

life invites or rather forces a decision, from us now as from those who witnessed and lived those days. It is here that the ways divide. In a reported conversation with Ferré, Professor Whitehead declared of Christ: 'His life was not an exhibition of overruling power. Its glory is for those who discern it and not for the world. It has the decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point.'¹ Can history give the final verdict? For some, like Reimarus and Eisler, the messianic entry represents the ephemeral triumph of a popular agitator, a fanatical field preacher in search of a revolution; his *Putsch* fails and he is taken and executed by the Romans as they had taken and executed so many others whose ambitions were not commensurate with their inner possibilities. His cry of real despair on the cross, 'My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?' is sealed by a terrible and tragic finality. For others, like Schweitzer, he goes up to the city from his native Galilee to force the hand of God, to bring in the kingdom by the sacrifice of his life, but the Kingdom does not come in, and his sacrifice, for all the fine gesture, is wasted. For the Christian reader Christ is indeed, as he so emphatically stated before Pilate, a king, *the King*, but as he rode into the city of the Great King he knew that he had already rejected the kingdom of this world which Satan had offered at the beginning, and the title over the Cross which caught the eye of the dying thief was to be fully vindicated within three days, and in the years that followed.

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BIBLE LANDS BY JEEP—I

Seven thousand miles by Land-Rover in the heat of the Middle East may not be everyone's idea of a summer holiday. But if such a journey involves inconvenience, hardship and strain (and it does not require much effort of the memory to recall that it did), it also makes possible the sort of knowledge of Bible lands which no amount of books and photographs can ever adequately provide. Père Lagrange's dictum, that no-one really understands the Bible until he has visited the lands of the Bible, was not a mere recruiting slogan for the *École Biblique*. There is a depth and solidity about such first-hand acquaintance with the stage on which the history of salvation was enacted

¹ 'Whitehead and Ferré discuss God' in *Hibbert Journal* LVI, p. 267

which add a third dimension to the study of Scripture. It is in the hope that others planning to make this acquaintance for themselves may find them useful that the following observations (of a purely practical nature) have been noted down. Certainly the journey in question was helped to no small extent by similar practical hints offered in the pages of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*.¹

An expedition such as the one envisaged here, from the Nile to the Tiber, will take about eleven weeks. More time can obviously be spent if the investigation of the numerous biblical sites is to be done more thoroughly, but nothing more than a 'Cook's Tour' could be achieved in less. Obviously too, if the journey to Egypt is to be done overland, more time will be required. As for costs, a party of four, using their own transport, could expect to contribute up to £300 each. Here too it goes without saying that the standards of luxury demanded could increase the expenses indefinitely, but nothing within reasonable comfort could be realised for much less. If these two preliminary hurdles (and they are considerable ones) can be cleared, the following additional details will need attention.

Passports and Visas. An ordinary British passport is valid for all foreign countries, including Israel. However, since the Arab countries do not recognise the existence of Israel, and will even refuse to acknowledge any document which makes reference to it, a second passport is issued to British travellers, valid for Israel only. (Americans, from whom Israel does not require a visa, get around the difficulty by inserting into their passport a card for official endorsement in Israel, the card being later removed.) This second passport is of course supposed to remain unknown to Arab officials, and one is warned to keep it well hidden; in actual fact they know of its existence perfectly well since every pilgrim carries one. The principal passport will need to be endorsed with visas for the United Arab Republic, Jordan and Lebanon (Cyprus, Turkey, Greece and Italy do not demand a visa), and there is no longer any difficulty about obtaining these, provided sufficient time (two to three weeks) is allowed. It is as well to know that the UAR visa is valid for both Egypt and Syria, and even allows the period specified (two weeks, a month) to be spent in each country successively. But it should be pointed out (as it was not to the writer) that this only applies to those travelling direct from one country to the other. If any other country is visited in between (namely Jordan overland, or Lebanon by sea), a new visa is required and charged for at the frontier.

Insurance. Car insurances for countries outside Europe do not

¹ R. North, S.J., 'The Present Accessibility of Pauline Sites' in *CBQ* xviii, no. 1 (Jan. 1956), pp. 30-46; 'Report from Palestine' in *CBQ* xxii, no. 1 (Jan. 1960), pp. 80-4

come within the usual terms of reference of Insurance Companies, but they are willing to quote special terms (£80 in the case in question). Insurance for travel in Egypt seemed in 1960 to provide some difficulties, since diplomatic relations had only recently been restored. In future years these difficulties may no longer exist; if they do, private arrangements can be made on the spot at Cairo or Port Said. Sickness and possible hospital fees can and should be insured against, the premium for a period of three months being reasonably small (£6-£7). The insurance of personal effects may be left to each person's taste; if the usual precautions are taken there is no more danger of theft in the Middle East than anywhere else. On the journey in question, no article was lost until the doors of the vehicle were inadvertently left unlocked in the centre of Christianity, Rome.

Health. Israel requires visitors to the country to have been vaccinated against smallpox within the last three years. Any doctor will provide this service, but his certificate must be stamped by the local Public Health Department before it is valid. Inoculation against cholera and typhoid fever is not demanded, but the traveller to the Middle East will be happier about the water he drinks there if he has taken this precaution too. Against dysentery, unfortunately, there is no immunisation, and the Westerner must be resigned to suffer this discomfort as part of the price the East demands of him. A degree of safety can be achieved by care in the amount of cold drink and skin fruit taken, and in the consumption of food handled by anyone stricken with the disease. But the heat and the unusual food will almost certainly affect most stomachs. A generous supply of some astringent is advisable (Enterovioform is recommended, available in most chemists in the Middle East under the name of Enterosept). Individual nostrums must be left to each person's taste, but a party (especially if travelling by car) should carry a communal medicine chest for emergencies. The growing of beards, which holds a curious appeal for the romantically minded, is not conducive to hygiene.

Photography. Photographers would be well advised to bring a generous supply of film, even an over-generous supply, since there is nothing like the Middle East to make one trigger-happy. Borrowing film can lead to hard feelings if it leaves the lender short, and Kodak, Ilford and the rest are not only difficult to obtain in Cairo, Jerusalem and Istanbul but also monstrously expensive. Whether exposed or not the film should come to no harm, even in a Middle East summer, if it is stored well away from direct heat. It is not wise to try to airmail it home: customs formalities are heartbreaking and the postage prohibitive. The enthusiast should perhaps also be warned that he will encounter obstacles he has not had to contend with before.

The most innocent sites have acquired military importance, and official permission may be required to use a camera there. In this regard there is no need for over-scrupulosity, but he would do well to pay considerable respect to the fear that many Arabs have of the camera. Whether this is connected with a superstitious dread of the 'evil eye,' or with the more understandable notion that a photograph takes something inalienable from them (cf. the biblical jealousy over one's 'name'), the fact is that it is not unknown for unimaginative photographers to have had their cameras smashed (and sometimes their faces too) by irate Arabs, especially in defence of the privacy of their womenfolk.

Clothes. Nights can be cool, especially on high ground such as Sinai or Hermon. So also can a sunless morning in Turkey or Greece, and a sweater or two will not be out of place in the luggage. But the pilgrim's main concern will be with the heat. The 'dry heat' consolingly promised him by the travel brochures, which will not cause the 'discomfort' experienced in European climates, is a sheer imposture. Even the slightest exertion in a Middle East summer will in fact make him feel (and look) like a wet rag. The fact that he will also be covered daily with the fine dust that is universal in the East will make it essential for him to carry several changes of clothing if he is not to be impossible to live with. Light clothing is advisable, of the type that can easily be washed by an amateur, for the intense heat that makes life a burden will also dry a washed shirt within a few hours. A lightweight cassock of some neutral colour (grey or khaki) is not only the most dignified garment for a priest to wear east of Turkey, but also the most comfortable: it covers a multitude of other inadequacies. In fact if luggage space permits, it would be wise to carry two, to allow for laundering.

Camping. Camping may not be to everyone's taste. Nor is it generally necessary: there is nowhere in Bible lands where a day's journey will not provide some sort of guest house. Indeed, in countries where accommodation is cheap and sometimes (in religious houses) free, the small amount of money saved by camping may not pay for the trouble and discomfort it involves. It should also be appreciated that the East is not geared to this sport as our countryside is, and east of Greece and even more of Turkey the camper will need to be far more self-sufficient than he would bother to be in Europe. Food of some sort will usually be obtainable easily enough, but it would be wise to carry a supply of tinned goods for emergencies, especially of milk. Water should be carried in any case: in lands that sometimes go for years without rainfall it is in short supply, and a canvas 'chuggie' hung on the outside of the vehicle can be worth

its weight in gold. A portable Mass-kit (with a supply of wine and altar breads) would seem to be essential. Even apart from camping there will be occasions when Mass cannot be celebrated without it.

Transport. For a party of four or five, some machine like the long-based Land-Rover is ideal. The cab allows copious room for two (even for three on shorter journeys), and the large compartment behind will comfortably accommodate the other passengers and the luggage. It has its disadvantages of course: the solid-sides model will leave the passengers with a boxed-in feeling, and the removable-canvas model provides little protection against theft and no choice at all between dust and air; one has neither or both. Moreover the ample storage room may tempt members of the party to include in their luggage the sort of equipment which might be needed but never is (there is really little call in the Middle East for the typewriter, tape-recorder, guitar, collapsible bath and edition of Shakespeare that were taken on the journey in question). But these disadvantages are far outweighed by the sturdiness of a machine which will stand up to the sort of road conditions that this journey offers. It is true that one hears of London taxis being used for expeditions of this kind. But there is much to be said for a vehicle that will travel 7,000 miles of bad roads without any tyre complaints, that will be in daily contact for three months with extremes of heat and dust without developing any starting troubles or oil-filter problems, that has the high-ratio gears and the four-wheel drive that can negotiate almost anything, and that will even (*experto crede*) stand a complete overturning with damage only to the bodywork. Unfortunately its petrol consumption is high—fifteen miles per gallon. The tank holds only ten gallons, and it is advisable to carry two jerry-cans with a reserve of another nine.

(*To be continued*)

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