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THE MODERN IMAGE OF THE HOLY LAND: THROUGH THE MANUSCRIPTS OF SOME CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

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This article aims to analyse the modern image of the Holy Land as it emerges from the accounts of several missionaries who visited this territory during the 19th century. The article will specifically examine the biography of William Lethaby (1910), who, with his wife, was affiliated with The Wesleyan Methodists, and the manuscripts of Father Jaussen (1908, 1927), a Catholic missionary from France. The experiences of these people, crystallised in the historical texts that portray their lives, tell us about the encounter between two different cultural worlds. The missionaries or travellers immersed themselves in the local field, took possession of it and rebuilt it according to their personal cultural sensibility, making it accessible to a wider Western audience. Thanks to this very act of force based on the written word, they reconstructed the image of the Holy Land, of its heart, Jerusalem, of its inhabitants and of the rights of the three monotheistic religions. They rewrote the local history and suggested the future of this land. The Holy Land and Jerusalem do not exist per se, but they are constructed according to the personal perception of these people through the conviction of their moral and cultural superiority. Firstly, regarding the view of the Holy Land by Orientalists, the analysis of these sources gives an insight into the historical meaning and scope of the cultural acquisition process of the Holy Land and Jerusalem by the West. Secondly, the study of these sources helps to reconfigure some modernist interpretations of the socio-political evolution of this land. Finally, understanding the dynamics behind this

encounter between different cultural perspectives explains the complexity of the consequences of Western activities within the Holy Land and Jerusalem, which gave rise to a specific image of this land that is still employed to describe and communicate it.

Missionary activity, as Mattingly points out quoting Kenneth Cragg (Mattingly, 2006-2007: 214), gives birth to a *"learning process"* during which people acquire knowledge of on another. Nevertheless, the process has not always led to mutual and equal understanding of the respective traditions and customs of the people involved. Frequently, missionary works had hidden programme of enculturation and correction of the natives' behaviour, considered exotic, barbaric and primitive, in order to create a new man according to Western knowledge (Mackenzie, 1993: 56).

Reconsidering the Mission as a learning process is, thus, useful to understanding the political, social and cultural implications of such activities, especially studying Europe's intellectual acquisition and accumulation of the Middle East during the 19th century. The Mission, in fact, produced a developing dynamic that affected not only the faith and religion of the local population, but also the entire society. Regarding this, the combination of the Orientalist interpretation of Arab culture and the missionary programmes supported by the European Protestant institutions and the Roman Catholic Church produced a specific representation of Palestine and Jerusalem with important consequences in terms of power and knowledge (Said, 1995: 91).

Firstly, the article describes the political situation that favoured the spread of the Christian missionaries' activities within the Ottoman Empire. Secondly, it reconsiders the development of the Protestant and Catholic missions in Palestine and Jerusalem, pointing out their strategies and purposes. Thirdly, the article analyses the life and works of the Lethabys and Father Jaussen to understand how the process of cultural acquisition worked and what it achieved, focusing on the image of Palestine and Jerusalem as it arises from their accounts. Finally, the article considers how

these sources help to reconfigure some modernist interpretations of the socio-political evolution of Palestine and Jerusalem.

1. Western Powers, Istanbul & the Capitulations System during the 19th century

During the 19th century, the rivalry between the Western Powers to control the Mediterranean territories of Istanbul came, also, to involve the religious life of the Ottoman State. The European countries tried, in fact, to acquire specific rights for the Christian institutions within Ottoman lands to penetrate the Empire's administration. From one side, the legal institutions that regulated the coexistence between its people and the functioning of religious foundations residing under its jurisdiction were inevitably altered. On the other, the Christian institutions took advantage of the momentary interest showed by the Western powers with regard to religious matters in order to expand their missionary activities within the Ottoman territories.

During 1839, at the ascent to the throne of Sultan Abdul-Megid and with the opening of the *Tanzimat* – Reforms – the Western governments demanded that Istanbul radically change the policy that had governed their traditional economic transactions over the centuries (Laurens, 1993: 64). The capitulations, which until the 19th century had been considered limited concessions conferred by Istanbul on various foreign businesses, became acts imposed from outside by each single Western country. The new capitulation system not only officially sanctioned the legal extraterritoriality of foreign commercial activities, but also placed their Ottoman employees under foreign protection. This produced a relevant legal *vulnus* – wound – within the Ottoman administration. The new system of capitulations and the legal reform of the *millet* – confessional communities – favoured the spread of missionary activities, allowing them to benefit both from Western political protection and from full legal recognition of their activities by Istanbul. The most important consequence of the growth of the Christian missions was the rise of new religious communities, which altered the socio-political balance of the previous century within the Ottoman population.

During the 19th century, Jerusalem and the Holy Places became one of the main theatres of conflict, in which the competition between the Western powers, Istanbul and the different Christian missionary institutions reached its peak. On the one hand, these rivalries, although undermining the peaceful local socio-political balance, favoured the proliferation of numerous charitable activities throughout Palestine, whose birth was made possible by the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate, the creation of the Anglican Bishopric of Jerusalem and the reform of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate. Moreover, these new religious institutions operated not only within Palestine, but exceeded its boundaries by settling their establishments in Transjordan and becoming, through the management of schools and health clinics, important actors of a dynamic of stratification and social diversification. On the other hand, the same foreign actors who undertook the work of evangelisation and care of the local Arab population reinforced the process, already in place, of intellectual acquisition and reconstruction of the socio-religious local reality, indelibly marking the political coexistence within the Holy Land and the Western image of this land and its population.

1.1 The Development of Protestant Establishments within the Holy Land

The initial development of Protestant activities in the Near East was sponsored by the evangelical movement that grew in importance within Europe and the United States in the wake of a compelling criticism of the disruptive effects of the industrial revolution (al-Hasan bin Talal, 1995: 85). During the 19th century the evangelical movement, promoting unity and cooperation among the various Protestant denominations in spite of their doctrinal disputes, decided to go beyond the boundaries within which it had hitherto operated and, inspired by a strong humanitarian sentiment, invited their affiliates to dedicate themselves to independent missionary activities to promote universal education in the light of the Holy Bible (Varg, 1954: 81). The renewed Protestant missionary push was born from the theological reflection of America's J. Edwards and the British group of "The Wesleyans" (Hummel, 2005: 195). They proposed

to reconsider and reform the Calvinist thesis of predestination, thus restoring value to personal responsibility and consequently re-evaluating the importance of conversion and missionary work (Hummel, 2005: 195).

The group of "The Wesleyans" was among the first to organise a permanent mission within Palestine, believing, as recalled by Mr John Carne in 1823 (Durley, 1910: 99), that in this land there were all the elements to make this kind of work flourish and prosper:

> A missionary stationed there, would have constant access to the Jews, the Greeks, and Armenian Christians. Annually, at Easter, he might converse with thousands of pilgrims who resort to that city; many places, also in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, might be visited, and a large field presents itself for religious labours. The climate is very favourable, and protection would be granted by the Government, on account of the respect in which the British character is held in that of the Turkish Dominions.

From 1820, in addition to the personal initiatives of individual missionaries affiliated with "The Wesleyans", the Near East saw the founding of many missionary establishments promoted by specific missionary associations. These activities were sponsored mainly by the Basel Mission Society, the London Jews Society, the Church Mission Society and, finally, by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Odeh Issa, 1977: 213).

The North American evangelical missionaries devoted themselves almost exclusively to the Lebanese and Syrian lands, founding in Beirut the Native Evangelical Church (1847) – National Evangelical Church – which gained the official legal recognition of *millah* in 1850 (Dodge, 1972: 15). Accordingly, with regard to Palestine, the North American Protestant community was not much greater than one hundred members, of which only half were Arabs (Arch. Prop. Fide volume 116/1897-126: 345).

The Lutherans and Anglicans, instead, developed their missionary works on a larger territory focusing more on the Holy Land. Splitter, Secretary of the Basel Mission Society, was the first to

attempt to establish Lutheran activities within Palestine and the Holy Land. Between 1832 and 1840, he sought to promote the birth of the first community entirely run by Protestant missionaries from Wittenberg, but he failed. The project was realised in 1866 when, thanks to the protection of the Prussian Consul of Jerusalem, the Lutheran missionaries consolidated their establishments, managing to build a community of about 1600 members, of which 400 were Arabs (Arch. Prop. Fide volume 116/1897-126: 345-387). There had been different reasons for this delay. Firstly, despite the commitment of Splitter, the initial attempt had not achieved the desired results because of the complicated relationship with the Anglicans. Secondly, the lack of protection for their missionary work from London, as demonstrated by Istanbul's prohibition of distributing Bibles within its Empire during 1824 (Gilbar, 1990: 263). The tension between the Anglicans and the Lutherans was based on both the normal competition among the various missionary activities and the opposition from London, which feared that these establishments could disrupt the internal stability of the Ottoman state, undermining its own interests within the East (Perry, Lev, 2003: 67). In 1841, however, thanks to the direct involvement of William IV of Prussia, Berlin and London signed the agreement of Bunsen-Palmerstone promoting the shared foundation of the Protestant Bishopric of Jerusalem. This new commitment led to the creation of the first Protestant community legally recognised by Istanbul (1847). Nevertheless, this did not eliminate the misunderstandings of the past that continued to enliven their relations, in particular due to the Anglicans' pressure on the Lutherans to submit to Canterbury. Between 1870 and 1881 the final separation between the two denominations occurred, which thereafter worked independently (Hummel, 2005: 208).

The decision to open missionary establishments within the territory under the authority of Istanbul was influenced by some specific elements. Firstly, the Ottoman Empire's economic weakness and growing foreign influence would enable them to develop their activities in an atmosphere of relative safety. Secondly, the Protestant missionaries were attracted by the

possibility of bringing the Gospel to both Oriental Christianity and the Muslim community (Hummel, 2005: 198). Richter notes that their main desire was to share the fruits of the Reformation and of Western knowledge with the Oriental Churches in the hope of triggering a process of spiritual revival (Richter, 1910: 36):

> From the beginning the chief immediate aim of Protestant Missions in the Near East has been to spiritually infuse new vigour and to kindle new intellectual light in the Oriental Churches.

Moreover, Richter points out that the CMS Society looked at the assistance and the reform of Eastern Christianity as a means of paving the way to evangelising the Muslims (Richter, 1910: 94):

> From Which to spread the knowledge of the Gospel over all the Countries bordering on the Mediterranean, especially among the Islamic nations on the other [...] The hope was entertained that a spiritual revival in the ancient Churches would exercise a beneficial influence on the Islamic world surrounding them, thus preparing the way for direct mission work among Muhammadans.

Nevertheless, until the fifties, the Protestant missionaries, both independents or members of specific missionary associations, did not really devote themselves to converting the local Arab Christians, but to reforming the already existing Eastern Christian institutions from inside, restoring their ancient spiritual strength (Mattingly, 2006-2007: 213). In the same way, in order to escape from Ottoman control, they proselytised among the Muslims under specific conditions and in particular cases. For that reason, they initially focused their efforts on the Jewish community. In 1842 the first Bishop of Jerusalem, Alexander, a Rabbi converted to Anglicanism (Odeh Issa, 1977: 214), invited the Protestant missionaries, as he wrote to the Prussian Consul Schultz in 1844, to devote themselves to converting only the Jewish population and not to disturb the social balance within both the Eastern Churches and the Muslim community (Gilbar, 1990: 264):

> I am quite sure that we can let them [the missionaries] immigrate safely. They will enjoy protection that every European in the Turkish Empire enjoys. However, it should not enter their heads to

> try to convert Muslims. If they should do so they would be killed whoever they may be. Therefore, in Palestine, they would have to turn their attention to the Jews because there are no heathens here.

According to these intentions Alexander, just before creation of the Anglican Bishopric, promoted the arrival of the London Jews Society, whose mission was, as one of its founders, Joseph Frey, pointed out (Hummel, 1977: 203):

> God was going to use England to play a leading role in helping to restore the Jewish people to their homeland and to their Messiah.

The London Jews Society had been founded by Joseph Wolf in 1824 but, until the mid-19th century, it had been unable to settle permanently within the Holy Land due to the opposition of the local population and the Ottomans. It was only in 1840, thanks to the intercession of London, that the London Society was able to successfully open its establishments which became one of the most significant Protestant activities within the Holy Land (Perry, Lev, 2003: 71), distributing sacred texts and promoting numerous health clinics and schools for teaching Hebrew.

In 1846, the appointment of Samuel Gobat, a converted Jew, as Bishop of Jerusalem, produced one of the most significant changes in Protestant missionary strategy during the 19th century. The initial invitation to abstain from proselytising among the Eastern Christians and the Muslims was cancelled and, with the financial support of the Church Mission Society, new missionary establishments dedicated to them were opened in Nablus, Nazareth, Salt and Karak (Odeh Issa, 1977: 214).

1.2 The revival of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Throughout the centuries, after the defeat of the Crusaders and the demise of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (1099-1187), the presence of Roman Catholicism in the Holy Land was secured by the steady work of the Franciscan Order (Heacock, 1995: 200). The Franciscans reached Palestine during the 13th century and were officially recognised by the Vatican as Custodians of the Holy Places in 1342. Rome did not cease to cultivate its relationship

with Oriental Christianity, although it lost a clear understanding of Eastern religious reality. During the first half of the 19th century, the Vatican decided to re-evaluate the issues of Oriental Christianity and, through the supervision of Propaganda Fide reformed by Pope Gregory XVI in 1842, began to reconsider the idea of founding new missionary activities within the Near East. In 1848, Pius IX officially manifested this will in the encyclical "Supreme Petri" (Hajjar, 1962: 281), calling on the Roman Catholic Church to lead to reunification with the Oriental Churches under the project of the "Unionism".

The favourable opportunity for reaching this goal came from the progressive implementation of Ottoman reforms, which allowed the different Eastern Churches to break free from the legal control of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople (Hajjar, 1962: 264). From the thirties, the Vatican decided to intervene indirectly in regions such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, demanding the monastic orders of the Jesuit, Capuchin, Lazar and Dominicans to support the existing religious institutions of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

In the case of the Holy Land, due to the lack of a large native Catholic community and as a result of strong competition with the Protestant and Russian establishments, the Vatican adopted a different strategy. In addition to promoting new monastic establishments, Rome decided to intervene directly, even politically, projecting the revival of the ancient Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (Médebielle, 1962: 29). The "Unionism" thus implied two different issues. On the one side, "Unionism" characterised the official relations between Rome and the Apostolic See of the East. On the other, with regard both to Palestine and Transjordan, it influenced the reconstitution of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the new Catholic missionary push within the Holy Land.

In 1847, thanks to the approval of the Ottomans, Pius IX decreed by the papal bull "Nulla Celebrior" the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate, with Jerusalem as its headquarters and the lands

of Palestine, Transjordan and Cyprus as its diocese (Odeh Issa, 1977: 219). The Archbishop Giuseppe Valerga (1847-1872), former General Vicar of Mesopotamia, was then appointed as the first Latin Patriarch resident in the Holy Land. The consolidation of the newly established Patriarchate was not simple. In 1852, Monsgr Valerga was immediately involved in a bitter fight for Latin rights in the Holy Land and faced vigorous hostility from the Orthodox Patriarchate with regard to the issue of shared use of the Holy Places. Between 1853 and 1854, the confrontation reached its climax but, thanks to the support of the French Consul, the Latin Patriarchate succeeded. The status quo as defined in the Agreement of 1852 was confirmed and the Latin Patriarchate enjoyed the rights of Franciscan Custody within the Holy Places. This positive solution of the issue of the Holy places strengthened the Catholic presence in Palestine. In 1852, the Patriarchal Seminary was founded in Beit Jala and this made it possible to train local clergies more efficiently (Médebielle, 1962: 40). Missionary activities flourished and ten new missions were opened in Palestine and Transjordan. Moreover, with the arrival of the Sisters of St. Joseph (1848), the Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth (1854) and those of Sion (1856), the Patriarchate created the first establishment dedicated to assisting local women (Médebielle, 1962: 42). On the death of Monsgr Valerga, the process of expansion and consolidation continued through the efforts of the Monsgr Bracco (1873-1889) and later of Monsgr Piave (1889-1905). Thanks to their efforts additional missions were created, especially in Transjordan. Twelve new foreign congregations came to Palestine and the first fully Arabic female order, the Sisters of the Rosary, was organised in 1880. At the end of the 19th century, the Latin Patriarchate could count on more than twenty parishes, passing from the 4141 members of 1848 to the 13810 of 1889 (Médebielle, 1962: 42).

The Latin missionaries traditionally focused their efforts on the local Arab Christian population, abstaining thus from converting the Muslim component to avoid direct clashes with the Ottoman authorities. Nonetheless, the rivalries and incomprehensions between the different Christian denominations were numerous. In

particular, with regard to the Holy Land, the issue concerned the difficult relationship between the Latin Patriarchate and the Melkite Church, a Greek Orthodox sect that went back into communion with Rome. In spite of continued efforts by the Latin authorities to reinforce the idea that their mission was for "reconciliation" with the Eastern Christians and not for their "conversion", the Melkite Catholics accused the Patriarchate of discrediting traditional Eastern ritual, discouraging the conversion of the local population to Greek-Catholics and latinising their members under the programme of the "Unionism" (Hajjar, 1962: 274). On the one hand, the Melkites accused the Vatican of undermining the identity and traditional autonomy of the Greek-Catholic Patriarchal Seat, hiding behind the call for unity an intention to put under its direct authority the religious life of the local Catholics (Médebielle, 1961: 61). On the other, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem stated that the political and social conditions existing in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century imposed on the Vatican the responsible choice of promoting at least the Romanisation, avoiding the Latinisation, of the Arab Catholics to resolve the confusion between the ritual and the nationality of their faithful (Médebielle, 1961: 61). The debate about the "Unionism" remained an issue never fully resolved. Firstly, the critics of "Unionism" testified to the local Christian population's about the influence of foreign activities within the Near East. This concern was manifested in firm claims against the Vatican to respect the originality and authenticity of their cultural, religious and ritual identities, accepting the support of Rome but refusing the Romanisation and Latinisation project. On the other, respecting the faith and authenticity of the aspirations of the Latin Catholic clergies, the "Unionism" debate further explains the socio-political climate and cultural atmosphere that initially led to the recovery of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and, later, to the promotion of missionary activity in Palestine and Transjordan.

2. The Holy Land of the Lethabys

William Lethaby was born in 1837 in Exeter, where he spent the first part of his life living with his grandmother, attending the local Grammar school and studying Greek and Latin (Durley, 1910: 3).

In 1851 he decided to move to London to undertake a period of apprenticeship in a printing press company, following his father's footsteps. While he was working in London, he came in contact with the Methodist Church and met his future wife and fellow missionary, Jane Goodson. It was during this period that William expressed for the very first time the desire to leave Europe, dedicating his life to missionary work. Nevertheless, a family veto prevented him from joining a mission in the Fiji Islands.

In 1871 Lethaby and his wife decided to go to Canada. In 1872 they reached Toronto where they were associated with the Canadian Methodist Church (Durley, 1910: 13). Later on, in 1873, they moved to Philadelphia, where William became pastor of the Union Methodist Episcopal Church. During this period his biographer reports that Lethaby began to develop an interest and desire to visit Syria and devote his life to missionary work among the Arabs (Durley, 1910: 18):

> There was also creeping over him, he hardly knew how or why, an impulse to mission the native Arab population of Syria, for whom he discovered little had been done. [...]

In 1874, supported by the Palestine Exploration Fund, William Lethaby crowned his dream, for the first time reaching Beirut and the Holy Land (Durley, 1910: 22). This pilgrimage marked him deeply, determining part of his future choices. In Beirut, he met W D Pritchett, a Protestant missionary who had promoted the distribution of Bibles within Gaza. Lethaby was fascinated by this man and decided to follow in his footsteps, dedicating himself to the same activities in Palestine. The meeting with Pritchett not only marked his initial missionary experience but was also fundamental in acquainting him with the existence of the other side of the Holy Land across the Jordan river, the so called Transjordan. Pritchett was the first to talk to him about Karak, the future home of Lethaby. The numerous stories about the Arab tribal culture charmed Lethaby, pushing him towards that unknown territory which never before had hosted a Protestant emissary. Due to lack of money, he was forced to give up to his

project to join Pritchett. In 1874, he came back to Frome and to his job in a printing press company. The following ten years were entirely spent by William in planning his mission. First, Lethaby became a Methodist pastor and actively worked to save the money needed to open a mission within the Holy Land (Durley, 1910: 34). Secondly, he completed his intellectual development, showing another side of his nature, which reinforced his personal attitude to the mission. He was, in fact, politically involved in the British Victorian liberal movement against slavery (Durley 1910: 36-37). This experience deeply rooted in him a belief in Western moral superiority and faith in the "sacred" principles of Rousseau's civilising missions of the white man.

In 1883 he finally returned to the Near East. Initially, he studied Arabic on the Mount of Lebanon without any important results. The difficulties with the language did not deter him from starting missionary work. While he was still unable to speak Arabic, Lethaby decided to serve in Syria and Egypt, especially in independent activities, accepting work with CMS establishments solely to deal with serious financial constraints. Nonetheless, the main difficulties that faced Lethaby, as well as most independent missionaries, were politically (Rogan, 2002: 150). The Ottoman Empire tolerated missionary activities but did not stand for independents who were considered dangerous because of their evident interest in converting Muslims. For this reason, in 1886 William decided to move to Karak, crossing the Jordan river. The decision to leave Palestine showed his deep desire to devote himself to the mission free from any limitation set either by the Ottoman authorities or any other missionary associations (Durley, 1910: 84). In 1894, after thirteen years in Karak, the return of direct Ottoman administration of the Transjordan districts forced him to leave his missionary establishment, moving to Aden where he lived until 1899. In 1899 Lethaby and his wife finally decided to go back to their homeland, where he died in 1909. One year later, the letters written by Lethaby during his experience in the Near East were already circulating, first as a pamphlet with 17,000 copies distributed, then in the form of a biography edited by one of his friends, Durley (Durley, 1910: XI).

The brief overview of Lethaby's life testifies to the singularity and spiritual force of a couple who dedicated all their resources to missionary work for others in the name of the Gospel. At the same time, recalling the paragraph about the Protestant missions within Palestine, it clearly appears that they were well immersed in a broader cultural environment with many connections between Europe, North America and the Middle East. Therefore, their call to the mission perfectly represents, as Rogan points out (Rogan, 2002: 149), the cultural atmosphere of an entire generation of men and women:

> Here was a man with a good profession who left the opportunities of the United States, and the security of his own home in Great Britain, to spend his personal savings and risk his health and life among a strange people whose language he had never spoken. Of course the missionary impulse had much less to do with Syria than it did with the cultural and religious certainties of Victorian Britain.

Their life proves that a strong spirituality and their deep religious faith merged with the Victorian belief in the civilising mission of the white man, looking at Palestine and Jerusalem as the ideal places to realise their dream of mission. Durley wrote that rooted in Lethaby's mind was an incontrovertible confidence in the strength of the Gospel in regard to reforming the local socio-political environment (Durley, 1910: 98):

> On the general subject of Eastern evangelization Mr Lethaby held strong theories. He believed that the face of the Eastern question would have been changed and the latter day glory hastened [...].

The Sacred Texts thus played a primary role in forming the cultural sensibility of these men and women. The Holy Bible became the edge on which they organised and motivated their missionary experience. Moreover, it was the magnifying glass through which they defined the land of their mission and the main characteristics of the populations to whom they tried to preach the Word of God. Palestine only exists with regard to the Bible. In their views nothing had changed since the time of Revelation, as Lethaby clearly shows in the following letter (Durley, 1910: 103):

> Moab has weird charm for the Bible student. There was, to begin with, the cousinhood with the "Chosen people". All through Old Testament times, little bits of sunshine or shadow touched the Eastern horizon of those who were on the other side of Jordan. The Moabitish mountains were the place of the Judean sun rising.

The Lethaby letters describe Palestine and Jerusalem as lands in crises, both spiritually and materially, that need to be reformed and awakened. The Bible and Western culture were considered the only instruments able to save and help these places and their populations. Palestine, with Jerusalem as its heart, thus became the Holy Land of the Bible. The anchor between these two elements appears to be ineradicable. Palestine had value because there it would have been possible to re-establish historical scriptural tradition in its original physical environment. Therefore, Palestine and Jerusalem were considered a "mission field" (Durley, 1910: 48). Their populations – Christians, Muslims and Jews – were perceived as "sinners", the subject of their paternalistic reforming activities (Durely, 1910: 98). Moreover, the idea that Palestine was solely the Holy Land of the Bible, the main "mission field", merged with the firm conviction that Protestantism was the only saver. In their minds, as Lethaby points out in one of his letters, Jerusalem should have been an outpost of the Reformation within the Middle East, like England had been during the 18th century (Durley 1910: 65):

> I imagine sometimes how Methodism and the Church of England may in Palestine be what they might have been in England last century; and how Moab, Edom and Arabia may be more distinctively our own.

During the 19th century, the land of Palestine, as it appears throughout Lethaby's letters, seems to be a land to conquer, physically and spiritually, even if this act of force has been ignored or interpreted for its benefit. With regard to the missionaries, their contribution to the cultural and political acquisition process of Jerusalem and Palestine followed a precise path involving Palestine and Jerusalem as a whole. First, behind the call to the mission there was the firm conviction that Palestine in the 19th century

was essentially the same land as described in the Bible. It was communicated and explored throughout this lens. Secondly, this particular representation of the Holy Land and its population was combined with the image of Palestine and Jerusalem as a "mission field", the place where the dream of evangelising the Christians, Muslims and Jews would have been realised under the auspices of Reformed Christianity and Western culture. Finally, despite the fact that this remained only a dream and the aspiration of some independent missionaries, once the "mission field" had been conquered it would have become the outpost of Protestantism in the Middle East, with Jerusalem as its headquarters, from where it would have been possible to irradiate all the Orient with the word of the Bible.

3. Father Jaussen and the intellectual acquisition of the land of Palestine

Joseph-Marie Jaussen was born in Brison, a French village in the Rhone river region, in 1871. He attended secondary school at the Dominican Apostolic school of Poitiers, where he decided to dedicate himself to the religious life within the same monastic order. In 1890 he arrived in Jerusalem to complete his religious formation at the Dominican Biblical School, where he became professor in 1896, teaching different subjects from the Exegesis of the Old Testament to the Hebrew, Arabic and Armenian languages. Moreover, during those years young Jaussen started to be attracted by ethnology and ethnography, which he studied by himself. The six years spent at the Biblical School were decisive for his intellectual development, and here he also met an important research fellow, Raphael Savignac. Father Lagrange, the former regent and founder of the school, introduced him to the idea of the "*voyage en Terre Sainte*" and the "*caravanes bibliques*" (De Tarragon, 1999: 18), a scholarly programme based on frequent expeditions around Palestine to offer students practical knowledge of this land, its population and language. Behind this project there was the European Orientalism idea of the immutability of the East, and, consequently, the firm conviction that studying the contemporary Orient, combined with archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, was necessary to better understand the Holy texts (De

Tarragon, 1999: 19). Father Jaussen, who became regent of the Biblical School in the 1908, realised Lagrange's ambition and between 1907 and 1909 organised many expeditions including the renowned epigraphic expedition to North Arabia. During these travels Father Jaussen collected numerous ethnographic sources that were organised in two books: *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* (1908) and *Coutumes Palestiniennes, Naplouse et son district* (1927). After serving in the French Intelligence Service during the First World War, Father Jaussen left Palestine and moved to Cairo in 1928. He lived in Egypt until 1959, when he decided to go back to France where he died in 1962.

Like the case of the Lethabys, Father Jaussen represents an unusual character compared to other foreign clergies and missionaries that lived within Palestine at that time. Father Jaussen was a professor but not a scholar and a clergyman but not a missionary. He did not dedicate his life to the "evangelisation" and "civilisation" of the Arabs, but preferred to study and observe them through the curiosity and intellectual categories of the ethnographer (Métral, 1999: 75). Father Jaussen frequently called himself a *khawaja* – foreigner. He felt himself an explorer who was living with the Arabs, but who knew that he was part of a different cultural dimension (Jaussen, 1927: 195, 196). From his point of view, this particular condition of being insider and outsider with regard to Palestine allowed him to fully embrace the traditional essence of local society, describing it scientifically without any moral consideration, thesis or interpretative system so that future generations would have the chance to know and study it (Jaussen, 1908: 10). This was his true mission. Jaussen seems to have been perfectly aware of the consequences of the meeting between Western and Arabic cultures. He was convinced that the Palestinian and Transjordanian societies were living in a period of deep evolution due to the Christian missionaries activities and Ottoman reforms. His concern was that the solid penetration of foreign values, knowledge and technologies would change the local Arab population whose essence had been untouched since Biblical ages (Jaussen, 1908: 2). Therefore, he chose to visit the communities observed, describing them through an impartial

methodology of observation and cataloguing to capture local socio-political customs and traditions as with a photograph. In spite of Jaussen's contribution to ethnographic research in Palestine and Transjordan and his unusual intellectual qualities, it is not possible to understand his research work and the image of Jerusalem and Palestine contained in it without the proper contextualisation. Jaussen's interest in archaeology, geography and ethnography had been influenced by the European Orientalist tradition, which had always considered the Arabic language, Islamic religion and Bedouins' customs important means of deepening the message of the Holy Bible (Jalabert, 1999: 64). Moreover, behind this belief there was a specific interpretation of the relationship between History and Revelation. The Catholics were convinced that the holy message had been transmitted through the history *ne varietur* – without variations – while the Protestants pushed for a return to the origin of Christ's predication, exposing the historical superstructures which had altered it (Sigrist, 1999: 53).

With regard to the Catholic view, the historical truthfulness of the Holy Bible had been preserved and handed down without any variations in the archaeological ruins of Palestine, in the traditions and customs of the local population. According to it, Catholic scholars, explorers and missionaries involved with the study of the Bible and Palestine had the specific duty of proving the historicity of the Revelation on the soil of the Holy Land. Even if Jaussen seems to distance himself from this perception of history, he frequently quotes the Bible, for example when he describes family relationships among the Bedouins (Jaussen, 1908: VII). He seems to be attracted by Arab customs and wants to preserve them in his accounts during a period of change and evolution to protect an important source for understanding the Bible.

On the one hand, Palestine became the land of authenticity, a territory where it would be possible to experience the Revelation, an intellectual universe described through metaphors and allegories linked to the pastoral environment with specific implications for the local society of that time (Maffi, 1999: 96-98). On the other,

Palestine, which become their "mission fields". The rights of the local population and the other monotheistic religions are considered only with regard to their relationship to Protestant Reforms. The local peoples are quite silent. They are not accepted as credible interlocutors. In the Lethaby letters they can react to their activities or cooperate with them, but they are not allowed to express themselves. It is Lethaby that, without any hesitation or doubts, presents to his audience local behaviour, needs and environments through the lens of the Bible and his faith in it.

Father Jaussen, on the contrary, seems to penetrate deeper into local society, finding in his interest in the territory and the environment of Palestine the way to escape from strictly Orientalist interpretations. Moreover, his life testifies to indifference to the "evangelisation" and "civilisation" of the Arabs. Nonetheless, Father Jaussen is part of a particular cultural atmosphere, which contributed to his education, based on the idea that the Arab population and culture have been untouched since the Biblical ages. According to this view, the image of Jerusalem and Palestine was defined in terms of validating the historicity of the Bible. The study of local Arab culture is important because it explains society at the time of Revelation as archaeological ruins physically describe the Holy texts. Hence, Palestine and Jerusalem become the fieldwork for archaeologists and ethnographers interested in the validations of these theories and interpretations. The local environment is observed and recorded. Father Jaussen shows more interest in the Arab population of Palestine and Transjordan. He lived with them and listened to their stories. Nonetheless, the choice of describing them impartially and neutrally without any doubts makes them silent again as in Lethaby's letters, reproducing the same Orientalist interpretation that he tried to avoid.

"Mission field" or "fieldwork", Palestine and Jerusalem are considered personal possessions by both the European faithful and intellectuals. They expected to decide their future and what was better for their destiny. Moreover, their representations of Palestine and Jerusalem explain not only the result of a process of

cultural acquisition and accumulation, but also inform about the intellectual atmosphere supporting the process of modernisation within these territories during the 19th and early 20th century. The evolution of the local socio-political environment has been judged from above or at least the costs of these dynamics of change are being reconsidered. Nevertheless, the images of a silent Orient and of its population unchanged in its cultural essence have been reproduced and partially accepted. Reconsidering the image of Palestine and Jerusalem can produce a new kind of knowledge where the evolutions and the changes occurring during the 19th and 20th centuries are the result of a dialectic of overlapping and intertwining between Western and Arab cultures.

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Patriarcat Grec-Melkite-Catholique d'Antioche et de tout l'Orient d'Alexandrie et de Jérusalem (1961) Catholicisme ou Latinisme? : à

Jerusalem was considered the headquarters where it would have been possible to realise this ambition implementing the comparative historical-critical method to prove the historicity of the Bible and to complete the "Unionism" programme.

Conclusion

The examples provided by the Lethabys and Father Jaussen during the 19th century show the complexity of the process of intellectually acquiring Jerusalem, Palestine and the local socio-cultural environment. These sources help to point out which images they elaborated and communicated to an audience interested in this kind of adventure, undertaking and research. Despite the differences between the Lethabys and Father Jaussen with regard to their interests and objectives within these territories, it appears evident that the image of Jerusalem and Palestine is not only a product of their individual sensibilities, but is the result of an intellectual mediation that involved them, their audience and the land of Palestine and Jerusalem.

With regard to the Lethabys and the Protestant dimension, the interaction between the author of Lethaby's biography, Durley, and Lethabys' letters needs to be reconsidered and investigated to understand the purpose of publishing these sorts of memories producing a specific and suitable image of the Holy Land, coherent with the aspiration of spreading the Reform. Durley selected the most appropriate letters to celebrate the couple and their activities within the Near East. The Holy Land is thus represented from the side of the missionaries and their diary. Lethaby became an example to imitate, a call to the Western faithful and a guide for their future missionaries activities. They are concrete proofs of the strength of the Protestant Reformation and Western values. There is no real failure or incapacity to understand and meet local needs. Difficulties arise from the local socio-political condition and the lack of financial resources. The main characters are the Lethabys. Palestine and Jerusalem are their stages, the outpost for the spreading of Protestant Reform. Faith and the Bible combined with belief in the superiority of the Western culture are the means through which the missionaries take possession of Jerusalem and