoted an entire chapter of his book - much longer than the one he devoted to Jerusalem - to talk about Lady Hester. Described as a heroic woman and "Queen of the Desert,"⁴⁷ Kinglake wrote that Hester's "habit of refusing to see Europeans added the charm of mystery to a character which, even without that aid, was sufficiently distinguished to command attention."⁴⁸

Still, the writers' choice of places and people to describe was connected to their biblical imagination. William Dixon, who described at length Jerusalem's Islamic shrines and its society in his two-volume book, was concerned primarily with "the scenery and politics of the sacred history."⁴⁹ Dixon was one of the few travellers who left a description of the houses and streets of Jerusalem. Pointing out that only one Jerusalem street was mentioned in the Bible, Dixon took it upon himself to present his reader with a description of the street of Jerusalem.⁵⁰

Streets in the European sense of the words have no existence in Jerusalem. No Oriental city has them, even in name. An Arab who has a thousand words to express a camel, a sword, a mare, has scarcely one word which

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*suggests a street. A Hebrew had the same poverty of speech; for such a thoroughfare as the Broadway, the Corso, or the Strand, is quite unknown to the East. Solomon never saw a Boulevard. Saladin never dreamt of a Pall Mall.*⁵¹

Similarly, John Kitto (1804-1854) devoted his entire book to what he called modern Jerusalem. However, unlike Dixon, his aim was to refute the idea that Jerusalem was a Muslim city. This was based on population statistics that he got from Dr. Shallots, the Prussian consul in the city. In these statistics the Muslim population was shown to constitute only one third of the total population of Jerusalem.⁵² (The issue of the population of the city will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.)

More than writers, artists depicted Jerusalem as an Islamic city. This can be seen in the illustrations of David Roberts, who drew the city and its population on site and thus gave it a more realistic appearance. However, photography of Jerusalem did not reflect this same sense of the city as an Eastern city vibrant with life. Instead, the new medium appears to have focused more on the religious heritage of the city than on its social life.

In some travel books, particularly in travel guides, Jerusalem appeared as an oriental historical site connected to Europe. This perception differs from that of a biblical city that was discussed earlier in the kind of history it narrates. These books focused mostly on Jerusalem's Byzantine and Crusader heritage and to a lesser extent on its Greco-Roman past. Many such works started with a brief historical account of the city, in which Crusader Jerusalem was highlighted in particular. In John Murray's 1875 *Handbook for Travelers in Syria and Palestine* - possibly written by J. L. Porter - a historical sketch of Jerusalem is found in the book's introduction. The main focus of this historical



narrative was the Old Testament period, but the Crusade kingdom and its fall to Saladin in 1187 was also presented.⁵³

This non-biblical emphasis was found mostly among more scholarly travellers. Similarly, the interest in Crusader Jerusalem seemed to appear mostly in the writings of French authors, such as Chateaubriand. The English - and Protestant - travellers were less interested in this history, perhaps because the Crusades were initiated by the Pope and that most Crusaders were Franks and therefore of less interest to Protestant England. Nonetheless, as a result of organized Eastern tours, especially from the 1860s on, many tourists saw Palestine as part of a larger journey that included Rome, Athens, and Egypt. In this context, the Greco-Roman heritage of Jerusalem was sometimes pointed out.

A City to be Reclaimed

In an 1838 book entitled *The Missionary Convention at Jerusalem; or an Exhibition of the Claims of the World to the Gospel*, Rev. David Abeel (1804-1846) described how by the end of the nineteenth century Christianity would dominate the globe. Abeel, identified in the April 1838 issue of *Biblical Repository* as a missionary to China, envisioned the convening of a grand assembly in Jerusalem devoted to understanding the meanings of the Gospel. It would be attended by people from all nations and religions, including Jews and Muslims who had been miraculously converted to Christianity and filled with the sincere "desire for the conversion of the world."⁵⁴ Abeel did not choose Jerusalem as the location of this massive conversion assembly by chance. Nineteenth-century Evangelical Christian groups in England were convinced that the second coming of Jesus was imminent. To prepare for this historic grand event, these groups felt that moving the Jews to Palestine - particularly to Jerusalem -

in anticipation of their conversion would bring the return of Jesus closer.

As the nineteenth century progressed, this view gained ground in English society. In 1875, Captain Charles Warren who led a Palestine Exploration Fund expedition in the 1860s was openly proposing the colonization of Palestine by England. "Let this be done," Warren argued, "with the avowed intention of gradually introducing the Jew, pure and simple, who is eventually to occupy and govern this country."⁵⁵ In the very same year, at a meeting of the Fund in London, Dr. William Thomson, the archbishop of York, echoed Warren's call when he said: "our reason for turning to Palestine is that Palestine is our country. I have used that expression before and I refuse to adopt any other."⁵⁶ Richard Brothers' claims to Palestine might have been, around the turn of the century, merely the ranting of a lunatic, but by 1875 his idea had been widely accepted within mainstream English society.

By then, the idea of "reclaiming" Jerusalem had moved out of the realm of British millenarianism into the English ruling class. British policy towards the Ottoman Empire was directed towards gaining a foothold in its territories. One way in which the European governments managed to penetrate Palestine and other Ottoman territories was through the use of religion. Russia and France had taken the lead in the race to gain influence by means of proclaiming themselves the protectors of certain minorities. "France was the traditional 'protecting power' for the Catholics" and Russia played the same role for the Orthodox Christians.⁵⁷ Tired of lagging behind the French and the Russians in this regard due to the virtual non-existence of a Protestant community in Palestine, the Protestant powers - England and Prussia - had to create their own "protégés".⁵⁸ This was where the theology preached by the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the



Jews and other similar organizations proved handy. The Jewish community of Palestine was about to become the primary excuse for British political intervention in Ottoman politics, and the missionaries were to become England's foot soldiers in this project. In other words, millenarian ideology was now officially in the service of imperialist politics.

At the same time, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, a new political movement was emerging in Europe with an agenda that would greatly influence Jerusalem. Although the Zionist movement was officially established only in 1897, unofficially the idea of promoting a Jewish presence in Jerusalem had been underway since the middle of the century. As early as the 1860s, the English Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore was financing the building of new Jewish neighbourhoods in and around Jerusalem. Similarly, around the same time in Frankfurt an organization known as the "Colonizations Society for Palestine" was established by a Dr. Lorje.⁵⁹ Despite their ideological differences, Zionist and British missionaries were using similar rhetoric and were at the same time working towards populating Jerusalem with Jewish immigrants.

The goal of increasing the Jewish population of Jerusalem was not absent from the minds of British politicians at the time. In 1874, the British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, bought the shares of the Egyptian Khedive in the Suez Canal and a year later declared Queen Victoria the Empress of India.⁶⁰ The region thus acquired even more importance in British policies due to its location on the way to India. Disraeli's colonial policies towards Palestine coincided with his earlier views regarding Jerusalem. As was pointed out earlier, Disraeli had already in the 1830s declared his wish through the protagonist in *Alroy*, for the creation of a "national" life for the Jews in Palestine. "You ask me what I

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wish," announced Alroy, "my answer is a national existence which we have not . . . my answer is the Promised Land . . . my answer is Jerusalem."⁶¹

British support for the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War (1853-56) had strengthened British influence in internal Ottoman affairs. The core assignment of the British Consulate in Jerusalem, it appears, was to extend British protection to most Jews in the city and to promote actively their welfare and safeguard their interests.⁶² In this regard, enlarging the size of the Jewish community in Jerusalem meant extending further the power of the British consul in the city. Travel narratives continuously reflected this British desire. The authors not only focused on the size and activity of the Jewish community, but provided in many accounts population figures of the different religious communities in Jerusalem. These numbers often suggested that the Jewish community was the largest in the city, a claim that cannot be independently verified since most of the travellers gave their sources as the British or Prussian consuls of Jerusalem. Citing a visitor to Jerusalem, Karl Marx put the number of Jews in 1854 at 8,000 and Muslims at 4,000;⁶³ and Murray's *Handbook for Travelers* placed the number of Jews in the city at 10,000 in 1875 and Muslims at 4,000.⁶⁴ According to the Ottoman population estimate of 1847, however, there were 25,000 Muslims in Jerusalem, 10,000 Christians and 10,000 Jews.⁶⁵ Similarly, the official Ottoman census of 1871 placed the number of Muslims in the city at 1,025 households, Christians at 738 households, and Jews at 630 households.⁶⁶

It is possible that the Ottoman statistics were not completely accurate, especially since many Jews were not subjects of the Ottoman Empire but foreign nationals who had migrated from Eastern Europe. However, even if we accept the statistics given by the



visitors about the size of the Jewish community, it is rather hard to accept their estimates of other communities, the Muslim, in particular. First, there is no reason to believe that the Muslim community in Jerusalem was declining in size at the time. Second, if the European visitors and consuls had their own manner of determining the size of the Jewish community, it is very unlikely that they would have had similar access to the Muslim community. Therefore, it is my conviction that the size of the Jewish population of Jerusalem was highly exaggerated to boost the role of the British institutions that were concerned with the Jews.

Creating Ownership

The construction of images of Jerusalem by nineteenth-century English travel writers resembles in many ways the process of making studio portraits. The photographer carefully prepares the object of the photograph and decides how best to depict it. The result is always a fixed and a silent image of the photographed object. In my view, nineteenth-century narratives of Jerusalem did just that; they produced an image of a city that is silent, fixed in time and space, and presented from only certain angles. Nonetheless, like photographers, each travel writer represented Jerusalem from certain angles in his or her own way.

The perceptions outlined above refer only to the primary ways of seeing Jerusalem common among most English visitors at the time. Despite the distinctiveness of each of these perceptions, their simultaneous appearance must have made them interrelated in the eyes of the reader. Additionally the recurrence of certain themes - such as Jerusalem's connection to the Bible - within all of these different perceptions alludes to the fact that the accounts also informed one another. All indications suggest that the

melange of these images helped construct an image of Jerusalem as a site of desire, heritage, and aspiration. In my view, this image of Jerusalem was what led to its eventual colonization by England in 1917 and to British and American support for the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. By promoting the Jews as the future heirs of Palestine, nineteenth-century English visitors were already paving the way towards its colonization. The interest in the Jewish life in Palestine far exceeded its size and political weight at the time. Even the most radical critics of the British capitalist system saw Jerusalem as essentially an empty place without ownership. Marx described Jerusalem in an article that appeared in the 15 April, 1854, issue of *The New York Tribune* with these words:

*All the religious rubbish of the different nations, says a recent traveller, live at Jerusalem separated from each other, hostile and jealous, a nomad population, incessantly recruited by pilgrimage or decimated by the plague and oppressions. The European dies or returns to Europe after some years; the Pashas and their guards go to Damascus or Constantinople; and the Arabs fly to the desert. Jerusalem is but a place where everyone arrives to pitch his tent and where nobody remains.*⁶⁷

By presenting everyone in the city as coming from somewhere else, Marx denies the existence of a native Jerusalem population. Those who did not go so far presented its people - and the entire Palestinian population - as "totally destitute of all moral sense," to use the words of Tyrwhitt Drake. This view of Palestinian Arabs was very common, especially among the most prominent English visitors to the country. The people of Palestine were stupid (the Dean of Westminster), brutally ignorant (C. R.



Conder), ruthless uneducated destroyers (Lord Kitchener), savages (Sir Flinders Petrie), and lagging behind in "material civilization" (R. A. S. Macalister).⁶⁸ As has been true of all colonial experiences, dehumanizing the natives is an essential part of the strategy. In this sense, Palestine was hardly an exception.

Endnotes

- ¹ *The Illustrated London News* (London), 29 November 1851.
- ² Disraeli, Benjamin, *Letters: 1815-1834* ed. J. A. W. Gunn, John Matthews, Donald M. Schurman and M. G. Wiebe (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 110.
- ³ See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discourse of Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 215-237.
- ⁴ Said, Edward, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) 94.
- ⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 92.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 92-3.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.
- ⁹ Cesare Segre defines *topos* as "a structure endowed with strong internal coherence and with valences which allow it to be linked to external argumentation." Segre adds that a *topos* is not a theme inasmuch as a *motif*, in the sense that it presents the reader with a primary way of viewing rather than with a narrative. See Cesare Segre, *Introduction to the Analysis of the Literary Text*, trans. John Meddenmen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) 283.
- ¹⁰ Similar perceptions were discussed in a study by Yehoshua Ben-Arieh. However, this study presents a reading of these perceptions that is very different from that of Ben-Arieh. See Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images of the Holy Land," in *The Land that Became Israel: Studies in Historical Geography*, ed. Ruth Kark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 37-53.
- ¹¹ William Hepworth Dixon, *The Holy Land*. Vol. 1, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1865) v-vi.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, v.
- ¹³ Norman Macleod, *Eastward: Travels in Egypt, Palestine and Syria* (London: Strahan, 1869), quoted in Kernohan, *The Road To Zion*, 56.
- ¹⁴ Charles Bell, *Gleanings from a Tour in Palestine and the East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1887) 74.

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- ¹⁵ John W. Dulles, *The Ride Through Palestine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1881) 19.
- ¹⁶ Eliot Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross; or Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel* (London: Colburn and Co., Publishers, 1852) 231.
- ¹⁷ Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images of the Holy Land," 37.
- ¹⁸ Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem: Rebirth of a City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985) 6.
- ¹⁹ Hanauer is the author of *Folk-Lore of the Holy Land* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935), *Tales Told in Palestine* (London: London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, 1910) and *Table of the Christian and Mohammedan Eras* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1904). He also was the co-editor of *Handbook for Palestine and Syria* (London: Thomaas Cook, 1907).
- ²⁰ Hanauer was a regular contributor to the PEF's *Quarterly Statements* from 1881 until 1910.
- ²¹ Palestine Exploration Fund document PEF HAN/2/39/F+G.
- ²² D. A. Randall, *The Handwriting of God in Egypt, Sinai, and the Holy Land* (Cincinnati: Randall and Aston, 1865) 138.
- ²³ John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, editor Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991) 355.
- ²⁴ Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem: Rebirth of a City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985) 30.
- ²⁵ William Bartlett, *Walks in and about the City and Environs of Jerusalem* (London: Daldby Isbister, 1854), and *Jerusalem Revisited* (London: A. Hall, Virtue & co., 1853).
- ²⁶ Henry Stebbing, *The Christian in Palestine* (London: George Virtue, 1847).
- ²⁷ The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was an English association of artists (1848-1854) that included Hunt, Rossetti, and Millais. Although the group had no clear unifying doctrine, the artists shared an interest in the art of the fifteenth century.
- ²⁸ Donald Rosenthal, *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting 1800-1800* (Rochester: Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 1982) 95.
- ²⁹ Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images of the Holy Land," 41.
- ³⁰ D. L. Miller, *Wanderings in Bible Lands* (Mount Morris: The Brethren's Publishing Company, 1894) 492-3.
- ³¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 66.
- ³² Cited in Miron Grindea, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in Literature* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1968) 173.

- ³³ Baedeker, 19.
- ³⁴ H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel: A Journal of Travels in Palestine, Undertaken with Special Reference to its Physical Character* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1865) 161-163, paraphrased in Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images of the Holy Land," 45.
- ³⁵ Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, 232.
- ³⁶ Gilbert, *Jerusalem*, 30.
- ³⁷ Randall, *The Handwriting of God*, 134.
- ³⁸ Miller, *Wanderings in Bible Lands*, 490.
- ³⁹ William Allen, *The Dead Sea, A New Route to India: With Other Fragments and Gleanings in the East* (London: Longman, 1855) 44.
- ⁴⁰ Dixon, *The Holy Land*, Vol. 2, 7.
- ⁴¹ For more on the influence of the *Thousand and One Nights* imagery on travel, see Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 347-349, and Melman, *Women's Orients*, 63-67.
- ⁴² This Arabic sex manual written by Sheikh Nefzaoui most likely in the sixteenth century was translated by Richard Burton and published in 1886.
- ⁴³ An Indian erotic love manual written in the eighth century and translated into English in the nineteenth century by Burton.
- ⁴⁴ Gerard de Nerval, *Journey to the Orient*, trans. Norman Glass (New York: NY Univ. Press, 1972) 139-149.
- ⁴⁵ A. W. Kinglake, Eothen: *A Classic of Travel in the Middle East* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970) 196.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.
- ⁴⁹ Dixon, *The Holy Land* Vol. 1, 1.
- ⁵⁰ Dixon, *The Holy Land* Vol. 2, 20.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19.
- ⁵² John Kitto, *Modern Jerusalem* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1846) 125.
- ⁵³ *Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine* (London: John Murray, 1875) 4-16.
- ⁵⁴ Review of *The Missionary Convention at Jerusalem; or an Exhibition of the Claims of the World to the Gospel*, by Rev. David Abeel, in *Biblical Repository* (April 1839) 503.
- ⁵⁵ Charles Warren, *The Land of Promise: or, Turkey's Guarantee*, quoted in Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983) 12.
- ⁵⁶ *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statment for 1875*, 115, quoted in Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956) 1.
- ⁵⁷ Alexander Scholch, *Palestine in Transformation 1856-1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development*, trans. William C. Young and Michael C. Gerrity (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993), 50.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.
- ⁵⁹ Scholch, *Palestine in Transformation*, 75.
- ⁶⁰ Blumberg, *Zion Before Zionism*, 147.
- ⁶¹ Disraeli, *Alroy*, quoted in Elon, *Jerusalem*, 135.
- ⁶² See Albert M. Hyamson, ed., *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in Relation to the Jews of Palestine 1838-1914* (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1939) xxxiii-lviii.
- ⁶³ Karl Marx, *New York Tribune* (New York), April, 15, 1854, also reprinted in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1952) 146.
- ⁶⁴ *Handbook for Travelers*, 121.
- ⁶⁵ See Table of Estimated Population of the *Pashaliq* of Jerusalem in Scholch, *Palestine in Transformation*, 29.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.
- ⁶⁷ Marx, *Tribune*, 15 April, 1854.
- ⁶⁸ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 79-80, citing Miriam Rosen, "The Last Crusade: British Archeology in Palestine, 1865-1920" (M. A. thesis, Hunter College, 1976) 18-21.