

## American Protestant Pilgrimage: Nineteenth-Century Impressions of Palestine

STEPHANIE STIDHAM ROGERS

DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THE LAND OF PALESTINE BECAME AN ICONIC place for American Protestants. The longing for immediate religious experience in the form of direct contact with the roots of Christianity seized the middle class in a new way. Mark Twain labeled that widespread interest in the Holy Land a “craze” or “mania” (Clemens 1869).<sup>1</sup> Feeding this desire, Palestine Park at Chautauqua, NY, a half-acre tract of land outfitted in 1874 with a scaled Jordan River, Galilee, and Jerusalem, allowed late nineteenth-century visitors to stroll symbolically through the land of the Bible – many decked out in “oriental” costume. In addition, popular new parlor pictographs provided touched-up, idealized landscape views of the Holy Land with light commentary. A small-scale city of Jerusalem was “the hit of the fair” at the St. Louis World’s Fair at the turn of the century. For the first time, nineteenth-century church school classrooms posted maps and images of the geographical Palestine, many with idealized representations of Christian biblical events, portraying Christianity as both a historical and geographical religion. With the invention of the steamship, hundreds of Protestant pastors and leaders took Holy Land tours and published travel narratives of their pilgrimages for the eager and interested laity at home, enabling them as readers to take symbolic pilgrimages from the comfort of parlor chairs.

The idea of Palestine raised questions of faith, nature, and national destiny for many Americans. For some, it represented a new American frontier.

<sup>1</sup> This popular book launched Twain’s career. Before its publication he was an obscure San Francisco-based journalist.

Though the physical size of the Holy Land was tiny, miniscule in comparison to the vistas of North America, as a landscape of the psyche the Holy Land was expansive and broad (Davis 1996: 5). The Holy Land was an enduring metaphor that could be made to signify many things, according to the needs of very different situations.

The pilgrimage narratives of the nineteenth century had a vast popular base, and their messages cut across many denominational and social lines. Among the public, there was a “seemingly insatiable” desire for the narratives (Davis 1996: 41). Pilgrimage authors such as Bayard Taylor frequently graced crowded Lyceum lectures promoting their books. These books are the subject of this study. Pilgrimage was rediscovered among American Protestants in the nineteenth century and became a popular Protestant practice as Palestine was rediscovered as a highly symbolic, iconic place. Protestant pastors, in a popular new Christian travel narrative genre, re-imagined Palestine and its Arab population in ways that form the background of modern Protestant pilgrimage to Israel and Protestant perspectives towards the Middle East, illuminating a phenomenon that has shaped Protestant attitudes towards Islam and the settlement of Palestine. Their tourist gaze focused upon the distant biblical past, and representations of the “foreign” soil of Palestine were often grounded in the observer’s perception of self (Davis 1996: 26).

Protestant pilgrimage is a phenomenon that has not been as widely studied as its Catholic counterpart. A comparison of Catholic and Protestant pilgrimage is fruitful—the more playful, communal nature of Catholic pilgrimage stands in sharp contrast to the solemn and commercial tone of Protestant pilgrimage. Most importantly, Protestant pilgrimage in the nineteenth century, unlike Catholic pilgrimage, was managed primarily by Protestant clerics and presented in a packaged form in the genre of the mass-marketed pilgrimage narrative.

## PROTESTANT PILGRIMAGE AND LIMINALITY

According to Victor and Edith Turner, the religiously symbolic liminal phenomenon of pilgrimage is found in tribal religions as well as among the major religions of the world. The Turners view pilgrimage as a liminal behavior that is most prominent among the highly organized, historical reli-

gions. Although they study Catholic Marian pilgrimage, many of their observations shed light in a comparative fashion on the radically different forms that Protestant pilgrimage has taken. Liminality, often associated with the young, adolescent boy who moves to a hut outside the village during a rite of passage, is found in all societies, both modern and traditional, and is associated with transition and potentiality (Turner 1978: 4). In the Turners' theory, liminality is associated with creativity and play, and is the seedbed of social change. They argue that for Christians, liminality has not been associated with the sacred hut, but rather with a pilgrimage to a distant place from the Christian's primary place of residence, a pilgrimage that becomes a complex surrogate for the journey to the source and heartland of the faith. While monastics make interior journeys as a part of daily life, pilgrims exteriorize their mysticism through a penitential journey that is often freely chosen as a way to slough-off systemic sins and nagging guilt that cannot be relieved in the local confessional.

The pilgrim's journey in the Christian faith is thought to be an ellipse rather than a straight line. In other words, the journey home is quite different from the journey outward. At the end of a pilgrim's journey, she or he will be exposed to powerful religious sacra and will be temporarily released from the normal binding structures of daily life (Turner 1978: 9). While tribal initiates seek a deeper commitment to the structural life of the community and enjoy enhanced status upon their return from a liminal experience, Christians often seek temporary release from the community and only sometimes are able to enhance their mundane status by having made the pilgrimage. Because Christian pilgrimage can intensify the traveler's attachment to her or his faith, many pilgrimages become crusades of some sort – either literal or symbolic (in the form of social protest) – when the pilgrim returns.

The climax of Christian pilgrimage is the moment of approach to the sacred altar or site wherein the pilgrim is momentarily transformed into the savior and the redemptive tradition through a process of identification with the divine. This moment makes up the converse of a ritual of affliction, wherein a Christian emphasizes their alienation from the holiness of God. Instead, the pilgrim has a moment of powerful recognition and identification with religious sacra.

## PILGRIMAGE AND PROTESTANT LITERATURE AND THEOLOGY

One literary image of Christian pilgrimage can be found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories about a group of unrelated persons crossing paths on their journeys spending time together in nonpermanent, associational relationships. Similarly, pilgrimage groupings in Protestantism during the nineteenth century are often associational rather than primary. A different literary model is found in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where the individual soul on the path of life is in direct relationship to God, a relationship surpassing even the most elemental human social relationships such as marriage and parenthood. Always a popular image among Protestants, the idea of life as a pilgrimage is also central to nineteenth-century Methodist hymnody. Methodist hymn writers of the nineteenth century transformed displacement into a religious virtue, wherein the Christian is a wandering stranger in the world, or the world is seen as an alien wilderness in the greater pilgrimage of life (Valenze 1985: 29). When pilgrims return from "wilderness" wanderings to their primary lives, they may experience enhanced religious status, but overall may have lost status in the realms of work and human relationships due to their long absence. While tribal patients draw kin and healers closer to them in order to be cured, in the West pilgrims go out and separate from kin in the process of religious or spiritual healing (Turner 1978: 16).

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the genesis of the Zionist movement, as well as increased popular acceptance among Protestant Americans for the establishment of the Jews in their "homeland." This feeling was most prominent among evangelical premillennialists, although it may also be found among the liberal, intellectual elite such as Philip Schaff and Henry Van Dyke. Mainline, liberal postmillennialists and the premillennialists of the Bible conferences and popular evangelicalism fought vitriolic battles during the second half of the nineteenth century over the role of Palestine in millennial Christian thought. At the middle of the nineteenth century, postmillennialism was the most widely accepted Protestant idea, yet by the twentieth century it would be the minority view. According to James Moorhead,

The postmillennialist hermeneutic was profoundly ambiguous. It wanted to treat the hope of the Apocalypse partly as a figurative truth and partly as literal. Against the premillennarians, for example, postmillennialists fought verse by verse, insisting that prophecy had a spiritual rather than carnal ful-

fillment. Prophecies of a political kingdom for the Jews were types of Christianity's religious influence (Moorhead 1999: 29).

Postmillennialists sought ever-renewed progress in a "kingdom without end" that de-emphasized supernaturalism while extolling the virtues of constant, unending kingdom-building activity. On the other hand, the masses of Protestant Christians were entranced by the millennialist idea that they lived in the end times. They viewed most events in the Middle East through an apocalyptic lens, while some liberal Protestants opted for a more symbolic interpretation of end-time prophecies, choosing not to reproduce what they considered the "mistake" of first-century Christians who erroneously assumed that Christ would return during their lifetime (Moorhead 1999: 185).

During World War I, "millenarians grew more aggressive. . . . the ideal of a constantly improving world [espoused by many postmillennialists], in which presently peace would reign, had been shattered" (Moorhead 1999: 173). Shirley Jackson Case gave evangelical opponents a name—"the premillennialist menace"—and mainstream Protestants spilled much ink in order to decry the idea that the kingdom would be ushered in by force rather than persuasion. According to James Moorhead, for the mainstream postmillennialists, premillennialists represented a delusional mindset that tried to "resuscitate ancient millenarianism with its primitive world view." Yet postmillennialists were thought to represent "an inconsistent attempt to unite modern spirituality with the primitive view" by evangelicals (1999: 182). During the late nineteenth century, which Moorhead calls "the Secular Great Awakening," liberal Protestants would place great faith in the new knowledge available through the modern sciences. Yet premillennialism pulled in the masses of Christians because they liked the connection that premillennialists made between current events and biblical prophecy. Hotly debated topics such as the end times and the newly rediscovered Holy Land of Palestine underscored wider debates between liberals and evangelicals.

Not all evangelicals were premillennialists, but by 1875 premillennialism began to gain wide acceptance among evangelicals and other American Protestants. They began to argue for a strict separation between Israel and the church as two distinct peoples of God, and that God had a plan for "Israel" – by which they meant modern Jewry – which did not exclude the then Ottoman district of Palestine (Weber 1987: 156-7). In the years before World War I, premillennialists saw the increase in Zionism as fulfillment of end-

time prophecy. Indeed, there are surprising links between premillennialists and early Zionists – showing collaboration at both early and later stages (Vogel 1993: 32-9). Premillennialist evangelicals were able to win the hearts of the American public in the decades before World War I because they were able to fit current events and biblical prophecy together in a way that was meaningful to the average churchgoer (Weber 1987: 128-9). When British General Allenby “conquered” Jerusalem in 1917, premillennialists gloated over the events that seemed to prove their eschatological interpretations.

### LIMINALITY, PILGRIMAGE AND SOCIETY

Ecclesiastical battles aside, Protestant pilgrimage became a cultural craze among Protestants of almost every stripe during the nineteenth century. Victor and Edith Turner hold that the epoch of genesis of a particular pilgrimage is of crucial significance in determining the development of that pilgrimage. The second half of the nineteenth century is the epoch of genesis of popular American Protestant pilgrimage, a formative moment that may be carefully scrutinized for patterns and symbolism. Nineteenth-century pilgrimage is modern (as opposed to medieval) pilgrimage, because it is most often “antimodern,” or a part of the “fervent faith and apologetic against advancing secularism of the post-Darwinian world” in which “the sacred has contracted” (Turner 1978: 18). Nineteenth-century pilgrimage among Protestants is not only evangelical in tone, it is also intimately related to a broader culture of leisure tourism, where people seek an almost sacred, often symbolic mode of *communitas*, which is generally unavailable to them in structured life.

On the way home from a pilgrimage, pilgrims have sloughed off structural sins and can relax and enjoy themselves. What is the role of leisure-tourism in pilgrimage? Many pilgrimage sites of the twentieth century are laden with the trappings of consumer commercialism and the opportunity to buy – vestiges from the 1890s when America was reborn as a money-spinning, shopping empire. Yet during the mid-nineteenth century, the souvenir, this enduring element of pilgrimage (and perhaps all travel), was also crucial. The recorded presence of religious memento hawkers outside of a Christian religious site testifies to this ancient traveling tradition and the eagerness to buy. For example, one 1838 traveler returned to Germany with “rosaries,

mother-of-pearl tablets, crucifixes, petrified olives, and peas, and a certificate of his visit to the Holy Sepulcher” (Shepherd 1987: 171). At home, the themes of the East and Orient were the hottest ideas for early department store marketing because for many the East symbolized a sensuality that Judeo-Christian culture lacked (Leach 1993: 104-11). During the nineteenth century, travel was often justified as a repair for ill health rather than for enjoyment’s sake alone. Travel to Palestine was defensible as an especially worthy use of time due to its religious significance.

Protestant pilgrims of the second half of the nineteenth century were able to use a variety of symbols to relay their experiences to would-be pilgrims who purchased their narratives. Narratives of the Holy Land provided a “baptized” alternative to the department store environments which popularized a sensual “Garden of Allah” setting while selling Eastern-influenced fashions. Yet the symbols that Protestant pastors used were those of the biblically-educated clerical class, rather than those of ordinary pilgrims. Nevertheless, they appeared to have a broad, sensational appeal.

In pilgrimage narratives written by Protestant pastors, visible images of the Holy Land were translated into popular theological frameworks. Therefore, the nature of pilgrimage, which in Catholicism is thought to be democratic rather than hierarchical, is perhaps significantly altered in the Protestant case. While the pilgrimages of Catholic peasants of this time are now regarded as anarchical and anticlerical with a populist message—linked to popular nationalism, millennialism, and peasant revolt—the Protestant case is quite the reverse. Protestants tended to send their clerics on the journey to encounter the powerful religious sacra of the pilgrimage, in order to deliver it to the religious congregation at home. Therefore, the experience of *communitas* is almost nonexistent, and the association with laicization, described by Jonathan Sperber in his study of popular religious life among Northern European Catholics during the nineteenth century, certainly does not seem to apply.

Sperber discusses popular pilgrimage in the context of the empowerment of the laity apart from the official church, and the experience of revivals among common people such as artisans and bourgeoisie – often to the dismay of priests who concurrently reported lowered church attendance (1984: 14). One nineteenth-century priest describes a mass of pilgrims at a popular Dutch shrine:

In addition to all these problems, there is the annoying mish-mash, at least in Kevelaer. In one place, people are chattering away, in another they are praying-in Dutch, or, a few steps away, in German. In one spot people are singing, in another they are wailing. While all this is going on, things are being sold or traded, people are drinking and eating, etc. (quoted in Sperber 1984: 18).

This excerpt from a frustrated priest concerned with bringing order to religious practice at a pilgrim's shrine illuminates the festive, often communal atmosphere of popular Catholic pilgrimage. Furthermore, frustrated parents and community leaders near Kevelaer complained that their young adult children begged incessantly to go on pilgrimages and frequently gathered at the unruly sites. By the mid-nineteenth century, Prussian bureaucrats, "the self-styled architects of economic growth and rational social structure," organized active political opposition to pilgrimage as an archaic practice that was harmful to economic development. Calculating leaders sought to liaison with priests in order to lump together processions and pilgrimages and to confine them to Sundays when no one was working (Sperber 1984: 25). Pilgrimage was feared and mistrusted by both Catholic and Protestant religious leaders as "antimodern" and as opposed to positive economic growth and a hardworking, vigilant attitude normally associated with the Protestant ethic of hard work, thrift, and saving, because of its connection to vacation time.

The overarching concern about popular pilgrimage during the nineteenth century in northern Europe by clerics and business leaders contrasts with the general enthusiasm among Protestant pastors for their own pilgrimages to Palestine and the popular books they subsequently published. Rather than bringing revolt, revival and anti-clericalism, they served to bolster the position of Protestant pastors as interpreters and managers of religious phenomena to the masses.

For Victor and Edith Turner, themselves frequent Catholic pilgrims, the domestication of pilgrimage by clergy represents the omnipresent attempts of religious specialists to domesticate the primitive because manifestations of *communitas* are potentially subversive and threatening to clerical status and orderliness. Clerics have historically sought to transform pilgrimage into a neater phenomenon that is more susceptible to ecclesiastical control (1978: 32). Western pilgrimage has become more solemn in tone and is often effectively mediated by travel agencies which provide tour guides with a

commercial goal in mind. As this transformation of pilgrimage has occurred, the promises of liminal experiences are no longer necessarily available, no matter how much they are promised or advertised.

The liminoid or playful, communal element of pilgrimage is attractive because it promises a release from mundane structure and a homogenization of status among pilgrims in addition to a release from ordinary time. The liminoid resembles, without being identical to, the liminal. It is an independent domain of creative activity and is associated with anti-structure and can “generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles” (Turner 1979: 27).

Pilgrims in a liminal process will maintain simplicity of dress and behavior and will often expect some sort of ordeal at some point in the pilgrimage process. Liminality brings a reflection on basic values and the emergence of an integral person from multiple personae. Indeed, the movement or travel that pilgrimage entails in itself goes against stasis and structure, and the pilgrim’s devotion brings a natural comradery among fellow travelers. Mircea Eliade writes that the road and walking can be transfigured into a religious experience, because every road can symbolize “the road of life,” or a peregrination to the center of the world:

If possessing a house implies having assumed a stable situation in the world, those who have renounced their houses, the pilgrims and ascetics, proclaim by their “walking,” by their constant movement, their desire to leave the world, their refusal of any worldly situation. The house is a “nest,” and . . . the “nest” implies flocks, children, and a “home,” in a word, it symbolizes the world of the family, of society, of getting a living (Eliade 1959: 183-4).

Eliade highlights the aspect of movement and danger against stasis and stability in the nature of pilgrimage. What Victor Turner calls “the whole field” of pilgrimage includes the nonritualized factors as well as the ritualized ones, i.e., the “play” times of travel and enjoyment. Liminal pilgrimage does not serve the static status quo; rather, it recollects an alternative, more fluid mode of social being and a world where *communitas*, rather than a bureaucratic social structure, is preeminent (1978: 37).

Turner examines pilgrimage as a rite of passage. Such a rite of passage includes three stages: separation, or leaving a previous social status, transition or passing through an area of ambiguity, and incorporation wherein the subject is re-aggregated into their well-defined position in a stable soci-

ety. Unlike initiations which permanently elevate subjects after temporarily humbling them, pilgrimages transiently elevate those with low status before returning them to their permanent humbleness (Turner 1979: 16).

The element of play is crucial to the spiritual work of pilgrimage. (As Turner writes, “the work of men is the work of the gods.”) In the liminoid process of pilgrimage, cultural elements are recombined in numerous ways. People “play” with the basic tenets of familiar religious faith and de-familiarize them. The “liminoid” resembles (without being identical to) the liminal—it is a distorted mirror-image, mask, or cloak for the structural activity in the “centers” or “mainstreams” of productive social behavior (1979: 27). This anti-structure can generate and store alternative models for living, which in turn speak back to the behavior of mainstream roles in society.

Turner writes that the differentiation between work and leisure brought by John Calvin and other reformers during the Protestant Reformation lowered the importance of special festival-like events such as pilgrimage, while sacralizing a person’s worldly occupation as the sphere in which to serve God. In bringing about this change, reformers sacralized what was formerly the most profane, and profaned what was formerly sacred – the festivals, cakes, and ale of popular religious life (Turner 1979: 33). The ideal of hard work in one’s calling promoted ascetic dedication to systematic profits and thrift, hardly a friendly atmosphere for the excesses and lengthy absences required by traditional pilgrimage practices. Thus, after the Reformation, “play” is a form of moral laxness, and Protestant pilgrim travel takes on a notably serious and holy tone of “work” in comparison to common folk pilgrimage among Catholics.

If the liminality of pilgrimage is “the acme of insecurity, disorder, and chaos” among Protestant divines, it follows that pilgrimage would undergo a radical transformation at their hands during the nineteenth century as they were writing pilgrimage narratives. Indeed, most narratives reaffirm traditional doctrines and the established Protestant church.

For Turner, the concept of the liminoid includes moments when the germ of the future, social change, and the liberation of human capacities and creativity occur. The liminoid is “an institutional pocket or capsule which contains the germ of future social developments” (1979: 41-2). As a moment when time flows openly and freely, liminoid processes are the difficult to duplicate objects of desire.

Liminality, nevertheless, undergoes a transformation in highly complex societies wherein it is not only removed from a rite of passage context but is

also individualized. In these instances, which are mirrored in the production of mass-produced pilgrimage narratives by Protestant pastors, the solitary person creates the liminoid phenomena, and the collectivity experiences the collective liminal symbols (Turner 1979: 51). In this process, the experience of *communitas* by the pastor will be recorded as the memory of *communitas*, wherein a particular social structure may be argued from the experience since it has the authority of liminality, a type of commidity. Therefore, the religious elite will convey the holy or liminal to their congregations in a way that will speak to that society in a desirable fashion, or a manner that will not undercut their own religious position and authority. How will the symbols of the Holy Land become relevant to social action? As my previous work shows, the prestige of the Holy Land and Christian pilgrimage often served an anti-Catholic agenda, an anti-Arab or Orientalist mindset, and bolstered popular millennialism, to name a few (Rogers 2000: 221-52). Holy Land pastor-pilgrims of the nineteenth century report a loss of ego, as they are immersed in the sacred setting of the Bible, wherein the delights of the experience outweigh the considerable danger and problems.

#### THE PROTESTANT PASTOR AS HONORARY PILGRIM

The nineteenth-century Holy Land pilgrimage experience is often recorded almost as a stage play wherein the pastor as religious hero embarks on a dangerous association with sacral phenomena. Original Christianity, the faithful landscape of the Bible, falls under his “gaze.” The boundary ambiguity on the part of the pastor when overseas is dangerous because it could be associated with a form of pollution, as sort of “going native” outside of the local context. In a careful balancing act, the pastor/narrator must mirror the revealed truths of Christianity as they are practiced at home, while claiming to experience them in an entirely new and revealing way. Since the sphere of religious ritual was contracting in Victorian society, travel was becoming a new nexus of the important work of liminal play. By baptizing certain forms of travel to the Near East as particularly religiously symbolic and holy, pastors could reclaim an area that hinted of the profane (travel and tourism) for the sacred, a sort of “Christian” vacation. Yet it was perhaps the same Victorian pastors who contributed to the process of secularization by defining the world outside of the church as “secular.”

Nineteenth-century pastors in the Holy Land reported dramatic, life-altering encounters with the religious past and their own heritage. Such encounters leave open the question as to whether the unprecedented will provide the 'terminal meaning' of the situation (Turner 1979: 93). Pastors interpreted the meaning of the Holy Land for the members of their congregations back at home, and this meaning would have a direct bearing on their understanding of the original faith unmarred by tradition. The narratives, as a form of public liminality, would enact in a dramatic form for readers the ritual of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage, understood as a process "betwixt and between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending" would yield a moment of potential, a time of enchantment with the faith when anything might happen (Turner 1979: 97). Victor Turner views such moments as an advance in the history of human freedom, since they can expose injustices and inefficiencies in mainstream structures.

Protestant pastors would speak back to their congregations about political issues at home that came into clearer focus while they were abroad. This is because pilgrims leave a domain where relations are complex for one far-away where they are believed to be simpler. The straightforward truths of Christianity would become more apparent in Palestine, away from the trappings of a modern industrial society. The pastors would not become interconnected with other pilgrims on their journeys. Rather, their relationships while there would be ones of similarity of purpose, meaning, etc. (Turner 1979: 122). Palestine became a stage wherein religious people looked for meaning. Ownership and control of holy sites in Palestine would reflect out upon the wider world, providing enhanced status at home. The Muslim control of Palestine was repeatedly decried by Protestant pastors as a slap in the face to Judeo-Christian dominance and preeminence in the world.

In Palestine, the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants, Armenians, Jews, and Muslims hotly contested the centers of pilgrim devotion during the nineteenth century. In one instance, popular Presbyterian minister T. DeWitt Talmage bartered heavily to purchase the site he believed was the original Calvary from the "Mohammedans" for "the sake of all Christendom" (Talmage 1893). This impulse to control meaningful, iconic sites can be related to the magnitude of public devotion related to these sites. Such sites are often connected to social and political conflicts due to their heavily symbolic nature. The sites are not thought to be holy in themselves, as some have

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these causal forces, see Wilson 1996.

assumed; rather, they are symbols of the higher power that lies beyond them, and often weigh heavily in the hearts of wider public opinion. Many groups anxiously sought control of key sites because these images and sites were crucial in the collective unconscious and performed therapeutic functions in society, serving to redress unwholesome imbalances in human life. Protestants did not have local control or a historical presence in Palestine until after 1917, when British General Allenby made his famous victorious walk from the coast of Palestine to Jerusalem. Under British mandate, Protestants quickly established multiple holy sites all over Palestine – sites which they still maintain and control.

It is not surprising that clerics and governmental organizations continually vied for power over these areas. Jonathan Sperber writes that “public opinion” became a new factor to consider in political and governmental control for the first time during the nineteenth century, as universal male suffrage became increasingly widespread in the West. Sacred sites would thus often become pawns in the quest for the approval of the public or one’s religious group.

Why do precious locales weigh so heavily in the hearts and minds of believers? Victor Turner considers the realm of the liminal, the locale of pilgrimage, to be the site of potentiality for social change because of the association with creativity and the free flow of time in process. Pilgrimage can be a rite of passage for Christians in the West wherein liminality is experienced and new perspectives emerge for the believer. Certainly, the authors of Protestant pilgrimage narratives report emotionally and spiritually significant experiences. In general, they report the thrill of having traveled back in time to a primitive past, where they can view Arabs as they have existed unchanged for centuries and witness the events and setting of the Bible. They report a new, deepened experience of their faith after the intense experience of visiting the land.

These Protestant ministers and other pilgrims published narratives of their journeys for eager audiences newly enthralled with the power of the press as a vehicle for the spread of Protestant ideas during the nineteenth century. Activist Protestants believed that a new era of missions had emerged in which the limitations of manpower would be transcended by the ability to reach thousands through massive printing projects and tracts such as pilgrimage narratives.

## THE POWER OF THE PROTESTANT PRESS

David Morgan writes that by the early nineteenth century, Protestants had gone through a radical transformation from an emphasis upon hearing and listening (to sermons, etc.) to a preference for mass-produced visual representation and religious writings. This helps to explain the large number of mass-produced pilgrimage narratives from this period. In the midst of this process, “belief was converted into graphic information and disseminated cheaply over great distances . . . and an ever-expanding infrastructure of distribution” (Morgan 1999: 6). According to Morgan, mechanical reproduction democratized visual response, making Christian art available to almost everyone in home or Sunday school classroom. The copies do not suffer from lower status than the original; in fact, they are fully invested with the power of the original. While some have argued that there is an inevitable “loss of aura” when an image or item is mechanically reproduced, Morgan holds that reproduction performed quite the opposite function, bringing the viewer to the very subject of the image, such as the places of the Bible. Furthermore, the reproductions helped to infuse the original with more sacral power, since Protestants thought that the means of reproduction were transparent or unintrusive (1999: 8).

Thus, face-to-face encounters were fashioned out of a desire to use images to shape character – especially that of youth. The precondition of such mass reproductions by Protestant pastors was public consumption fueled by images that perpetuated desire and made satisfaction appear possible. Morgan suggests that the tract societies of the second and third decades of the nineteenth century invented the American mass media, because they were deeply convinced in the power of the media to effect social change. Not necessarily an instrument for domination, such media exerted influence rather than control. Tractarians argued that they wished to use the press to return the church to its primitive purity and linked tract distribution to the practices of Luther and other reformers. Their ultimate desire was to place in the hands of each person on earth the changeless truths of Christianity, concisely written and accessible (Morgan 1999: 27). According to Morgan, it is difficult to overstate the optimism of those who sought to use the mass medium of the press for benevolent ends. Similarly, Protestant pilgrimage narratives of Palestine were intended to uplift and affirm while satiating the new curiosity about the unexplored East of the biblical past.

Such a positive apprehension of the power of the press to effect positive results in society is the background for the widespread publication of pilgrimage narratives. While consumers of the narratives often believed that the transmission of the pilgrimage experience was transparent or unobtrusive, pilgrimage narrative writers were aware of the broad appeal of their writings and sought to provide a dramatic spiritual encounter with the essential truths of Christianity for their readers. In the wake of the modernist controversy, pastors could reaffirm and symbolically witness the seemingly undeniable testimony of geography, which they commonly referred to as the "fifth gospel," written in stone.

Was there a "loss of aura" (to use Morgan's phrase) as the pilgrimage experience was recorded and cheaply disseminated in book form by well-meaning pastors? Certainly, if pilgrimage is intended to be a personal encounter with powerful religious sacra at the site of the religion's founding. The traditional pilgrimage ideal of leaving one's own home for new acquaintances or comrades on the pilgrim's road cannot be reached by reading a mass-produced book, except perhaps in one's guided imagination. In addition, the experience of cleansing from one's sins would certainly be watered down if one has not personally undertaken the labors of pilgrimage. Finally, the radical, anticlerical, communal element of pilgrimage that has been associated with millennialism and peasant revolt would not be available in a book written by a cleric about a cleric's experiences. For these reasons, pilgrimage narratives represent a reversal of ancient Christian pilgrimage traditions, forming a more top-down experience for seekers, with clergy translating the meaning of the event.

#### DOMESTICATING THE PRIMITIVE: CLERGY AND PILGRIMAGE

The historical widespread antipathy of clergy to the practice of pilgrimage is perhaps strongly expressed in this form of co-opted pilgrimage in which the reader hopes to travel to the Holy Land, or has the desire to go to the site of powerful religious sacra, but instead receives a managed and pre-digested experience controlled and orchestrated by the professional clergy. This reality only becomes apparent when one considers the centuries-old history of pilgrimage, which has been associated with laicization and popular revival wherein laypersons take charge of their own spiritual development. The symbols of pilgrimage such as the Holy City of Jerusalem, the site

of the crucifixion, and the boyhood home of Christ in Nazareth are thus coming from the religious elite to the laity, rather than emerging from the laity's individual, personal connection and interest in special sites, areas, and symbols.

The nineteenth-century pilgrimage experience, available for purchase from a local store and readable from the comfort of one's own home, was a far cry from the experience of journeying by foot and in boats, over land and sea, to the homeland of the faith in order to personally encounter the powerful connection of religious sacra to the site of a historical religion. One is not released from mundane structures and healed from systemic maladies, and the connection to local clergy and places of worship is strengthened and maintained rather than damaged. *Communitas*, other than imagined, is completely broken down in the experience of reading a book. For Turner, *communitas* is a connection to the sacred or the holy because "it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency" (1969: 128).

It is also of interest to note that women historically favored pilgrimage as a type of piety. From Egeria of Spain in the early church to Margery Kempe of late Medieval England, such an act of piety was often chosen and favored by women. In contrast, pilgrimage narratives of the nineteenth century among Protestants were almost without exception written by men, even though some women accompanied their husbands on such tours, while a few other women traveled independently. In contrast, among Catholic popular pilgrimage in Latin America and Europe, pilgrims are disproportionately female.

The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca has a broader appeal: it is thought to be universally desirable for both women and men. Christian pilgrimage narratives of the nineteenth century were often read by women, but almost never written by them. These women, as pilgrimage narrative consumers, stand out in history for their willingness to let others take pilgrimages on their behalf, or their unwillingness or inability to do so themselves combined with a desire and an interest in the topic. According to Turner, the *communitas* of pilgrimage is often characterized by a decreased emphasis upon sexual differences and a suspension of kinship rights and behaviors – elements appealing to many women bound to traditional roles by their societies (1969: 111). Therefore, as pilgrims, women have been freed of some of the binding norms, which may have held them captive in their homes. Yet when a woman

reads a pilgrimage narrative, she has not been set free from any of the strictures of daily life. Women were the primary market for these narratives, which were written by men.

In this instance, a traditional women's area of Christian piety is co-opted, pre-interpreted, and divorced from personal experience. Instead of the freeing experience of release from communal norms, the local norms are reinvested and affirmed, baptized with the status of pilgrimage. It is interesting to note the sheer lack of local pilgrim sites for North American Christians during the nineteenth century in contrast to those of Europeans. It is perhaps due to the overwhelming emphasis emerging during the nineteenth century upon the distant Holy Land overseas, a trip too difficult and expensive for many women, that American Christian women did not develop this type of pious practice.

For much of Christian history, pilgrimage has been a form of popular religion tied to Marian devotion because such piety is non-literate, open to anyone who seeks non-written, non-verbal forms of symbolic practice. Because both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions so highly favored the verbal and written modalities, the visual and experiential aspect of faith was widely rejected. As John Dillenberger aptly writes, "The visual as the Bible of the illiterate or the unlearned, as the older tradition expressed it, has been transformed into the visual illiteracy of the learned" (1999: 91). It is therefore ironic that the personal experience of pilgrimage by Protestant pastors would be transformed into a written form, namely, the pilgrimage narrative, among nineteenth-century Christians so that they could more properly read about pilgrimage rather than experiencing it themselves.

Many middle class members of the laity and popular public figures such as former presidents and generals, however, would make their own pilgrimages to Palestine in increasing numbers as the nineteenth century continued. The opportunity was available to middle-class people for the first time in centuries after the invention of the steamship in the 1840s. After the Saracenic invasion of Palestine, European Christians had been obliged to recreate holy sites at home through the careful placing of relics and the witness of miracles associated with them, because Holy Land travels were almost impossible. In the fourth century, Constantine built a shrine at the site of the crucifixion that was important among early Christians. This shrine was totally destroyed by Arabs in the eleventh century, and the crusaders later covered the area with a smaller building in the twelfth century, which evoked centuries of devotion for nineteenth-century pilgrims (Sox 1985: 201).

Nineteenth-century Protestants complained about the turf-wars and doctrinal strife at this key site controlled by five ancient rival groups: the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Armenians, Syrians, Copts, and Ethiopians. Nineteenth-century Protestants also often eschewed the popular shrines of Palestine, many of which were steeped in the traditions of the Middle Ages and were popularized by Franciscans (i.e., the Bethlehem stable, the mount of the beatitudes, etc.). Instead they sought what they called “the out-of-doors gospel” in a direct experience with nature. They sought the images of childhood Bible illustrations, often anxiously searching in vain, while rejecting the gilded, incense-filled chapels set up by the Eastern traditions.

Meccan pilgrims wear the clothing on their pilgrimages that will be their death shroud. The ideal in this case is that they may present themselves at the last judgment covered with their “ihram” pilgrim’s garb. The idea of holy geography is critical to the Islamic faith, and their history, like that of Christians, is also one of conquest, victory, and defeat. While Christian pilgrimage has historically been less critical in the life of the believer, has had less connection with assurance of salvation, and has been seen as less necessary than is the pilgrimage to Mecca among devout Muslims. Pilgrimage is an early Christian practice first attributed in the second century that has historically endured, whether on a local level or in connection to a longer journey, due to its popular appeal and the important meaning assigned to particular regions of the world. The nineteenth century set the stage for the broad public acceptance of the land of Palestine as a spiritual homeland for Judeo-Christian peoples. It also set the stage for our inability to empathize with a more universal idea of connection to sacred locales among those whose claims may be at odds with our own views of religious past and future.

Popular pilgrimage has historically been democratic, anarchical, anticlerical, and populist in tone – linked to popular nationalism and millennialism, and the seeking of *communitas*. Protestant pilgrimage therefore, in which ordained ministers make the trip and present it in digested form for their congregations back home, appears quite different from the ancient Christian practice dating from the second century C. E. and from the customarily individualized pilgrimages of both Catholics and Muslims. Religious specialists, perhaps fearing potential subversiveness, may have attempted to domesticate the primitive in pilgrimage and transform pilgrimage centers into orderly, solemn, and comfortable encounters. “Honorary” pilgrimage, attempted through the purchase of a book, waters down and certainly tames the essence of the pilgrimage journey itself, for the journey has not physi-

cally been taken, and its actual climax is when the pilgrim is exposed to powerful religious sacra. Modern pilgrimage is mediated by travel agencies and church or denominational tours where contact with the sacred is less individual and more group-oriented, and also highly controlled. In this scenario, human freedom is not necessarily enhanced, and the liminal, rite-of-passage element of pilgrimage appears to be lost. Religious experience trickles from the religious elites down to the public.

The nineteenth-century Holy Land craze was the beginning of modern-day Protestant pilgrimage. It was the epoch when the broader Protestant public began to form opinions about Palestine in line with some of their millennial hopes and expectations, and to look eastward for the beautiful, utopian, promised land pictured in their Bible illustrations. As John Davis writes of Palestine Park at Chautauqua, the Holy City at the St. Louis World's Fair, and the popular parlor pictographs of the Holy Land, "miniature worlds are dominated worlds" (1996: 92). Travel narratives were likewise small worlds unto themselves, crafted by religious leadership for widespread consumption. Over time, the natives of the land were thought to make up a pleasant, historical, and biblical backdrop that served to enhance the modern tourist experience.

## REFERENCES

- Clemens, Samuel  
1869 *Innocents Abroad or the New Pilgrim's Progress: Being Some Account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land: Wit.* Oxford: The Oxford Mark Twain.
- Davis, John  
1996 *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century Art and Culture.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dillenberger, John  
1999 *Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual*

*Images in Sixteenth-Century Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eliade, Mircea

1959

*The Sacred and the Profane.* New York: HBJ.

Leach, William

1993

*Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture.* New York: Vintage Books.

Moorhead, James H.

1999

*World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Morgan, David

1999

*Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rogers, Stephanie Stidham

2000

"In Search of a Promised Land: American Protestants, Geopietry, and the Holy Land at the Turn-of-the-Century." *Koinonia Journal: The Princeton Seminary Graduate Forum* XII.2: 221-52.

Shepherd, Naomi

1987

*The Zealous Intruders: The Western Rediscovery of Palestine.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Sox, David

1985

*Relics and Shrines.* London: George Allen & Unwin.

Sperber, Jonathan

1984

*Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Talmage, D. DeWitt

- 1893 *From Manger to Throne: Embracing a New Life of Jesus the Christ and A History of Palestine and its People Including an Account of the Author's Journey to, Through, and From the Christ-Land.* New York: The Christian Herald Bible House.

Turner, Victor

- 1969 *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

- 1979 *Process, Performance, and Pilgrimage: a Study in Comparative Symbolology.* New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Turner, Victor and Edith

- 1978 *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Valenze, Deborah

- 1985 *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Vogel, Lester I.

- 1993 *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Weber, Timothy

- 1986 *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1982.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.