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Elliott Horowitz

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“Remarkable Rather for Its Eloquence than Its Truth”: Modern Travelers Encounter the Holy Land—and Each Other’s Accounts Thereof

ELLIOTT HOROWITZ

I. “THE THEATRE OF THE MIRACLES OF MY RELIGION”

EARLY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, R. Moses Basola traveled through Palestine and afterward composed an extensive description of the land, its holy places, and its peoples.¹ In Basola’s Hebrew account, of which use was soon made by his younger Italian contemporary Azariah dei Rossi but whose authorship was first determined only in the 1930s by (Israel’s future president) Yitzhak Ben-Zvi,² the Italian rabbi and kabbalist briefly mentioned the Jordan river, which he claimed was “visible from Jerusalem, from the summit of the Mount of Olives.” He added that “it is more than a mile wide at that point.”³

Basola did not explain how he knew that the Jordan (unlike the Dead Sea, with which he clearly confused it) was “more than a mile wide at that point,” or any other point for that matter, but it is easy to understand why he thought that it was, and why readers (at least in Europe) would have believed him. The Jordan, after all, was the river whose waters had miraculously divided, first for Joshua and then for the prophet Elijah and his disciple Elisha. For those who had grown up on such biblical tales—especially for Christians who also associated the river with the Gospel accounts of Jesus and John the Baptist—it was difficult to imagine that “it is not any wider,” as Mark Twain archly wrote in 1869, “than Broad-

1. Basola’s account was first published as an anonymous text in *Shivbei Yerushalayim* (Livorno, 1785). See most recently Abraham David, ed., *In Zion and Jerusalem: The Itinerary of Rabbi Moses Basola (1521–1525)*, trans. D. Ordan (Jerusalem, 1999).

2. David ed., *In Zion and Jerusalem*, 28–29

3. *Ibid.*, 85.

way in New York,” or as the young Theodore Roosevelt later noted in his diary, “what we should call a rather small creek in America.” Yet as a boy in Sunday school, the former ingenuously claimed, he “somehow got the impression that the River Jordan was 4,000 miles long and thirty-five miles wide.”⁴

The gap between the river’s puny size and its religious significance eluded not just R. Moses Basola in the sixteenth century but also, a century later, the Scottish traveler William Lithgow, who in 1610 set out from Paris to Palestine, a trip he later described in his *Rare Adventures and Painefull Peregrinations*. Lithgow, like many of his British contemporaries, was staunchly anti-Catholic and utilized his description of the Jordan for a polemical attack on Papism. “The river Tigris at Rome, & Jordan are not much different in quantity and colour,” he wrote, “and not unlike . . . in their courses: for Jordan falleth in the old Gomorah, and Tigris runneth through the new Sodome.”⁵ Just as Basola, in his religious enthusiasm for the Holy Land, had been able to believe that the Jordan was “more than a mile wide” at the point where it flowed into the Dead Sea, so too was Lithgow propelled by his own anti-Catholic polemic into believing that the narrow river—in which he himself had swum—was “not much different in quantity” from the Tiber.

Mark Twain, who was famously agnostic in matters of religion, was not the first American writer to give expression to the yawning gap between expectation and reality which often confronted first-time visitors to the redoubtable river. In his enormously popular *The Land and the Book*, first published in 1858, the Midwestern missionary William McClure Thomson commented on the “indescribable feeling of disappointment at the Jordan.” Approaching it from the direction of Jericho, the point at which Basola had confidently described the river as “more than a mile wide,” Thomson “expected it to burst on my delighted eyes; but not until we were actually on the very brink did I see water enough to fill a thimble,

4. Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), quoted in Linda Osband, ed., *Famous Travellers to the Holy Land: Their Personal Impressions and Reflections* (London, 1989), 139. For the comment of the teenage Roosevelt during family’s visit to the Middle East in 1872, see Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans in the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park, Pa., 1993), 72, on the basis of *Theodore Roosevelt’s Diaries* (New York, 1927).

5. William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Advantages and Painefull Peregrinations of long Nineteene Yeares Travayles from Scotland to the most famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia, and Africa* (Glasgow, 1906), 229. On Lithgow see, among others, John Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad: 1604–1667* (2nd ed.; New Haven, Conn., 1989), 76–277 *infra*.



[54.] Peter Bergheim. *Jerusalem, Valley of Hinnom*. 1860s. Albumen print. The Edward Lenkin Family Collection of Photography at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

and when there it was hard to believe that what I saw was the whole Jordan.” Like Twain, the Ohio-born Thomson reflected on the difference between “the vastly ensmallled reality” and the great river he had imagined as a child:

When boys we used to sing with vast enthusiasm “On Jordan’s *stormy* banks I stand,” and supposed that it was as big as the Ohio at least, and as stormy as the North West Passage; and something like this must have been in the mind of Watts when he applied the word *stormy* to this little river rambling over this low plain where everlasting *summer* abides. (emphases in the original)⁶

6. W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book; or, Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land* (London, 1882), 612. On Thomson’s book, see John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century Art and Culture* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), 45–47; Elliott Horowitz, “Fourth and Long: Presenting (and Resenting) the Sabbath,” *JQR* 97.3 (2007): 439–40. “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks” by the English hymn writer Isaac Watts (1674–1748) was first printed in John Rippon’s *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors* (London, 1787).

Although François-René de Chateaubriand (1768–1848) had presumably never sung the English hymn by Isaac Watts so well remembered by Thomson, as a fervent Catholic he too carried many religious associations with him when first encountering the Jordan during his brief but intense visit to the Holy Land, in October of 1806. In his romantically rapturous and highly influential *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1810–11) the French aristocrat described his initial confusion when, north of the Dead Sea, his Arab guides drew his attention to “what appeared to be sand in motion.” Upon drawing nearer to this “singular object” Chateaubriand beheld a “yellow current,” which he could “scarcely distinguish from the sands on its shores. It was deeply sunk below its banks, and its sluggish stream rolled slowly on. This was the Jordan.” Although in his youth he had seen “the cascades of the Alps” as well as those of the Pyrenees, and in during his visit to North America in his twenties had marveled at Niagara’s Falls,⁷ Chateaubriand refused to allow his enthusiasm for the Jordan to be dampened by the sluggish stream’s diminutive dimensions.

I had surveyed the great rivers of America with that pleasure which solitude and nature impart; I had visited the Tiber with enthusiasm, and sought with the same interest the Eurotas and the Cephisus [in southern Greece]; but I cannot express what I felt at the sight of the Jordan. Not only did this river remind me of a renowned antiquity, and one of the most celebrated names that the most exquisite poetry ever confided to the memory of man; but its shores likewise presented to my view the theatre of the miracles of my religion.⁸

A century later the Congregationalist clergyman and recently elected MP Charles Leach (1847–1919), who had made, he claimed, no fewer than nine trips to Palestine (the last of which took place in the spring of 1911), published his suitably titled *The Romance of the Holy Land*, in which he too wrote rapturously about what he called “the most remarkable river known to man.” Like Chateaubriand, the Yorkshire-born Leach had trav-

7. On his visit to the falls and its impact, see *The Memoirs of Chateaubriand*, ed. and trans. Robert Baldick (London, 1961), 171–74; George D. Painter, *Chateaubriand: A Biography*, vol. I (London, 1978), 175–80; 184–91.

8. F. R. Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* 3 vols. (Paris, 1851), 2:127; Osband ed., *Famous Travellers*, 32. The classic study of Chateaubriand’s writing on the Holy Land and its influence is Fernande Bassan *Chateaubriand et la Terre-Sainte* (Paris, 1959). See also Naomi Shepherd, *The Zealous Intruders* (London, 1987), 26ff.

eled widely and seen many impressive bodies of water, having “crossed and re-crossed the Seine at Paris . . . walked by the side of the Arno at Florence . . . gazed upon the Tiber at Rome . . . seen the Hudson River of America . . . visited the Niagara in Canada . . . sailed on the noble St. Lawrence . . . glided over the surface of the ancient Nile in Egypt, and . . . sat by the banks of the beautiful Albana at Damascus.” Yet “not any” or even “all of these” together gave him “such pleasure, nor awakened such gratitude and feelings of devotion” as his first sight of the Jordan. “The Christian who for the first time stands by its banks,” wrote Leach, “has kindled within him such emotions as the sight of no other river in the universe can awaken”—adding with remarkable confidence that the Jordan “has a greater place in the affections of Christian men everywhere than all other rivers put together.”⁹

Unlike his fellow Protestant William Lithgow, three centuries earlier, Leach was moved, in the Jordan’s presence, to think ecumenically of the river’s place “in the affections of Christian men everywhere,” rather than to polemicize against the Papists in the “new Sodome” through which “Tibris runneth.” Yet, as we will see, anti-Catholic polemic in Anglo-American travel writing survived well past the seventeenth century and was sometimes interwoven with criticisms of Jewish practice.

The remaining two parts of this essay will turn to two other classic moments in the encounter of modern (Jewish as well as Christian) visitors with the Holy Land—first seeing the city of Jerusalem and visiting the “Wailing Wall” of the Jews. Here too we will see that expectations often clashed with reality, and that visitors were often as busy with what they were carrying in their heads as with what was before their very eyes.

II. “FOR ALTHOUGH ITS CHIEF MERIT IS IN THE STYLE OF ITS COLOURING, THERE ARE MANY FAITHFUL TOUCHES IN IT.”

The Holy Land, as the anthropologist Simon Coleman has recently observed, “occupied a liminal position in Western thought, between the known and the unknown,”¹⁰ but it also served for many travel writers as a Rorschach test, feeding their heads with stimuli that would prompt them to reveal the inner contents of their hearts and minds. Just as he did with regard to the Jordan, Chateaubriand managed, upon first encountering Jerusalem from the “desolate landscape” of Abu-Gosh, to impose his own rich inner experience upon the less than imposing sight that

9. Charles Leach, *The Romance of the Holy Land* (London, 1911), 160–61.

10. Simon Coleman, “From the Sublime to the Meticulous: Art Anthropology and . . .,” *History and Anthropology* 13 (2002): 275.

met his eyes. "I am certain," he later wrote, "that whoever has had the patience, as I did, to read nearly two hundred modern accounts of the Holy Land, the rabbinic collections, and the passages of the ancients on Judea, would still understand nothing."

Among the numerous accounts Chateaubriand had consulted was the Latin itinerary of the "Bordeaux Pilgrim," discussed by Oded Irshai in his contribution to this issue. The "Christianized Jerusalem" of the fourth century, as described by Irshai, is equally evident in Chateaubriand's conception of the city, in which its *historia sacra* extended from the biblical patriarchs through Jesus to the medieval crusades. "My eyes fixed on Jerusalem," he later wrote, "recalling all the memories of history from Abraham to Godfrey of Bouillon, reflecting how the entire world was changed by the mission of the Son of Man." This allowed him to experience the desolate "wilderness" outside Jerusalem as infused with "the grandeur of Jehovah and the terrors of death."¹¹

In addition to the many travel accounts and "passages of the ancients" he consulted, Chateaubriand also made use of Edward Gibbon's magisterial *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–78) but had allowed himself, on at least one occasion, to be taken in by Gibbon's sometimes mock-serious tone. In response to Chateaubriand's citation of the latter's assertion that Christians of the Holy Land had "fixed by unquestionable tradition the scene of each memorable event," Edward Clarke (1769–1822), who had traveled through Palestine several years before the French aristocrat but published his account later, added dryly: "An English Commentator may perhaps suspect the Historian of irony."¹² Clarke, who had been educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, and was eventually appointed the university's first professor of mineralogy, was, as Neil Silberman has remarked, "less a pilgrim than a skeptical scientist," who "had come to the Holy Land with an eye to discovery." An erudite antiquary as well as pioneering mineralogist, Clarke, according to Silberman, was the first traveler "to utilize secular learning rather than ecclesiastical tradition in examining the ancient remains of Palestine."¹³

Yet, despite his more critical approach, the Cambridge don was

11. Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, 2:93–94; F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times* (Princeton, N.J., 1985), 562.

12. Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa* (4th ed.; London, 1817), 4:270. On Clarke's trip to the Holy Land, see Neil A. Silberman, *Digging for God and Country* (New York, 1982), 19–23; Shepherd, *Zealous Intruders*, 17–24.

13. Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 19.

strongly influenced by the rhetorical tone of Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* "from the perusal of which," as he himself acknowledged, "the reader rises as from a pleasing romance."¹⁴ Thus, of first seeing Jerusalem, which he had approached from the north, by way of Ramallah, Clark later wrote:

We had not been prepared for the grandeur of the spectacle which the city exhibited: instead of a wretched and ruined town by some described as the desolate remnant of Jerusalem, we beheld, as it were, a flourishing and stately metropolis; presenting a magnificent assemblage of domes, towers, palaces, and monasteries; all of which, glittering in the sun's rays, shone with inconceivable splendour.¹⁵

One can understand why Lord Byron (1788–1824) was apparently so moved by Clarke's writings on Palestine that, after reading the volume of his *Travels* in which they appeared, he wrote to his fellow Cambridge alumnus "of his desire to go there himself."¹⁶

Yet the "grandeur" and "inconceivable splendour" of Jerusalem breathlessly described by Clarke were less than evident to a subsequent English visitor, the journalist (and later politician) James Silk Buckingham, who traveled through Palestine in 1816. Like Chateaubriand, Buckingham had arrived in the Holy Land shortly before turning forty, and like the former (but unlike Clarke) he too had arrived in Jerusalem from the west—but there the resemblance ends. In his *Travels in Palestine, through the Countries of Bashan and Gilead* (1821), the brash native of Flushing (in southwest England) recorded his deep disappointment upon first setting his eyes on Jerusalem, explicitly contrasting his reaction with the more enthusiastic one of his countryman Clarke:

The appearance of this celebrated city, independently of the feelings and recollections which the approach to it cannot fail to awaken, was greatly inferior to my expectations, and had certainly nothing of gran-

14. Clarke, *Travels*, 4:364. Among the many references to Chateaubriand in Clarke's text and notes, see also *ibid.*, 259, 270, 293–95, 309–10, 346, 364, 372–74, 394. Bassan, *Chateaubriand et la Terre-Sainte*, fails to include Clarke among those writers influenced by Chateaubriand, an influence that seems also to have eluded Silberman in *Digging for God and Country*.

15. Clarke, *Travels*, 4:288–90.

16. Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 23; Eitan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture, 1799–1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism* (Oxford, 2005), 69.

deur or beauty, of stateliness or magnificence about it. It appeared like a walled town of the third or fourth class . . . with scarcely a picturesque object in the whole compass of the surrounding view.¹⁷

Although Buckingham noted that he and Clarke had approached the city from different directions, he clearly understood that the difference between his account of first seeing Jerusalem and that of his older countryman was rooted less in the direction of approach than in their respective approaches to travel writing, especially about the Holy Land. Both had read Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (which had gone through a dozen editions by 1814) before composing their own travel accounts, but Buckingham, who had passed much of his early life at sea and had never been to university, was more successful than his more learned countryman in resisting its seductive influence.¹⁸ Simon Coleman has written perceptively of the potential tensions in nineteenth-century Protestant accounts of Palestine "between attempts to represent the Holy Land accurately . . . and attempts to convey the author's personal experiences of the Holy Land."¹⁹ This tension is reflected in the contrasting accounts of Jerusalem by Clarke and Buckingham but may be further described, especially in the century's first half, as the anxiety over whether to submit to Chateaubriand's powerful influence or to resist it.

The late literary scholar Edward Said, in his modern classic *Orientalism*, which like Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire* is more often "remarkable rather for its eloquence than its truth," contrasted the French aristocrat with his younger English contemporary Edward William Lane, author of *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). The legacy of these two very different writers, asserted Said, "embodies the fate of Orientalism, and the options to which it was limited." In Said's view, after the publication of Lane's *Manners and Customs*, "either one wrote science like Lane or personal utterance like Chateaubriand."²⁰

The six pages devoted to Edward Lane in *Orientalism* have already

17. James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine, through the Countries of Bashan and Gilead* 2 vols. (London, 1822), 1:271, quoted also in Osband, ed., *Famous Travellers*, 27.

18. Bassan, *Chateaubriand et la Terre-Sainte*, includes Buckingham among those travel writers who were influenced by Chateaubriand. On the twelve editions of Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire*, see Shepherd, *Zealous Intruders*, 26–27. On Buckingham, see *Travels in Palestine*, 46–47, 59–66, as well as Y. Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Detroit and Jerusalem, 1979), 43.

19. Coleman, "From the Sublime to the Meticulous," 276.

20. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 176.



[266.] T. W. *Jerusalem, the Valley of Josaphat*. Early 1850s. Salt print. The Edward Lenkin Family Collection of Photography at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

been singled out as the “least satisfactory” in the entire book,²¹ but it should be further noted that like many of his other dichotomies, that posited by Said between writing “science like Lane or personal utterance like Chateaubriand” is greatly oversimplified.²² As we have seen, between the appearance of Chateaubriand’s *Intineraire* and Lane’s pioneering ethnographic work, two Englishmen, Edward Clarke and James Buckingham (neither of whom merits a single mention in *Orientalism*), published travel accounts of Egypt and Palestine in which they sought, each in his own way, to forge a middle path between empirical description and romantic subjectivity. These two travelers, no less than their younger contemporary Lane, left their mark on subsequent Anglo-American writing about the Middle East, in such works as *Eothen* (1844) by Alexander William Kinglake, who, like Clarke, had studied at Cambridge.

21. John Rodenbeck, “Edward Said and Edward William Lane,” in *Travellers in Egypt*, ed. P. Starkey and J. Syarkey (London, 1998), 233.

22. Said himself, some twenty pages later (*Orientalism*, 194), described the work of the British scholar and traveler Richard Burton as occupying “a median position between Orientalist genres represented on the one hand by Lane and on the other by the French writers [such as Chateaubriand] I have discussed.”

“Kinglake’s undeservedly famous and popular work,” sniffed Said, “is a pathetic catalogue of pompous ethnocentrism and tiringly nondescript accounts of the Englishmen’s East.” The literary scholar linked Kinglake with such self-obsessed travelers as Chateaubriand and Lamartine who were more interested in remaking themselves and the Orient than “in seeing what there is to be seen.”²³ Let us look, however, at such passages as the following, from *Eothen*’s tenth chapter:

Christianity permits and sanctions the drinking of wine; and of all the holy brethren in Palestine there are none who hold fast to this glad-some rite so strenuously as the monks of Damascus; not that they are more zealous Christians than the rest of their fellows in the Holy Land, but that they have better wine.²⁴

Is this Lane’s “science” or Chateaubriand’s “personal utterance”? Or is it, rather, of the same cloth as Buckingham’s earlier comments on the monks of Jerusalem:

I am persuaded that they themselves have faith in all the legends which they retail, and that they think their life to be a meritorious one; but as they are still men, they feel sensibly the privations to which they are subject; and as far as I could discover, longed to escape from them.²⁵

Buckingham, whose account was read and admired by T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia),²⁶ may have been more successful than Clarke in resisting Chateaubriand’s influence, but he too was captivated by the discreet charm of the French aristocrat’s prose. After commenting on the “general sterility” of the countryside surrounding Jerusalem and its “frightful barrenness” during the summer, he artfully noted:

If, after these dry details the reader should still, however, desire to see them united . . . in a more general and finished picture, I could do no better than to refer him to that which M. Chateaubriand has drawn;

23. *Ibid.*, 193.

24. Alexander William Kinglake, *Eothen: Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East* (Edinburgh, 1896), 138–39. For excerpts from Kinglake’s comments on Jerusalem and Bethlehem, see Osband, *Famous Travellers*, 58–60, Dennis Silk, ed., *Retrievements: A Jerusalem Anthology* (2nd ed., Jerusalem, 1977), 124.

25. Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine*, 1:278–79; Osband, *Famous Travellers*, 27–28.

26. *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence*, ed. D. Garnett (New York, 1939), 719.

for although its chief merit is in the style of its colouring, there are many faithful touches in it.²⁷

Similarly, after describing a Sabbath among the Jews of Jerusalem and a less than uplifting visit to one of their synagogues (“nothing could be more mean than this subterranean synagogue nothing more paltry than its ornaments”), Buckingham added:

The picture which is drawn of these people by M. Chateaubriand, like that which he has given of the Christians, is remarkable rather for its eloquence than its truth; and, like it too, proves how far enthusiasm, and the infection of holy fervour, may occasion men of the most accurate judgment on general subjects to deceive even themselves on certain points.²⁸

Edward Said later expressed his own ambivalence about Chateaubriand’s *Itinéraire*. “What matters about the Orient is what it lets happen to Chateaubriand,” he wrote, “what it allows his spirit to do, what it permits him to reveal about himself, his ideas, his expectations.”²⁹ Unknown to Said, a similar evaluation of the *Itinéraire* had been made several decades earlier by the Armenian-born scholar and priest Garabed Der-Sahaghian, who remarked of its author that “in going to seek impressions in the East, he was mainly bent on leaving his own forever.”³⁰

III. A FRENCH CATHOLIC, AN ENGLISH JEWESS, AND A SCOTTISH PRESBYTERIAN

It was partly in order to offset the effects of Chateaubriand’s religious enthusiasm that Buckingham made a point of informing his readers in considerable detail of “the extraordinary nature of profligacy and piety” which might be encountered in the Holy City in the span of a single day.³¹

27. Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine*, 2:8–9.

28. *Ibid.*, 1:399–401. For an annotated Hebrew translation of Buckingham’s description of a Sabbath among the Jews of Jerusalem, including the contrast between his impressions and those of Chateaubriand, see Michael Ish-Shalom, *Christian Travels in the Holy Land* (Hebrew; 2nd ed.; Tel Aviv, 1979), 417–20. Passages from his account can also be found in Silk, ed., *Retrievements*, 36–38.

29. Said, *Orientalism*, 173.

30. Quoted by André Maurois, *Chateaubriand*, trans. V. Fraser (London, 1938), 160, evidently from Der-Sahaghian’s *Chateaubriand en Orient* (Venice, 1914), which I have not been able to consult but is included by Bassan (*Chateaubriand et la Terre-Sainte*) in his extensive bibliography.

31. Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine*, 1:395.

"There are some anecdotes detailed, more particularly those witnessed at Jerusalem," he wrote in his preface, "which may be thought . . . unfit for the public eye, but they are too descriptive of the state of manners there to be wholly omitted."³²

Buckingham, however, was bucking the tide of romantic writing about the Holy Land that was slowly but surely turning into a torrent. In October of 1827, during the first visit (of four) that she made to Palestine with her Livorno-born husband Moses, Judith Montefiore (1784–1885) wrote in her "private journal," which was later privately printed: "There is no city in the world which can bear comparison in point of interest with Jerusalem—fallen, desolate, and abject even as it appears—changed as it has been since its days of glory." Mrs. Montefiore, who had studied French in her youth, had probably read Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire*, which was "probably the most widely read book on Palestine" in the early nineteenth century.³³ Just as Chateaubriand, when confronted with the Jordan's disappointing dimensions, had been able nonetheless to feel himself in the presence of "the theatre of the miracles of my religion," so too the Anglo-Jewish pilgrim to Palestine championed mental over visual experience as the key to achieving, at ancient sites "where great events occurred," those "feelings that enlarge the sphere of our sympathies."³⁴

This allowed her to raise Jerusalem above both Athens and Rome, as well as the ancient cities of Egypt (which she and her husband had just visited), as "infinitely" exceeding them in interest, "still abounding, as they do, in monuments of their former grandeur." For Jerusalem, unlike those cities, "depends not for its power of inspiring veneration on the remains of temples and palaces," but rather—like "the home of our youth," even if destroyed—upon the store of memories it evokes. "It is

32. *Ibid.*, 1:xxix. By way of further apology Buckingham added, with more than a touch of irony: "If I have given a colouring to these [anecdotes] which is not in conformity with the reigning taste, I request the readers to pass over them in silence . . . and attribute these defects to my ignorance of the state of public feeling on these subjects among my own countrymen, from having mixed much more with foreigners, than to any wish of mine to shock the prejudices of the one class, or offend the delicacy of the other."

33. Shepherd, *Zealous Intruders*, 26–27.

34. Judith Montefiore, *Private Journal of a Visit to Egypt and Palestine* (1836) 193. On Judith Montefiore's schooling and her visits to the Holy Land, see Sonia Lipman, "Judith Montefiore: First Lady of Anglo-Jewry," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 21 (1968): 287–303; Judith W. Page, "Jerusalem and Jewish Memory: Judith Montefiore's Private Journal," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27 (1999): 125–41; *idem*, *Imperfect Sympathies: Jews and Judaism in British Romantic Literature and Culture* (New York, 2004), 105–32.

almost a matter of necessity,” added Mrs. Montefiore, “that the traveler should have these feelings on visiting Jerusalem,” for “it is only in proportion as he venerates the spot, independent of what he sees at present there, that he can properly estimate its sanctity.” Thus she was able, on the one hand, to assert that Jerusalem “infinitely exceeds in interest” both Athens and Rome, while acknowledging that in the Holy City and its environs “there is everywhere some appalling token of desolation.”³⁵

Some four decades after the Montefiores made their first trip to Palestine the Scottish minister Robert Buchanan (of Tron Parish in Glasgow) made his, described shortly afterward in his *Notes of a Clerical Furlough, Spent Chiefly in the Holy Land* (1859). Like James Buckingham and Mrs. Montefiore before him, Buchanan addressed the clash between expectation and reality when first setting eyes upon the “city of the Great King” (Ps 48.3), which he too had approached from the west. “It is no uncommon thing, I believe,” he wrote, “for travelers approaching by this road, to experience a certain feeling of disappointment when the city first comes into view,” acknowledging that “it is not difficult to understand how this should be the case.” Many travelers, Buchanan noted, accustomed from the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah to thinking of Jerusalem as “the mountain of the Lord’s house, as established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills . . . expect in consequence . . . to find it towering above them on some commanding eminence, and at once filling their minds with an overpowering sense of the grandeur of its position.” Yet, asserted Buchanan, “seen from no side could it meet the expectations they had formed regarding it; but, least of all . . . coming from the side of Jaffa.” For his part, however, “the disadvantages of this line of approach” did not lessen “in the very least the emotion or interest” with which he looked upon the Holy City: “It was Jerusalem—the city of David—the city where David’s Lord and mine was crucified, and that was enough . . . It was not so much the mere city itself as the awe-inspiring events of which it had been the scene, that then occupied my thoughts.”³⁶

Although Vicomte Chateaubriand, who would have heartily consented, was no longer alive when Dr. Buchanan’s book was published, one can easily imagine Judith Montefiore nodding in agreement while reading these lines in her Ramsgate library, despite the potentially jarring reference to Jesus as “David’s Lord.” All three travelers to nineteenth-century

35. Montefiore, *Private Journal*, 194–96.

36. Robert Buchanan, *Notes of a Clerical Furlough Spent Chiefly in the Holy Land* (London, 1859), 120–21.

Palestine—a French Catholic, an English Jewess, and a Scottish Presbyterian—utilized the strategy of displacing the desolate landscape seen by their eyes with the more inspiring sacred history recalled in their minds.

IV. ROME AND JERUSALEM

Yet side by side with the growing focus, with the rise of religious Romanticism, on the traveler or pilgrim's inner experience, a reaction to this celebration of subjectivity is also discernible. "It is neither my desire nor intention to describe emotions and sensations occasioned by the presence of venerable and sacred objects," wrote the Anglican minister George Fisk (d. 1872) during the early 1840s, "for they, of necessity must be peculiar to the tone and habit of individual minds, and therefore . . . generally unsatisfactory to others, whose susceptibilities have never been awakened by the actual presence of the objects to which they may refer." Rev. Fisk, who had been vicar of Walsall (in Lichfield) before setting off, in 1842, on a journey through Europe, Egypt, and Palestine, stated further, in the introduction to his (frequently reprinted) account of that trip, that "mere emotions and sensations are really very inconsiderable matters."⁵⁷ Yet later in that same work, in seeking to describe his experience upon first seeing the city of Jerusalem, Fisk was clearly torn between revealing his emotions and manfully denying their very existence.

JERUSALEM! JERUSALEM! My eyes were indeed resting on its dim and distant reality. I can see the holy city now—how distinctly! I had no emotions—none of those overwhelming gushings of the heart which more enthusiastic travelers have experienced. If I recall my sensations rightly, they partook, more than anything else, of a calm, peaceful, and adoring assurance that what God had promised me in Eden . . . He has really fulfilled for me there—in that sacred spot which lay before me.⁵⁸

Rev. Fisk's solution to his conundrum was to pretend that experiencing a "calm, peaceful, and adoring assurance" that God had indeed delivered what he had promised was fundamentally different from "those overwhelming gushings of the heart which more enthusiastic travelers have

57. George Fisk, *A Pastor's Memorial of Egypt, . . . Jerusalem, and other Principal Localities of the Holy Land, Visited in 1842; With Brief Notes of a Route through France, Rome . . . and Up the Danube* (3rd ed.; London, 1845), 2–3.

58. *Ibid.* The first two words are capitalized and followed by exclamation marks in the original.

experienced.” It is far from certain that his contemporary readers were persuaded.

Those readers would have already gotten a glimpse of Fisk’s inner spiritual world in his remarks, early in *A Pastor’s Memorial*, on first entering Rome—the city of “ancient glory and ruined magnificence,” but also, less appealingly for an Anglican divine who within a decade would deliver a series of seven lectures in London on the evils of “Popery,” the international head-quarters of the Roman Church.³⁹ While attempting, early on that March morning in 1842, to focus on Rome’s “by-gone days,” the pious vicar was plagued by the Eternal City’s “more modern associations, which forced themselves” on his sensitive mind.

Pagan glory, robed in darkness, as the characteristic of the former age; and spiritual degradation, hand in hand with the vast and fearful depravity, as the indication of the latter, supplied the elements of the moral picture on which my mind rested, as I drove within the walls of the modern city, crossing the lazy waters of the ancient Tiber.⁴⁰

The classic comment on Rome’s problematic pastiche of paganism and popery was, of course, that of Edward Gibbon (1737–94), to whom “the idea of writing the decline and fall of the City” came, he later recalled, in October of 1764, as he “sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol while the barefooted [Franciscan] friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter.”⁴¹ Gibbon, who as a teenager had a brief fling with Catholicism, was preceded in this matter by his controversial countryman, the Cambridge-educated Conyers Middleton (1683–1750), who in 1729 published his *Letter from Rome, showing an exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism*. In fact, it was Middleton’s “bold criticism” in his later *Free Inquiry into Miracles* (1749) that had played a crucial role in the young Gibbon’s exit from what he later called “the errors of the Church of Rome.”⁴²

Middleton, who like the mineralogist Edward Clarke eventually became librarian of Cambridge University, wryly wrote of Rome’s Santa Maria Rotonda church in the former Pantheon, rededicated (by Pope Boniface IV in 609) to the Virgin and the martyred saints:

39. *Ibid.*, 16. The lectures, delivered between November 17, 1850, and January 5, 1851, carried such titles as “Popery, a deceiver of souls,” “Popery, a helper of infidelity,” and (in two parts), “Popery, subversive of morality.”

40. *Ibid.*, 15.

41. See Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of My Life*, ed. with introduction B. Radice (Harmondsworth, 1984), 16. See also 143.

42. *Ibid.*, 84–85, 87.

With this single alteration, it serves exactly for all the purposes of the *Popish* as it did for the *Pagan worship* for which it was built. For as in the *old Temple*, everyone might find the *God* of his country, and address himself to that *Deity*, whose religion he was most devoted to; so it is the same thing now; everyone chooses the [ecclesiastical] Patron whom he likes best.⁴³

Middleton's *Letter from Rome* was not only widely read in Anglican circles, it was also widely "borrowed" from by such learned travelers as Joseph Spence. During the summer of 1732 Spence, who was then professor of poetry at Oxford, wrote home from Italy to his mother that "one of the pleasures of being at Rome [is] that you are continually seeing the very place where some great thing or other was done," adding that the "one thing" that mortified him, however, was "that they turn these old Roman things into modern popish ones." In addition to the Pantheon's unfortunate transformation, he mentioned, for example, the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, "where the Roman ladies once a year used to prostrate themselves . . . to beg children and good luck [and] the Christian ladies one day every year now do the same thing there."⁴⁴

Precisely one century after Gibbon "sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol," the young American novelist and critic William Dean Howells (1837–1920), whose then recent biography of Abraham Lincoln had procured for him the post of consul at Venice, set off for Rome, with his new wife and baby daughter, arriving, rather unusually, by way of Genoa, Capri, and Naples. "The first view of the ruins in the Forum brought a keen sense of disappointment," Howells later wrote. "I knew that they could only be mere fragments and rubbish, but I was not prepared to find them so." It was not only the "rubbish" that impaired his ability to appreciate the fragmented remains of ancient arches and columns that had once graced the Forum but also such annoying distractions as "the façade of a hideous Renaissance church."⁴⁵

Like many Protestant travelers before him, the Ohio-born Howells sought to separate Rome's pagan past from its more recent (and regretta-

43. Quoted from the fourth edition of Middleton's *Letter from Rome* (1741) by Slava Klima in idem, ed., Joseph Spence, *Letters from the Grand Tour* (Montreal, 1975), 116, n. 14.

44. Spence, *Letters*, 115.

45. William Dean Howells, *Italian Journeys* (1872; 9th ed.; Boston, 1884), 9, 151. On Howells' campaign biography and others of that genre, see Jill Lepore's delightful essay "Bound for Glory," *New Yorker*, October 20, 2008.

ble) religious history, especially from the “hopelessly ugly” architecture it inspired:

Modern Rome appeared first and last hideous. It is the least interesting town in Italy, and the architecture is hopelessly ugly—especially the architecture of the churches. The Papal city contrives at the beginning to hide the Imperial city from your thought, as it hides it in such great degree from your eye, and old Rome only occurs to you in a sort of stupid wonder over the depth at which it is buried.⁴⁶

The sharp dichotomy between the pagan and papal elements of Rome experienced by Howells soon found its parallel in the dichotomy frequently drawn by Protestant travelers to Jerusalem between the “city of the Great King” and its harsh immediate surroundings. Arriving in Palestine, like Chateaubriand and Buckingham earlier in the century, just before his fortieth birthday, the California lawyer and politician John Franklin Swift (1829–91) later described the challenging three-hour ride from Kiryat Ye’arim to Jerusalem. “The road, as it approaches the holy city, becomes even more stormy and rough. The country, if such a thing were possible, becomes more rugged and inhospitable.”⁴⁷

A dozen years later Mary Sumner (1828–1921), a native of Lancashire, and her husband the Rev. George Henry Sumner (1824–1909)—both of whom are buried in the hallowed grounds of Winchester Cathedral—visited Palestine and its adjacent countries. In his preface to *Our Holiday in the East*, Mary’s highly readable (though largely ignored) account of their visit, which he ably edited, Rev. Sumner (a graduate of Eton and Balliol) wrote of their “long cherished wishes . . . to visit localities familiar to us by name from our earliest childhood, and rendered dear by their association with the Sacred Story of our Lord’s Life on earth.”⁴⁸

Of their approach to Jerusalem from the west, Mrs. Sumner, who in 1876 had founded the Mother’s Union—an Anglican women’s organization still active today—later wrote: “Bare, stony hills stretched out be-

46. Howells, *Italian Journeys*, 152.

47. John Franklin Swift, *Going to Jericho: or, Sketches of Travel in Spain and the East* (New York, 1868), 215. On Swift, see Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, esp. 80–85.

48. Mrs. George Sumner, *Our Holiday in the East*, ed. G. H. Sumner (2nd ed.; London, 1882), v. No mention of Sumner’s account is made, for example, by Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land*, Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture*, or Billie Melman, *Women’s Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918* (2nd ed.; London, 1995).



[265.] T. W. *Jerusalem, the Old City*. Early 1850s. Salt print. The Edward Lenkin Family Collection of Photography at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

tween us and Jerusalem, and the country was dreary and desolate in the extreme." But then, in the same vein as several nineteenth-century travelers before her she quickly added:

But earthly beauty seemed to be as nothing—it was not needed. The city which we were at this moment privileged to see had a beauty and interest quite distinct . . . from earthly associations or material loveliness. No Christian can gaze for the first time . . . on the city of the Great King without a mingled feeling of intense awe, reverence, and devotion.

Whereas seeing the city of Jerusalem inspired in the Sumners "awe, reverence, and devotion," this was hardly their response to the craggy hills of Judea:

Hills and valleys, stony, rugged, desolate, neglected, silent, and lifeless, succeed one another, as though the anger of God rested on this land once flowing with milk and honey. Judea is not beautiful. A shroud of sadness hangs over it like a pall, and forces even an unbeliever to observe that it is different from any other land in the world.⁴⁹

49. Sumner, *Our Holiday in the East*, 82

Side by side with the “Christianized Jerusalem” of Late Antiquity, we see here a “Judaized Judea,” which for these pious Protestants served as a metonym for Judaism and the Old Testament. The Psalmist’s “city of the Great King” was associated in their minds exclusively, at least before they entered it, with the New Testament and the Galilean described in it, sometimes derisively, as “King of the Jews.”

V. THE STONES OF JERUSALEM

Rev. Sumner and his wife Mary, during their 1880 visit to Jerusalem, made sure, as did John Swift a dozen years earlier, not to miss the spectacle each Friday at the Western Wall where, as the latter wrote: “Jews of both sexes and all ages . . . unite in a cry of anguish and lamentation over a desolated and dishonored sanctuary.” Already in 1858 the seasoned American missionary William Thomson had observed that “no traveler thinks of leaving Jerusalem without paying a visit to the Wailing-place of the Jews.”⁵⁰ Like many Western visitors before, them the Sumners were deeply affected:

It was difficult to stand by unmoved. Their forefathers had crucified the Lord of Glory, and they knew it not; the true Light is shining and, and they see it not; the Messiah for whom they sigh has come, but they believe it not; but the days must be drawing near when they will return to Jerusalem, and have it in possession.⁵¹

Mrs. Sumner, whose Mother’s Union now numbers nearly nineteen thousand members in Zimbabwe alone, would undoubtedly be amazed, and perhaps perturbed, not only at the prospect of young soldiers affirming their loyalty to a Jewish state at the very place where she had seen “older Jews weeping bitterly” but also at such ceremonial consequences of the Jewish “return to Jerusalem,” as the four-score new immigrants from southern Africa who recently received their Israeli identity cards “at a welcoming ceremony at the Western Wall . . . in a special gesture by the Interior Ministry.”⁵² The Lancashire native had envisioned something quite different. Her own pious prediction was that after taking possession of Jerusalem “the veil will be taken” from the hearts of the Jews, “God

50. Swift, *Going to Jericho*, 248; Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, 690.

51. Sumner, *Our Holiday in the East*, 138.

52. Raphael Ahren, “Southern African Immigrants Get ID Cards at Western Wall,” *Haaretz*, April 24, 2009. For statistics on the Mothers’ Union, which Mary Sumner founded after her oldest daughter Margaret gave birth, see www.themothersunion.org.

will build up Zion, and appear in His glory, and the Jews' wailing-place shall be no more."⁵³ Paradoxically, many Jewish Jerusalemites now share her hope.

It was already during the first half of the nineteenth century that Jewish prayer and mourning at the Western Wall began to attract the attention of Christian visitors to Jerusalem, many of whom imposed upon it their own theological interpretations. In 1840 the young Irish physician William Wilde (1815–76), who had recently traveled throughout the Mediterranean, singled out Jewish prayer at the Western Wall as one of the scenes that had most moved him. "Were I asked what was the object of the greatest interest that I had seen, and the scene that made the deepest impression on me, during my sojourn in other lands," wrote Dr. Wilde (father of the future playwright), I would say that it was a Jew mourning over the stones of Jerusalem."⁵⁴ Shortly afterward Rev. Fisk of Lichfield, who had visited Jerusalem in 1842, provided his own comments on the weekly spectacle, which, slyly suggesting a connection with perfidious Popery, he described as "humiliation and supplication." The Jews, he reported, "are said to have a persuasion that their prayers will find especial acceptance when breathed through the crevices of that building of which Jehovah said 'Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually' (2 Chr 7.16)." Although among the "aged Jews sitting in the dust" Fisk saw no signs of the "outward manifestation of strong emotion" that he "had been led to expect," there were also present "several Jewesses, enveloped from head to foot in ample white veils," who "stepped forward to various parts of the ancient wall," and kissed them with great fervency."⁵⁵

Fisk's comments about prayer at the Wall were soon echoed by his famed countrywoman, the children's writer Favell Lee Mortimer (1802–78), in the second part of her *Far Off* (1852), devoted to Asia and Australia—neither of which she had visited. Addressing her "little readers," Mrs. Mortimer (a daughter of Barclay's bank cofounder David Bevan and wife of London minister Thomas Mortimer) informed them that "every Friday evening a very touching scene takes place" in Jerusalem

53. Sumner, *Our Holiday in the East*, 138.

54. Wilde, *Narrative of Journey . . . along the Shores of the Mediterranean* (1840), quoted in Osband, ed., *Famous Travellers*, 155. On the remarks by modern travelers about the Jews of Jerusalem, see also Elliott Horowitz, "As Others See Jews," in *Modern Judaism: An Oxford Guide* (Oxford, 2005), 418–23.

55. Fisk, *A Pastor's Memorial*, 290–91. In a later edition (1865) the pious pastor wrote less cautiously that "the Jews have a persuasion" (*ibid.*, 199). For an annotated Hebrew translation of Fisk's comments on Jerusalem and its Jews, see Ish-Shalom, *Christian Travel*, 539–43.

near the Mosque of Omar. “There are some large old stones there,” wrote Mrs. Mortimer, “and the Jews say that they are part of their old temple wall, so they come at the beginning of their Sabbath . . . and sit in a row opposite the stones.” Upon arriving, the Jews “read their Hebrew Old Testaments, then kneel low in the dust, and repeat their prayers with their mouths close to the old stones; because they think that all prayers whispered between the cracks and crevices of these stones will be heard by God.”⁵⁶ Her “little readers” were likely to think of Jerusalem’s Jews as involved in the cultic worship of large “stones” (a word used no fewer than four times in the brief passage), which served as intermediaries between them and God.

In fact, it would appear that Protestant visitors to Jerusalem conflated the (to them) primitive modes of worship, particularly those of the osculatory variety, practiced by Christian pilgrims of other denominations at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with what Jews were doing nearby at the Western Wall. In *Going to Jericho* (1868) John Swift of San Francisco described the Stone of Unction, on which the body of Jesus had been allegedly been prepared for burial, as “an object of adoration to Christians,” adding that “all the [non-Protestant] denominations” he had seen visiting the church “make it a point to stop here, and kneeling, kiss this stone repeating their prayers.” His description of the Jewish “women and children” at the Western Wall is quite similar. “These,” wrote Swift, “throw themselves on the pavement in paroxysms, or embrace and kiss the great beveled stones, burying their faces in the joints and cavities, while real tears stream down their cheeks.” Of the two ceremonies, however, the Christian and the Jewish, it was the latter that the Californian considered “the most touching . . . to be met with in all the strange and melancholy things to be seen in or about Jerusalem.”⁵⁷

It should be added that Swift was far from being a philo-Semite, and that his general opinion of Jerusalem’s Jews was not particularly high. Elsewhere in his 1868 travel account he referred, in a less than positive tone, to the “commercial character of the Jewish people,” and in his chapter (no. 21) on Jerusalem’s Jewish quarter he noted that although throughout the world the Jews are “equal if not superior to any class of the community” in their “material prosperity,” this was hardly true was “at the great fountain and reservoir of Jewish nationality.” His comment

56. Favell Lee Mortimer, *Far Off, or Asia and Australia Described* (London, 1852; accessed as an e-book through Project Gutenberg).

57. Swift, *Going to Jericho*, 225, 249. See also Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 80–85.

about the capabilities of the city's Jews, among whom this writer is numbered, still rings true today: "When a Jew is good for nothing else he is good to send to Jerusalem."⁵⁸

One is reminded here of the tone of Mark Twain, whose *Innocents Abroad* appeared a year after Swift's travel account, and to some degree (unfairly) eclipsed it. Twain, like his Californian contemporary, also seems to have sensed a link between the respective rites of Jews and Christians in Jerusalem involving the adoration of stones. He described the marble slab that had been protectively placed over the Stone of Unc-tion as "much worn by the lips of Christians" and at the Wailing Wall was struck by "the solemn vastness of the stones the Jews kiss."⁵⁹

Both Swift and Twain had been preceded to Jerusalem by Albert Rhodes, who served as U.S. consul there for some two years (1864–65) during which he was not particularly happy. After being reassigned Rhodes promptly published his appropriately titled but (like Swift's account) insufficiently utilized *Jerusalem As It Is*. Like Swift, the young Pittsburgh native had a sharp eye for discerning, as well as a sharp pen for describing, the difference between the Holy City's Sephardim and Ashkenazim,⁶⁰ and he too noticed that Jerusalem was a place where there was a whole lot of crying and stone-kissing going on. He remarked on the marble slab at the Holy Sepulchre that had been worn away on one of its sides "by devout pilgrims, who have wet it with their tears and kissed it with their lips for so many hundred years" and he also dutifully described the Friday prayers at "the wailing-place of the Jews . . . a spot

58. Swift, *Going to Jericho*, 201, 243–47.

59. Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, with an introduction by Edward Wagenknecht (New York, 1962), 426, 443.

60. "There is no *entente-cordiale*," he wrote "between the Sephardim and Aschkenazim. The former are cleaner, more indolent, and ignorant than the latter. The Aschkenazim pride themselves on their Talmud learning, are dirty, and fond of dispute. From long residence in the East, the Sephardim have acquired something of the ease and dignity of its inhabitants . . . The Aschkenazim are often seen poring over the Talmud, and are consequently full of its traditionary [*sic*] lore, but know little of the Bible . . . The Sephardim, as a race are healthy-looking, and many of them are handsome . . . Of the two the Aschkenazim are more corrupt." Rhodes, *Jerusalem As It Is* (London, 1865), 363–64. For Swift's comparison of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, see idem, *Going to Jericho*, 245–46. Ruth Kark has claimed that Rhodes's 1865 work "expressed his cynicism, and was critical of life in Palestine, of the natives, monks, Jews, travelers, and missionaries." See Kark, *American Consuls in the Holy Land, 1852–1914* (Jerusalem, 1994), 314–15. Clearly the author, a professor of geography, has used the word "critical" uncritically.

of interest to every traveler.” Rhodes reported that “every available spot along the foot of this wall is occupied by weeping Jews,” adding that “the greater part of these are women, who often sit in little circles around a Talmud-learned Jew, who reads to them—for a consideration . . . —portions of the Jewish chronicles.” He reported not only that “those who arrive early, particularly the women, commence at one end of the wall and kiss and touch every stone within reach, from one end of the wall to the other,” but also that the “ancient stones . . . have been made smooth with their tears and kisses.”⁶¹ For Rhodes, as for his contemporary countrymen Swift and Twain, the ritualized behaviors of Christian pilgrims at the Holy Sepulchre and Jews at the Wailing Wall were mere variations on the same theme—with the latter, of course, performed in the *doloroso* mode.

Some three decades after the departure of Rhodes, another Pennsylvanian, Edwin Sherman Wallace (1864–1960), arrived in Jerusalem, where he served as U.S. consul for Palestine between 1893 and 1898. Unlike Rhodes or Swift (who eventually served as U.S. ambassador to Japan), Wallace was a man of theological training who had studied at the Princeton Theological Seminary and was eventually ordained a Presbyterian minister.⁶² His writing on both sites of prayer, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Wailing Wall, clearly reflects that background. Of the former he wrote: “Many times have I watched in admiration the devotion of Russian pilgrims, the privilege of whose life it has been to reach this sacred enclosure. The Stone of Unction being the first of the holy things to which they come gets a generous share of reverential prostrations and kisses.”⁶³

His tone is equally sympathetic, yet with the same degree of polite distance, when describing Jewish prayer at the “Place of Wailing,” where “on a Friday evening and on fast days may be witnessed a sight unparalleled for strangeness and pathos”—a sight he also described as “unlike any other on earth.” On those occasions, Wallace wrote, “Jewish men and women, quaint specimens of a once great nation—stand and read their prayers and weep over their departed glories and their desolated

61. Rhodes, *Jerusalem As It Is*, 373–75.

62. On Wallace, see Kark, *American Consuls*, 155–56. Neither Wallace nor his diplomatic predecessor Rhodes is mentioned in Michael Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York, 2007).

63. Edwin Sherman Wallace, *Jerusalem the Holy: A Brief History of Ancient Jerusalem; with an Account of the Modern City and its Conditions Political, Religious and Social* (London, 1898), 185.



[103.] Unidentified photographer. *The Wailing Wall*. 1870s. Albumen print. The Edward Lenkin Family Collection of Photography at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

city.”⁶⁴ As a consequence, he continued, “the old stones are worn smooth by the affectionate kisses of the faithful and by the touch of reverent hands.” Wallace found it “hard to doubt that these tears are sincere” and had little regard for those who thought otherwise: “To the frivolous observer the varied and quaint costumes, the peculiar intonations and the unusual motions of the body are amusing, but the serious man considers their motive which lends an air of sanctity to the place.”⁶⁵

Another late nineteenth-century visitor to the Western Wall who saw the Jews gathered there as “specimens of a once great nation” was Asher Zvi (Hirsh) Ginsberg (1856–1927), who unlike Wallace, however, did

64. On the participation of women in prayer at the Western Wall, see Stuart Charmé, “The Political Transformation of Gender Traditions at the Western Wall in Jerusalem,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21 (2005): 5–34. The author cites a number of nineteenth-century accounts, but not those of Fisk, Swift, Rhodes, or Wallace.

65. Wallace, *Jerusalem the Holy*, 300. Excerpts from Wallace’s work may be found in Robert T. Handy, ed., *The Holy Land in American Protestant Life* (New York, 1981), 154–63.

not regard them as “quaint.” The Ukrainian-born Ginsberg, by then known widely known as Ahad Ha-‘am, was the leading ideologist of Cultural Zionism and, as such, deeply concerned about the spiritual future of his people. In 1891 he made his first trip to Palestine and visited many of its new Jewish colonies, of which he was quite critical. As Ginsberg later wrote in his controversial essay *Emet me-Erets Yisrael*, “filled with melancholy thoughts” he “arrived on the eve of Passover in Jerusalem, there to pour forth my sorrow and rage before the . . . remnants of our former glory.” Although he clearly knew what to expect at the Wall, the visit nevertheless affected him greatly, provoking painful questions that remain largely unanswered:

There I found many of our Jerusalem brethren standing and praying in loud voices. Their haggard faces, their strange gestures, and their odd clothes—all this merged with the ghastly picture of the Wall itself. Looking at them and at the Wall, one thought filled my mind. These stones testify to the desolation of our land; these men testify to the desolation of our people. Which of these desolations is worse? For which should we lament more bitterly?⁶⁶

Some seven years later Ginsberg’s fellow Zionist and ideological opponent Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), toward the end of his own first (and only) visit to Jerusalem, wrote in his diary: “When I remember thee in days to come, O Jerusalem, it will not be with delight. The musty deposits of two thousand years of inhumanity, intolerance, and foulness lie in your reeking alleys.” Needless to say, the Budapest-born Herzl was considerably less moved by the Western Wall and those praying there than had been, for example, the father of his fellow playwright Oscar Wilde several decades earlier. “Any deep emotion,” he wrote ruefully after visiting the Wall, “is rendered impossible by the hideous, miserable, scrambling beggary pervading the place.”⁶⁷ How ironic that in the very same year the American diplomat and Presbyterian minister Edwin Wallace, who like Herzl looked forward, though for different reasons, to the

66. The translation I have provided is a composite of those by Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha-‘am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), 62, and Reuven Hammer, ed., *The Jerusalem Anthology: A Literary Guide* (Philadelphia, 1995), 206.

67. Marvin Lowenthal, ed. and trans., *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (New York, 1956), 283–84; Hammer, ed., *Jerusalem Anthology*, 213.

Jewish return to Palestine, wrote in his *Jerusalem the Holy*: “Surely a plot of ground that has been a place of prayer for centuries has some claims to reverence, and a people who through generations have continued faithful to their religious convictions, however mistaken they may be, will be treated with disrespect only by the despicable.”⁶⁸

68. Wallace, *Jerusalem the Holy*, 300. On Wallace’s Christian Zionism, see Moshe Davis, *America and the Holy Land* (Westport, Conn., 1995), 67–68.