

**CREATIVE AMBIGUITIES
IN
THE PILGRIMAGE PROCESS**

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ABSTRACT

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem has been popular since at least the fourth century, and still attracts many Christians today. Throughout the history of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a deep theological ambiguity has characterized the journey. Writings from the patristic period reveal a “teaching of restraint”, contrasted by an enthusiastic endorsement of going on pilgrimage “to increase the grace of charity.”

The present thesis examines the history of Christian pilgrimage to the land of the Bible and identifies a broad range of motivations and theological dilemmas. Pilgrimage is first seen in the context of the history of religions, as “worship in motion”, an example of Eliade’s “creative hermeneutic”. Anthropological approaches, especially those of the Turners, are studied and critiqued. MacCannell’s understanding of modern tourism as a “quest for the authentic”, and Cohen’s phenomenological study of the “existential tourist”, provide points of reference for establishing the relationship between pilgrim and tourist.

A qualitative study, based on “personal experience” interviews, provides the data for studying contemporary Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The actual words of pilgrims about their motivations, the journey, their encounters, the shrines, and the return home, all reveal creative ambiguities of a theological nature. These are characteristic of a postmodern age, in which orthodox understandings of Revelation, Incarnation and Salvation are challenged and deconstructed.

Personal pilgrim stories are evaluated in the present thesis in the light of narrative theology. Between Loughlin’s “narrative orthodoxy” and Taylor’s “erring”, the pilgrim maps a path of faith through the uncertain terrain of postmodern religious experience. On a journey to contemporary Israel and Palestine, the pilgrim finds God “on the edge” and encounters Christ in the “other”, especially in unscheduled encounters with Jews, Muslims and local Christians. This storied process of pilgrimage through both ambiguity and faith leaves traces of reform and renewal, to be developed theologically and practically when the pilgrim returns home.

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PREFACE

Pilgrimage is an ancient form of human journey, and still holds a deep fascination for both the religious and the secular traveller at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Although some might consider it a devotional fossil, pilgrimage is far from defunct in contemporary societies. The statistics of recent research in the geography of religion indicate that upward of 200 million human beings go on pilgrimage each year. A surprising 150 million of these are Christians.¹

The essential meaning of Christian pilgrimage is far from self-evident. Christians making their way to such shrines as Santiago, Rome and Jerusalem are not always clear in their own minds about their motives, and critics of the practice make derogatory references to the medieval traditions of a cruel penitence, or to the quest for merit in the form of indulgences. Many pilgrims, however, see their journeys in a different and more positive light, and this is especially true if they are on their way to the land of the Bible. Some who take the road to Jerusalem speak of this as a work of faith, a quest for a renewed awareness of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, in the land where he lived and taught – which they call the “Holy Land”. Some pilgrims seek an understanding of Scripture as related to the “sacred topography” of the Bible. Others cite an urge for spiritual renewal, not specifically linked to a “holy place”, but rather to a prayerful community experience which they hope to find in the company of other pilgrims. Still others – “pilgrim/tourists” - will insist that they are motivated only by curiosity or simply intrigued by the adventure of travel to see exotic “religious sights”.

Contemporary pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, like all Christian pilgrimage, has an ambiguous and elusive character. This it shares with its ancient counterpart. Among the earliest documents of Christian pilgrimage, from the fourth century onward, we find both stern warnings against setting out on the road to Jerusalem, and enthusiastic endorsements of the same enterprise. Gregory of Nyssa, the great Cappadocian theologian, voiced the “teaching of restraint” in no uncertain terms in his “*Letter on Pilgrimages*”, when he wrote:

What advantage is to be gained by reaching those famous places themselves? One cannot suppose that our Lord lives there today in his body, but is absent to us foreigners!²

Paulinus of Nola, on the other hand, could counsel a friend:

¹ S.M. Bhardwaj and G. Rinschede (eds.), *Pilgrimage in World Religions, Geographia Religionum 4* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag 1988) 11. Victor Turner pointed out already in 1973 that “reports from all over the world indicate that, if anything, larger numbers of people than ever are visiting pilgrim centers” (“The Center Out There: Pilgrim’s Goal”, in *History of Religions* 12 (3) 1973, 195).

² Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistolae: “Letter on Pilgrimages”* (Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*. [=PG] 46.1009C; P Schaff and H Wace (eds.) *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* Vol. V (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) 382-383.

“Make pilgrimage abroad to increase the grace of charity in you, whilst you still lodge in the body and are a pilgrim for Christ.”³

Pilgrimage in Christian tradition, at its very beginnings, reflects a wide range of intentions and goals. This range seems to have been somewhat regulated during the Middle Ages, with the definition of pilgrim goals by an external religious (or even secular) authority, so that penitential pilgrims and Crusaders (for example) had fairly clear ideas of why they were travelling. Subsequently, however, ambiguity returned in full force, and remains a primary characteristic of pilgrimage today. The present study is intended not to overwrite the ambivalent subtexts, but to understand and evaluate them, by considering the role of ambiguous experiences in re-mapping the journey and re-creating the pilgrim. Central to this thesis is the proposition that ambiguity and questioning are essential to the theological effect of pilgrimage as a religious experience of transformation and renewal.

Recent developments in religion and society have extended the usage of the word “pilgrim” beyond its classical boundaries. Any intentional journey – physical or metaphorical - away from the familiar, through an unfamiliar context or place that enriches or changes the traveller, and back to the familiar, can conceivably be called a pilgrimage.⁴ The purpose of the present study is to provide, in the midst of this broad context of human movement and growth, practical focus and informed theological reflection on Christian pilgrimage to “The Holy Land”, especially in its most ambivalent and challenging aspects.

While the history and geography of Christian pilgrimage have been well documented, it can be argued that today’s pilgrims are less consciously aware of the *meaning* of their journey than ever before in Christian history. The incidence of pilgrimages is increasing rapidly, even including people from formerly resistant traditions like Protestantism. Yet, as J.G. Davies has written: “little attempt [has been] made to develop a theological interpretation or justification of the renewed practice...”⁵

Today’s scholarly interest in pilgrimage is mainly sociological, and today’s popular interest mainly psychological. Consequently, theological reflection is relatively rare. When it does appear, its focus is almost entirely devotional or idealistic.⁶ Two examples:

³ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 5:14, in: P.J. Walsh (trans.) Letters of Paulinus of Nola (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1968).

⁴ I. Reader and T. Walter (eds.), Pilgrimage in Popular Culture (London: Macmillan 1993); and see discussion below.

⁵ J. G. Davies, Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today: Why? Where? How? (London: SCM Press 1988) viii.

⁶ E.g. Alan Jones, Passion for Pilgrimage: Notes for the Journey Home (New York: Harper and Row 1976); Joan Puls osf, Hearts Set On Pilgrimage (London: Lamp Press 1989); Rick Jarrow, In Search of the Sacred: A Pilgrimage to Holy Places (Madras/London: Theosophical Publishing 1986); Jim Fiennes, On Pilgrimage: A Time to Seek (London 1991); and many others.

“Pilgrimage helped to shape the culture of Europe. Perhaps it is no coincidence, at a time when western culture is undergoing a further period of considerable change, that pilgrimage should re-emerge to allow thoughtful men and women to travel with hope into a new millennium.”⁷

“Christ is the eternal pilgrim. His coming and his going are eternal. He came from God and he has returned to God. In the words of the Fourth Gospel, ‘Jesus knowing the Father had given all things into his hands and that he was come from God and went to God’ speaks of this pilgrimage. Jesus makes a double pilgrimage, but in effect it is but one pilgrimage. He pilgrims into the heart of God especially when he is deeply involved in the affairs of the world.”⁸

A dilemma is encountered in the search for serious theological reflection on the religious journey. Pilgrimage – sometimes called “the eighth sacrament” - is all but absent from the pages of texts on pastoral theology, systematic theology and sacramental theology. Pilgrim routes and shrines have remained remarkably constant for centuries, yet many pilgrims make their way through a theological medium so abstract and unexamined as to be quite opaque. Pilgrims “move invisibly in huge numbers among the tourists of today, indistinguishable from them except in purpose.”⁹ It is precisely that purpose, in its sacramental invisibility and ambiguity, which is the theological essence of the Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The present thesis, with its focus on the journey hermeneutic and on personal and communal process in the pilgrim narrative, is a response to the need for a theological evaluation of an important religious practice, and at the same time an answer to those pessimists who judge all journeys as equally impersonal and random.

⁷ M. Robinson, Sacred Places, Pilgrim Paths: An Anthropology of Pilgrimage (London: HarperCollins 1997) 10.

⁸ I. Smith-Cameron, Pilgrimage: An Exploration into God (London: Diocese of Southwark) 73.

⁹ R. Barber, Pilgrimages (Woodbridge: Boydell Press 1991) 2.

CHAPTER ONE: FIRST STEPS

(A) BEGINNINGS OF RESEARCH

My work as a pilgrim guide, field instructor and researcher of Christian pilgrimage experiences in the Holy Land is rooted in my own personal journey to Jerusalem in 1970, and the subsequent process whereby I remained to live in the Holy Land permanently. I have been a pilgrim myself for over thirty years, and also a guide, instructor and host to other spiritually motivated travellers to Jerusalem and the biblical lands. In the mid-1980's, after training and licensing as a guide, I began receiving and accompanying groups of predominantly Roman Catholic pilgrims to the Holy Land; I was soon guiding Protestant groups as well. Subsequently, for more than two decades, as I pursued other forms of a vocation in adult experiential education, I also continued to seek employment in the pilgrimage field. Over time, I became responsible for educational/informative and devotional/reflective excursions and pilgrimages in the context of several biblical study programs based in Jerusalem (most notably St. George's College), expanding my horizons to include, not only Israel and Palestine but Jordan, Egypt, Turkey and Greece as well.

The theological observations of the pilgrim experience that later formed the basis for my Master's thesis on the subject¹ were preceded by several years of conversations, reflections and information gathering of an informal nature. In the field, I met many pilgrims who were more than willing to share their experiences of the sacred journey with me in their own words, and also many travellers who preferred not to see their trip in religious terms but for whom the way trodden was nevertheless immensely significant. Pious or less so, the pilgrims and travellers I spoke with were engaged in a discrete and empirically observable enterprise which had a beginning, a middle and an end, like any good narrative, and therefore could conceivably be parsed, appreciated and understood.

During the summer of 1992, I undertook an informal and limited survey of pilgrims and students of biblical studies who were in the Holy Land, in pilgrimage programs facilitated by myself, for periods of up to ten weeks. My survey questions – which concerned how pilgrims personally understood their experiences - were somewhat simplistic at this stage. I first asked: “What expectations or questions did you bring with you on the journey?” Another set of questions concerned the “voices” which each pilgrim heard in Jerusalem: which “voices” were most clear, and which least audible? A third set of questions invited respondents to identify something in the experience of encountering the Holy Land which “awakened empathy or approval”, and – conversely – something which “aroused resistance or disapproval”.

Without a well-developed interviewing methodology, these questions were not focused clearly enough to provide explicit guidance or interpretation, either for the respondents or for anyone wishing to evaluate the responses. Since I had collected all the material in an entirely anonymous format, no particulars of the respondents' identity (not even age and gender) were recorded. For this and other reasons, I was

¹ Henry R. Carse, The Jerusalem Way: A Theological Handbook for Holy Land Pilgrimage (MA Thesis; The General Theological Seminary, New York; January 1994).

not inclined or able to make systematic or specific use of these data either in the subsequent course of my research into pilgrim theology or in the preparation of the present thesis. However, in these first attempts at listening to pilgrims some patterns did emerge among the variety of responses. These patterns were, in their own right, to influence my interviewing premises at a later and more developed stage of the research.

Relating to “expectations and questions”, one respondent in the 1992 survey said that he/she expected “deeper insights into the Scriptures... and to experience some kind of encounter with the living God...”. In the words of this respondent, these expectations were met, and in fact surpassed, largely due to the “many, many surprises, big and small, that kept turning up... (blessings in disguise)”. Another respondent wrote: “I expected a prayer experience in visiting holy sites which were at the very root of my faith. However, something deeper has developed within me!... There has been an awakening of awareness of the complexities of this Holy Land, an awareness of local culture that helps me to interpret Scripture in a better way... [local people] who have lived through the horrors of many wars and have rebuilt – hope-filled.” A general pattern of observation emerges here: the pilgrim’s original (pious) expectation is enhanced and in a real way fulfilled by surprise, local encounter, and contemporary complexity – and all this in ways that would have been unimaginable before the beginning of the journey.

Concerning the “voices” of Jerusalem, one respondent wrote: “The first voice I recall is that of its ancient history and tradition. Then there are the religious voices... Next, the political voices, especially those of the Israelis and Palestinians. Finally, I still hear the voices of the poor in the streets...” A different person wrote: “I heard the voice of faith, and faith people of the past... I heard the voices of ... Jews seeking a homeland, nationalistic Jews... and peace-seeking Jews. I heard Palestinians crying out for justice in their oppression...” A significant pattern illustrated here is the way a pilgrim’s experience unfolds from the most familiar and, perhaps, least disturbing and challenging (i.e. the “voice” of faith and tradition), through a more diverse and engaging interfaith level (“voices” of different, non-Christian religions), and finally to the most challenging and ethically disturbing level – an attentiveness to the realities of the world (“the voices of the poor”... “crying out for justice”).

Responses concerning experiences that “awakened approval” or “aroused resistance” were particularly revealing. They included the following appreciation expressed by an ordained person: “My reading of the Bible... has come alive and has a richer, deeper meaning. Yes, my work as a pastor should be more open to the outsider, the little ones which it is easy to overlook”. On the other hand, another pilgrim is openly critical of certain people encountered along the way: “I could not accept the narrow-mindedness of some of the Franciscans at some of the holy places we visited, nor the blindness of some of the ‘we-have-it-made’ Israelis to the plight of their Palestinian neighbours.” Again and again, the pilgrims I was hearing placed their subjective impressions of contemporary struggles in the context of religious quests and insights. Being asked to think in terms of “appreciation” and “resistance”, rather than simply to list the shrines they reached and what they did and felt there, led these pilgrims to the realization that the heart of the sacred journey is not necessarily found at some historical remove, or in some external shrine. The realization of contextuality is not

immediate, but evolves through a process of encounter with ambiguous and unforeseen terms of the journey.²

It was clear to me at this stage that the contemporary Christian pilgrimage experience in the Holy Land was radically open to and affected by surprises and challenges – “creative ambiguities” - of a social and ethical, as well as a theological nature. It struck me that the needs and aspirations, as well as the disappointments and difficulties, of Christian pilgrims must pose a challenge to pastoral theology, the textbooks of which generally ignore pastoral ministry to pilgrims. This disinterest in the pilgrim’s state-of-soul, I surmised, was because pastors and theologians have become accustomed to thinking of pilgrimage as a sort of religious holiday, and therefore divorced from the pastoral frameworks and processes of the localized parish or Christian community. It seemed to me that, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the “marginal” character of their experiences, pilgrims should be afforded a more informed theological response.

In a written presentation of my findings at that preliminary stage in the study of the spiritual care of pilgrims,³ I concluded that even the relatively easy conditions of modern travel cannot equate pilgrimage with tourism, and cannot alter the fact that a pilgrimage can be a “perspective-shattering and faith-transforming event.” The expectations I was hearing voiced by pilgrims included the hope for a personal spiritual renewal (“some kind of encounter with the living God”, “to add colour to my prayer life”, etc.), and a recurring urge to reform and revivify the image of Jesus held by the pilgrim (“I came to try to find Jesus and get him out of the plaster”). However, the pilgrims’ actual experiences did not stop there; they expanded into a relatively uncharted theological territory where faith is questioned and tested in a process of interfaith profiling, relating to contemporary conflicts and struggling with the ethics of witness and response.

Since theological pastoral care addresses the general human need for “religious... guidance toward moral self-understanding”,⁴ I proposed a theological reflection, not only on past practices of pilgrimage, but - more relevantly - on the substantially diverse personal experiences of today’s pilgrims. I took issue with the commonly held scholarly opinion that Christian pilgrims are too naïve or emotionally engaged to present a coherent hermeneutic of their experiences, and that the “better” way to study the pilgrimage phenomenon is the historical/geographical context, relegating the personal, spiritual and psychological to a secondary role.⁵

² This evolutionary process is confirmed in the reflections of Rev. John Peterson, who as dean of St. George’s College Jerusalem for 12 years had ample opportunity to observe pilgrims: “There are many people who feel their relationship with God is strengthened... often... because of an encounter with God/Other generally at some place such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, along the Stations of the Cross, beside the Sea of Galilee... There are others who for the first time meet Christ in the suffering of the Palestinian people...” (Rev. John Peterson, undated correspondence - 1992?)

³ Henry R. Carse, *Pilgrim Counsel: Reflections on a Pastoral Theology for Contemporary Pilgrimage*; The General Theological Seminary (unpublished course paper, 1992).

⁴ Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology* (San Francisco: Harper 1983) 58.

⁵ E.g. Leonard Agate, “Pilgrimage (Christian)”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*; ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner 1919) Vol X, 18.

In the scholarly preference for historical perspectives, versus the pastoral preference for considerations of personal moral immediacy, I detected the echo of an ancient debate within Christian theology – that between Eusebius of Caesarea and Cyril of Jerusalem. In the early fourth century, according to Peter Walker,⁶ Eusebius “had continuously emphasized the spiritual nature of Christianity and the need for progression away from more physical considerations in Christian worship”. Later in the same century, however, Cyril “knew how to awaken the unspoken needs of pilgrims; but he also possessed the pastoral sensitivity to meet those needs.” The contrast established here between the “spiritual” Eusebius and the “pastoral” Cyril can be misleading, unless we understand “spiritual” as denoting in this case impersonal, objective, or theologically abstract, and “pastoral” as denoting personal, existential and theologically realistic. Cyril’s approach is that of personal immediacy, of valuing the simplest needs of individual pilgrims as if they derived from the most complex spiritual necessities, and of being attentive to the depths of their human emotions as if they represented the symbolic heights of theological truth.⁷ The challenge today is to listen to Christian pilgrims with Cyril’s ear.

At this early stage in my research, I had intimations that at the heart of contemporary Christian pilgrimage experiences is the quest for a new and balanced personal religious identity, and an informed responsiveness to the real world, not a flight from it into “spiritual” solipsism. In the attitudes of pilgrims toward their experiences I saw evidence indicating that their journeys amounted to transformations of *who they are*, and of *how they perceive and relate to faith and its practice in life*. I was becoming aware that these issues of “identification and incorporation”⁸ are every bit as immediate and urgent to pilgrims today as were the quest for personal forgiveness and the comfort of relics and indulgences associated with pilgrimage in times gone by.

The experience of pilgrimage can be a form of spiritual renewal which intellectual theology cannot offer. What is sought, in sacred time and sacred place, is not justification for faith, but a response to the question, “Who am I?”... The identification of self with the Christ-event through pilgrimage is signalled by the participation of the emotions... No matter how sophisticated the ecclesiastical frameworks, the essence of pilgrimage is in identity transformation. Pilgrimage is always an opportunity for moral growth. Here is where the grace of immediacy is so clearly needed, and also where the stormy environment of strange surroundings and physical challenges takes on new meaning.⁹

⁶ Peter W. L. Walker, Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century (Oxford: Clarendon 1990) 129,38

⁷ The fourth century pilgrim, Egeria, describes Cyril’s pastoral attitude: “Then the bishop speaks a word of encouragement to the people. They have been hard at it [praying] all night... so he tells them not to be weary, but to put their hope in God... ‘Now off you go home till the next service, and sit down a bit...’” – Itinerium Egeriae 36.5. For two excellent translations of this pilgrimage classic, cf. G. E. Gingras, Egeria, Diary of a Pilgrimage, in J. Quasten, W. J. Burghardt and T. C. Lawler (eds.), Ancient Christian Writers No. 38 (New York: Newman Press 1970); and John Wilkinson, Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land, revised edition (Jerusalem: Ariel 1981).

⁸ Eric J. Leed, The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism (HarperCollins: Basic Books, Inc. 1991) 85-87.

⁹ Carse, Pilgrim Counsel, 12.

(B) CATEGORIES OF THE PILGRIMAGE PROCESS

The effect of my early explorations in the research of pilgrimage is discernible in the present thesis, first of all, in the determining of a set of relevant narrative and experiential categories for observing and evaluating the process of contemporary pilgrimage theologically. In naming these categories, I resolved to develop a cohesive set of “lenses” through which to observe with empathy the general characteristics of the Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and to relate them through an empirical interviewing format, without losing sight of the essentially holistic and intimate nature of the sacred journey for each individual pilgrim. Drawing from the very considerable literature on the history of pilgrimage and its more recent sociological analysis, I was able to enhance the simplest definitions of pilgrimage (“a journey, a ritual, a commemoration, a search...”).¹⁰ I also aimed at a more detailed understanding of the transforming processes involved, beginning with the concept of the “rite of passage” (departure, experience and return) and moving toward a more nuanced phenomenological understanding of how question, encounter, doubt, ambiguity and challenge leave educational, religious, and moral traces in the narrative of the pilgrim’s life-changing experience.

The questions that arose naturally from my dialogues with pilgrims, and which were further borne out in my reading on the subject, concerned (1) the motives for pilgrimage, (2) the type of journey undertaken, (3) the nature of the shrines approached, (4) the impact of meetings experienced, and (5) the role of return home.

I: MOTIVATION

(a) **PILGRIM REASONS**

My first line of enquiry was into the motives for pilgrimage. While today’s travel is certainly not a risk-free enterprise, in antiquity this was even more true; people would not leave home without a compelling reason. Trade and commerce were the primary reasons people took journeys.¹¹ However, there were also less pecuniary travellers on the roads, seeking health (often at the shrines of Aesclepius), oracles (at the shrines of Apollo), games (at Naples, Antium, Sparta and of course the spectacles at Rome), a holiday (one of the early contexts of the Latin *peregrinatio* – in the sense of “moving out of the city to make the rounds” of the rural villas), or – finally - simply to see the sights.¹²

In what way was the motivation for the ancient practice of pilgrimage different from all of these travel modes? It is indisputable that the fourth century, with its abrupt

¹⁰ Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace B. Clift, The Archetype of Pilgrimage: Outer Action with Inner Meaning. (New York: Paulist Press 1996) 9.

¹¹ “A never-ending flow of merchants, ship-owners, bankers, buyers, and their various agents kept the ports and sea lanes of the Roman Empire humming.” Lionel Casson, Travel in the Ancient World (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1994) 129.

¹² Casson, Travel, 130-137. As Pliny wrote (Ep. 8: 20: 1-2), “We travel long roads and cross the water to see what we disregard when it is under our eyes. This is either because nature has so arranged things that we go after what is far off and remain indifferent to what is nearby, or because any desire loses its intensity by being easily satisfied...”

redefinition of Christianity from a persecuted minority to a state religion, was the fertile soil in which Christian pilgrimage first flourished. “By the end of the century the yen to make the *peregrinatio ad loca sacra* had spread to the four corners of the Roman Empire... The pious flocked to Jerusalem to see ‘Bible country’. At times, [Christian theologians like Jerome] elevated a pilgrimage almost to a sacred duty...”¹³

That many thousands of pilgrims continue to travel the pilgrim ways to the major and minor shrines of Christianity, among these Jerusalem, has been amply observed and recorded.¹⁴ What is much less obvious is how their motivations are similar to or different from their ancient counterparts, and what theological insights might be derived from the reasons for pilgrimage at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The generic motives for pilgrimages have been described as follows: to see the place where something happened, to draw near to something sacred, to achieve pardon, to ask for a miracle, to give thanks, to express love for God, to answer an inner call, to satisfy curiosity, to get outside normal routine, to reclaim a part of oneself, to admire something beautiful, to make a vacation more interesting, to honor a vow, to prepare for death, or simply to go on pilgrimage because others did it...¹⁵ This summary illustrates some of the problems we face at the outset of our study: numerous conceptual overlaps and the mixing of secular and religious intentions, all of which require a careful focus before they can be useful in a coherent empirical study.

“Pilgrimage” has entered the public domain. Many disciplines express interest in the pilgrimage phenomenon (i.e. anthropology, sociology, geography, ethnography, psychology and others) because of the ways in which the pilgrim’s experience overlaps with and is subsumed under other types of human activity. This is especially clear when one considers pilgrimage as a form of demographic mobility, personal odyssey, community journey, educational outing or recreational interlude.

While “pilgrimage” has taken on an almost universal meaning, this universality has its limits. Alternative definitions of the practice must all be related to the history of religion as pilgrimage’s original context. While “pilgrimage” has become a handy tag for many different kinds of quests, the historical context of the term is much more specific. In all times there have been travellers, and in all times pilgrims, and *they* have generally known the difference, even if *we* do not. What has consistently distinguished pilgrimage is that it is primarily a *religious* (not simply a political, economic, recreational or scientific) journey. Although “religious purpose” cannot be measured or counted, it can be recognized and evaluated, and remains the pilgrim’s defining mark. A concise expression of this is to found in T.S. Eliot’s lines:

You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel

¹³ Casson, *Travel*, 304.

¹⁴ Cf. Bhardwaj and Rinsdhede (eds.), *Pilgrimage in World Religions*, 11. Cf. also Eleanor Munro, *On Glory Roads: A Pilgrim’s Book about Pilgrimage* (New York: Thames and Hudson 1987)xi, and “Pilgrims Crowding Europe’s Catholic Shrines”, *The New York Times* (Oct 12, 1993) A14.

¹⁵ Clift and Clift, *The Archetype of Pilgrimage*, 42ff.

Where prayer has been valid.¹⁶

Original descriptions of pilgrimage in the Christian tradition involve simply “going to pray”, as evidenced in the earliest substantial pilgrim journal, that of Egeria in the late fourth century.¹⁷ Kneeling in prayer is a form of human behavior that can certainly be described without prevarication as “religious.” If pilgrimage is understood *in the context of prayer* (rather than simply *as a context for prayer*), then pilgrimage is, primarily and essentially, “worship in motion” – a religious journey.

This definition seems to go beyond the simple etymology of the word “pilgrim”. The early English *pelegrim* is derived from the Latin *pereger* (*per* [through] and *ager* [country]) – that is, someone who passes through a country. The lack of intrinsic religious content in the word “pilgrim” is, however, only apparent. In the modern context, an assumption is made about travel, that it is almost exclusively secular and practical in motivation. World literature, however, contains numerous examples of paradigmatic figures engaged in spiritual journeys: Gilgamesh, Odysseus, Abraham, Moses, Muhammad, Jesus, Paul, Launcelot and Luke Skywalker are only a few. The authors of their sagas share a world in which religious meaning and feeling permeate every action and situation, and in which every journey has some spiritual, even religious, purpose or intention.

Recent scholarly attempts to define pilgrimage cover a wide spectrum. “Pilgrimage,” writes one source, “is the physical journey from one’s normal place of residence, to a religious shrine in order to pay religious homage to a recognized holy being and through that religious activity to pay homage to or request special favor from God.”¹⁸

A definition like this raises yet more questions about the parameters of our study. There is a strong religious tone here, but a lack of theological clarity. Is it accurate to assume that only those who worship “God” or who recognize a “holy being” go on pilgrimage? What or who is a “holy being”? Are Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims, or pilgrims who are not theists, excluded by this definition? Is an atheist pilgrimage an impossibility? Further, if the religious nature of the journey is summarized as “homage” or “supplication”, does this rule out the traditions of pilgrimage for thanksgiving, or the “journey into the Word of God”, like the biblically motivated Jerusalem pilgrimages of the early centuries, and of today?

At the other extreme of the definition spectrum we can find this aphorism: “If mysticism is an interior pilgrimage, pilgrimage is exteriorized mysticism.”¹⁹ This has a circular character, like the classical movement of pilgrimage (from home to the shrine and returning home). Since we do not really have a clear definition of “mysticism”, we do not learn much about pilgrimage here, except to note that it is

¹⁶ T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding”, in *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World 1971) 139.

¹⁷ *Itinerarium Egeriae* 13.1. Cf. also Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris and Philips 1977) 33.

¹⁸ L. K. Davidson and M. Dunn-Wood (eds.), *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages: A Research Guide* (New York: Garland 1993) 13.

¹⁹ V. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press 1978) 7.

“exterior” rather than “interior”. This, however, raises some questions about the “locus” of the pilgrim process; if it is only “exteriorization”, is it not then simply a form of migration motivated by religious circumstances, rather than an integral religious process in its own right? Is it sufficient to say with the geographers of religion that “pilgrimage is an important form of religiously motivated spatial behavior?”²⁰

What is “religious motivation”? It will be difficult to discuss the theological dynamics of pilgrimage, and to relate them to its anthropological, historical, sociological and theological implications, without a basic understanding of what “religion” entails. To clarify this essential issue, we begin by turning to the work of one of the twentieth century’s leading historians of religion, Mircea Eliade.

(b) QUEST, INITIATION AND MEANING

Eliade’s comprehensive vision of religion contains specific insights that will be foundational to our understanding of pilgrimage as a religious journey. First, he does not see “religious” as synonymous with “theistic”, or even with “spiritual”, certainly not in a pious or otherworldly sense. Eliade wrote of “religion” as follows:

“Religion” may still be a useful term provided we keep in mind that it does not necessarily imply belief in God, gods, or ghosts, but refers to the experience of the sacred, and, consequently, is related to the ideas of *being*, *meaning*, and *truth*²¹ ... The sacred is a universal dimension, and... the beginnings of culture are rooted in religious experiences.²²

Several aspects of this definition deserve attention. Eliade is careful to term religion an “experience” rather than a “belief system” – a strong experiential bias which permeates his work in the history of religion. Religion is primarily an experience of the sacred, and only secondarily a conceptual conviction about a specific sacred being. Further, the “sacred” is here classed in the realm of ideas (“being, meaning, truth”), and implicitly contrasted with another group – “God, gods, or ghosts” – i.e., objects of belief. Lastly, Eliade relates religious experience in a causal manner to culture, claiming that culture arises out of religion, not vice versa.

The effects of Eliade’s concept of religion on a study of pilgrimage are many. Pilgrimage, as will be seen, is a prime example of experiential religion, capable of challenging the structures of belief systems, even when (or especially when) originating within such systems. It is clear, at least in the case of many of the pilgrims I interviewed, that the motivations and goals of the pilgrim lead in some way to the realm of ideas and processes rather than simply to objects of belief like shrines to specific deities. Pilgrimage, in other words, is not so much about position as disposition. Finally, anthropological data on the pilgrimage process in actual practice indicate a powerful culture-creating role in the combination of mobility, perception, implicit or explicit social critique and community formation.

²⁰ S. M. Bhardwaj and G. Rinschede, Pilgrimage in World Religions, 11.

²¹ Eliade The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion (University of Chicago Press 1969), preface.

²² The Quest 9.

Eliade's work on religion is helpful in understanding the dilemma of contemporary pilgrimage studies, which stand on a significant threshold between religion and secularism. Why, in spite of its increasing popularity, is there such a poverty of theological reflection on pilgrimage? Researchers tend to see pilgrimage primarily as an object of historical or anthropological analysis; direct reference to the "sacred" is an aspect of pilgrimage research remarkable by its absence. Yet pilgrimage is a religious journey, and our understanding of "religion" will have a significant effect on our understanding of pilgrimage.

The history of religion began, to a certain extent, with an equation of religion and society, moved through an equation of religion and psychology, and is now reaching recognition of religion as a *language of meaning*. For Eliade, religion is a *symbolic system of communication referring to the sacred*. It is religious perception that gives intelligent "transparence" to the world, which "reveals itself as language."²³ While we may not know what the sacred *is*, we can and do know communication *about* the sacred through words (texts), signs (responses) and actions (worship). The 'work' of religion (in Greek sources, its *ergon*) is a grammar of both acts and words, Peter Berger's "things which must be done" (*dromena*) and "things which must be said" (*legoumena*). Berger further names these two aspects "ritual and mythology"; they are both communications of symbols of meaning.²⁴ The religion-as-symbolism equation simultaneously liberates religion from sheer social functionalism, re-forges the essential link between religion and myth, and re-situates religious experience in the creativity of the unconscious *as well as* the conscious mind. Carl Jung's use of symbolism in psychological practice is based on his recognition of the intrinsic value of religious symbolic language:

No matter what the world thinks about religious experience, the one who has it possesses a great treasure, a thing that has become for him a source of life, meaning and beauty...²⁵

It is in the context of the unconscious creativity of religious experience that *myth* has special importance. A comprehensive critique of contemporary approaches to myth can be found in G. S. Kirk's 1970 work on the subject.²⁶ Kirk takes a cautious approach to the origins and functions of myths, especially to the automatic assumption of an equation between myth and religion, or myth and ritual.²⁷ "For the

²³ Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row 1963) 141: "The World is no longer an opaque mass of objects arbitrarily thrown together, it is... articulated and meaningful..."

²⁴ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday 1967) 40.

²⁵ C. Jung, *Collected Works II* (New York: Pantheon 1958) 104-105.

²⁶ G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Cambridge University Press 1970). Kirk has criticism for historians and anthropologists alike: "the erratic Harrison, the factual Rose, the Jungian Kerenyi, the repetitive Eliade, ... the brilliant but... totally misguided Robert Graves"(5). His judgement of anthropological studies, with their "tendency to divide up the subject into separate and sometimes artificial topics... in spite of the extensive modern opinion which insists that social structure should be seen as an integrated whole"(6), calls to mind the contemporary tensions between historians and anthropologists on the subject of pilgrimage research.

²⁷ Cf. Kirk, *Myth* 9, 12ff and 20ff, where Kirk rejects the ideas that all myths are about gods, that all myths are associated with ritual, and that all myths can be disassociated completely from folktales. He sums up his argument by saying: "It will be wise to reject from the outset the idea that myth and religion are twin aspects of the same subject" (31).

Greeks,” he writes, “*muthos* just meant a tale, or something one uttered... [and] for Plato, the first known user of the term, *muthologia* meant no more than the telling of stories.”²⁸ Kirk in fact sees the essential origin of myth in “gradual development of narrative structures” rather than “complex symbolic implications”; he professes an affinity for “story-telling for its own sake”. Of course, this story-telling also has a formative and operative function in many societies which recognize the “importance of the irrational and supernatural both in waking and in sleeping experience.”²⁹ In the last analysis, Kirk acknowledges the religious motifs which are of “deep human concern” and which “enormously strengthened and encouraged” the development of myths.³⁰

For Eliade, the understanding of myth in what he calls “archaic” societies is an important element of his history of religion. Greek mythology is not the best medium for the original meaning of myth, precisely because the Greek philosophers dismissed the religious reality of the *muthos*. For Eliade, “archaic” society experienced myth as “a sacred story, and hence a ‘true history’, because it always deals with *realities*”, and as “a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant.”³¹ Eliade describes the function of myth as both “exemplary” and “esoteric”. On one hand, myth “reveals the exemplary models for all human rites and all significant human activities,” and on the other hand “myth constitutes a ‘knowledge’ which is esoteric... for knowing the origin... is equivalent to acquiring a magical power.”³² Finally, for Eliade, “living” a myth (i.e. knowing, reciting, reiterating and displaying or acting out the sacred story) implies a genuinely religious experience.³³

The centrality of myth in Eliade’s thought cannot be overestimated. Myth as sacred narrative is primarily concerned with creation and communication, not simply with apprehension of the truth. Religious experience – including pilgrimage – is mythic. It is a communicative event, and therefore “exemplary”, i.e. social and even political. It is at the same time an individually constitutive event, in which a person experiences a “projection into mythical time... when the individual is truly himself: on the occasion of rituals or of important acts.”³⁴ Communication with and through the power of myth points to a perception shared by religion and psychology: “truth” and “meaning” travel an *inward* way – a pilgrimage from the head to the heart.

The status of religion in our time is an ambivalent one. The reality of the sacred is both denied and affirmed by psychologists, theologians and historians of religion. In

²⁸ Kirk, *Myth* 8.

²⁹ *Myth* 285.

³⁰ *Myth* 280-284.

³¹ Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 1,6.

³² Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 8,15.

³³ Cf. Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 12: “For archaic man, myth is a matter of primary importance, while tales and fables are not. Myth teaches him the primordial ‘stories’ that have constituted him existentially.” In Eliade’s system, “myth” still means “story”, but not in the later Greek sense of “merely a tale”. As the Jewish proverb has it: “What is truer than the truth? A story.”

³⁴ Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*; trans. W.R. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1955) 33. Further reference to “mythical time” is found in *Myth and Reality* (19): “...primordial Time (sic)... ‘strong time’ of myth... prodigious, ‘sacred’ time when something *new, strong* and *significant* was manifested.”

psychology, for example, Freud's manifest disdain for all things religious³⁵ is succeeded ironically by Jung's 'collective unconscious',³⁶ the *mysterium fascinans* of Rudolph Otto - for whom myth is "an earliest stirring of the numinous consciousness"³⁷ - and Eliade's myth hermeneutics. Myth as the communication of the sacred through the agency of the unconscious will have a deep impact on pilgrimage studies, especially in the recognition of the creation of the formative narrative of the individual and collective pilgrim story. "The heart has reasons," wrote Pascal, "which Reason does not know."

It may be argued that Eliade's system fails to provide a clear definition of "sacred", a failure that continues to draw criticism today. However, the dilemma of definition should be seen in the light of developments in the sociology of religion subsequent to Emile Durkheim. Durkheim's "sacred" was essentially limited to whatever is circumscribed by prohibitions, with no real distinction made between social and religious limitations. This of course is to be expected in the Durkheimian religion=society school.³⁸ Otto, on the other hand, saw "sacred" as referring to a category of human experience which he regarded as practically universal – an assumption which does not have broad support today. While in Eliade's work the parameters of the "sacred" are not so precisely determined, the activity of the *human consciousness of the sacred* is thoroughly explored for its many levels of possible meaning. It is this exploration that Eliade proposes as the means to go beyond phenomenology and historicity.

For Eliade, hope for the history of religion lies exactly in the psychological ability, of the "religious" person but equally of the student of religions, to transcend both the narrow confines of "religious phenomena" and the equally narrow horizons of "historical facts". Our vocation, according to Eliade, is not just to observe, but to ask questions about, to comprehend and to interpret what the "phenomenologists" and the "historicists" are pointing *to*. What they are pointing *to* is not the "thing" but the "meaning." Understanding and interpretation are the task of hermeneutics, the quest for meaning. It is this quest that can lift scholars of religion beyond their perceived role as functionaries who collect facts. This is Eliade's challenge:

It is only in so far as he succeeds, through hermeneutics, in transmuting his materials into spiritual messages that the historian of religions will fulfill his role in contemporary culture.³⁹

³⁵ Cf. Eliade, *The Quest* 21: "The historian of religions is especially grateful to Freud for proving that images and symbols communicate their "messages" even if the conscious mind remains unaware of this fact."

³⁶ For a summary, cf. Carl Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (London, 1964).

³⁷ Rudolph Otto, *Das Heilige* (1917); Eng. trans.: *The Idea of the Holy* (London and New York 1950) 122. Kirk, who quotes this passage, characteristically refers ironically to Otto's masterpiece as "curiously influential" (*Myth* 10), but later approvingly cites *mysterium tremendum* to support the essential role of feeling in religious experience (*Myth* 31).

³⁸ "The sacred is *par excellence* that which the profane should not touch, and cannot touch with impunity... Sacred things are those which the interdictions protect and isolate; profane things, those to which these interdictions are applied and which must remain at a distance from the first." Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*, trans. J.W. Swain (London: George Allen and Unwin 1912) 40-41. A nation's flag, for example, might bear much the same sacred meaning as a religious symbol.

³⁹ Eliade, *The Quest* 36.

The history of religion is... a total hermeneutics, being called to decipher and explicate every kind of encounter... with the sacred.⁴⁰ Creative hermeneutics *changes* [human beings]... A good history of religions book ought to produce in the reader an action of *awakening*.⁴¹

To study religion should be itself a process of growth and synthesis, not exclusively analysis. The quest for meaning begins not with the accumulation of facts but with their integration, the creative labor of consciousness (awareness, attention) which can transform information into communication. No one who reads Eliade is left in any doubt that he believes this quest for the message and meaning of religious experience to be one of the highest human vocations.

The courage of this calling entails also an ability “to free oneself from the superstition that analysis represents the *true* scientific work, and that one ought to propose a synthesis... only rather late in life.”⁴² Synthesis, then, has a ‘higher’ function for Eliade than analysis, or at least is not to be automatically postponed for the sake of further analysis. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Eliade insists on a thoroughly *hermeneutical* analysis, one that never loses sight either of the meaning of the empirical data or of the goal of the enterprise, which is the construction of a meaningful system of interpretation. “For the history of religions,” writes Eliade, “the road toward synthesis lies through hermeneutics.”⁴³

The quest for meaning comes to bear on pilgrimage more directly when Eliade turns his attention to initiation rites. He defines “initiation” as

...rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a radical modification of the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to an ontological mutation of the existential condition.⁴⁴

This echoes Eliade’s earlier definition of initiation as a “change of existential status... produced by religious experience.”⁴⁵ Throughout his work, Eliade returns to the theoretical and practical foundations of initiation rites, which he sees as a lost element in our (Western) culture. At the end of a detailed study of various types of traditional initiation, he writes:

In the Western world, initiation in the traditional and strict sense of the term has disappeared long ago. But initiatory symbols and scenarios survive on the unconscious level... In a desacralized world such as ours, the “sacred” is present and active chiefly in the imaginary universes. But imaginary experiences are part of the total human being, no less important than his diurnal experiences. This means that the nostalgia for initiatory trials and

⁴⁰ Eliade, *The Quest*, 58.

⁴¹ *The Quest*, 62.

⁴² *The Quest*, 59.

⁴³ *The Quest*, 60.

⁴⁴ *The Quest*, 112.

⁴⁵ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Row 1958) 1.

scenarios... reveals modern man's longing for a total and definitive renewal.⁴⁶

Eliade's advocacy of this existential longing is echoed in today's renewed respect for the role of the imagination. It can be argued that a process of "definitive renewal", sparked in part by Eliade's legacy, has begun in both the arts and the sciences in our time, and that this renewal has integrative and initiatory aspects. The present popularity of pilgrimage, especially in Western culture, might be interpreted in Eliade's terms as a quest for new forms of religious activity and spiritual community. While Eliade believed that initiatory rites were lost in the past, his recognition of our "nostalgia" for ancient rituals was a presentiment of things to come⁴⁷. This is where pilgrimage studies owe much to Eliade, although he did not often study pilgrimage customs directly. For it is as an initiation rite that pilgrimage enters the view of anthropologists, essentially (but not exclusively) through the writings of Victor Turner. And it is as a search for radical renewal of an existential condition that pilgrimage has earned its pride of place in the modern lexicon of alternative theological and sociological experience.

To understand pilgrimage in terms of Eliade's category of initiatory quest will be to emphasize motivation and meaning rather than appearance and (social) function. It will be argued, then, that in a sense pilgrim and tourist are on the same journey. The collapse of medieval differentiation has multiplied "quests" into many modulations, of which one is the pilgrim's and another the tourist's. The visible "pilgrim's badge" of archaic sacred travel is now invisibly on all travellers' cloaks. Differences between journeys are now to be found (like other aspects of contemporary religion) in the more private realm; they are less determined by public social consensus. Tourists and pilgrims are engaged in forms of initiation practiced through differently interpreted meaningful movement.

The most specific observations on pilgrimage in the three decades following the publication of Eliade's The Quest have been written not by historians of religion but by sociologists and anthropologists. There may be some truth in Eliade's earlier assertion that historians of religion are "timid" and apologetic in the face of the more popular successes of psychoanalysis and what he calls the "triumph of scientism".⁴⁸ In any case, the focus of sociological and anthropological study was not the "sacred" but the "social". By understanding the religious event of a pilgrimage in terms of its social components – the pilgrim, the church, the pilgrim company, the guide, the shrine, the journey and the return – sociologists and anthropologists have "deconstructed" an apparently monolithic historical structure, revealing its inner dynamic and illuminating its appeal. However, the determination to "decode" the practice of pilgrimage by reducing it to its sociological parts has not brought us appreciably closer to its theological meaning. The tendency of the social sciences to downplay the role of myth and mystery in the religious experience of pilgrimage has fostered a phenomenological view in which the meaning of a journey is

⁴⁶ Eliade, The Quest 126.

⁴⁷ Cf. also Rites and Symbols of Initiation 132ff. Although Eliade's language exhibited an unfortunate religious elitism (his reference to "higher religions" being one example), his insistence on the essential *transition* and *renewal* of initiation experiences remains an important guideline for understanding pilgrimage.

⁴⁸ The Quest 60.

overshadowed by its form. This is an example of analysis obscuring synthesis, and of what Eliade warned against when he wrote that “demystification does not serve hermeneutics.”⁴⁹

(c) ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Victor Turner’s chief work on pilgrimage began around 1969,⁵⁰ and his perhaps most influential article on this subject appeared in *History of Religions* in 1973.⁵¹ After a series of essays developing the theme of pilgrimage as a social process, he and his wife Edith produced their collaborative *chef d’oeuvre* – Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture – in 1978.⁵² “Turner and Turner” soon became a landmark text for all subsequent pilgrimage research. The Turners’ influence is still felt two decades later in anthropological and sociological work on all forms of travel and tourism. The concepts of “liminality” and “communitas”, without which no such study can now go far, entered the general research lexicon through the Turners’ work.⁵³

Turner’s 1973 article, “The Center Out There”, figures prominently in subsequent studies of pilgrimage, and deserves close attention. It raises religious issues that must be developed further in our discussion of a theology of pilgrimage.

Turner first came to his interest in pilgrimages through anthropological work on traditional “rites of passage” in tribal societies. In their collaborative work, the Turners began to see pilgrimage as essentially a contemporary type of rite of passage or initiation.⁵⁴ In comparing initiation in ‘tribal’ societies with the ‘initiatory’ quality of contemporary pilgrimage, the Turners reveal a primary ambiguity in their research material. Briefly put, there is a tension in principle between the ‘corporate’ purpose of tribal initiation and the ‘anti-structural’ character of pilgrimage as described by the Turners. Any similarity between the two phenomena is to be found primarily in the “trials, tribulations and... temptations” common to both initiation and pilgrimage, and in the shared encountering of religious *sacra* (sacred things like shrines, images, liturgies, etc.).⁵⁵ There are, however, differences. The most significant is the identity of the “moral unit” – the individual in pilgrimage, the social group in initiation. “The pilgrim seeks temporary release from the structures that normally bind him, the tribal initiand seeks a deeper commitment to the structural life of his local community...”⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Eliade, The Quest 69.

⁵⁰ Victor Turner, The Ritual Process (Chicago: Aldine 1969).

⁵¹ Victor Turner, “The Center Out There: Pilgrim’s Goal”, *History of Religions* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Feb. 1973) 191ff.

⁵² Victor Turner and Edith Turner, Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press 1978).

⁵³ Alan Morinis writes (Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage; Westport, CN: Greenwood Press 1992, 8) that “the only significant theory of pilgrimage that has been put forward to date is that of Victor Turner. He is owed credit for bringing pilgrimage to the forefront of anthropological consideration.”

⁵⁴ “Center Out There” 204; Image and Pilgrimage 8: “A pilgrim is an initiand, entering into a new, deeper level of existence...”

⁵⁵ Image and Pilgrimage 8.

⁵⁶ Image and Pilgrimage 9.

This essential ambiguity can be summed up in the concepts of *voluntary* and *obligatory* religious action. In his early work, Turner calls pilgrimage “infused with voluntariness though by no means independent of structural obligatoriness”.⁵⁷ In the same place he uses the paradoxical term “institutionalized... antistructure” – an adequate summary of his ambiguous approach to the context and motivation of pilgrimage.

The paradox of structure/antistructure has direct bearing on the role of church officials, clergy and shrine-keepers in the process. The relationship of these functionaries to the pilgrims themselves is not always clearly defined. “Religious leaders... have been silenced by their ambivalent feelings about pilgrimage.”⁵⁸ Ironically, on the other hand, history records some very vocal interventions of religious leaders in an attempt to regulate pilgrimage either by relegating it to a delegitimized paganism or by redeeming it through “baptizing” its acceptable elements and clothing it whenever possible in orthodox garb. Turner terms the Church (specifically the Catholic Church) “the structured guardian of... antistructure,”⁵⁹ and describes in detail the relationship between pilgrimage and hierarchy at centers like Walsingham and Loreto, pointing out that “a bishop can make or break an incipient pilgrimage.”⁶⁰

In dealing with the inherent contrasts of pilgrimage, the Turners employ special terms, including the words “liminal” and “communitas”.⁶¹ These are primarily anthropological terms, and deal with social forms on the borders of the religious experiences of people living in traditional tribal contexts.

“Liminal” derives from the Latin *limen* (threshold). By “liminality” Turner means:

The state and process of mid-transition in a rite of passage... The characteristics of the *liminars* (the ritual subjects in this phase) are ambiguous... Liminars are betwixt and between... stripped of status and authority, removed from a social structure... and leveled to a homogenous social state... Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion.⁶²

The communion experienced in the liminal process is a form of “social antistructure” that Turner calls “communitas”:

A relational quality of full unmediated communication... a liminal phenomenon which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness,

⁵⁷ Turner, “Center Out There” 204.

⁵⁸ “Center Out There” 209.

⁵⁹ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage* 174.

⁶⁰ *Image and Pilgrimage* 175ff, 190.

⁶¹ Turner borrows “liminal” from the work of Arnold van Gennep (*The Rites of Passage* 1908; new ed.: London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1960); “communitas” he attributes to Paul Goodman (cf. “Center Out There” 216).

⁶² Victor Turner, *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage: A Study in Comparative Symbolology* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing 1979) 149.

homogeneity, and comradeship... *Communitas* is an essential and generic human bond.⁶³

It is commonly assumed that Turner saw “*communitas*” as the primary motivation of pilgrimage.⁶⁴ At the very least, Turner’s uses of the categories of “liminality” and “*communitas*” have had the deepest influence on a generation of scholarly work on pilgrimage, and the ambiguities they entail will accompany us throughout our study. The applicability of these concepts to pilgrimage stems from Turner’s commitment to *processual symbolic analysis* – i.e. an understanding of pilgrimage as a contemporary form of *ritual*, governed by dynamic symbol systems and meaningful performances, rather than technological routine.⁶⁵ Like myth, the word ‘ritual’ evokes contradictory responses. The modern attitude to ritual as mechanical, stultifying and meaningless activity is diametrically opposed to Turner’s distinction of ritual as “transformative performance... associated with social transitions.”⁶⁶ In order to appreciate the direction of the Turners’ thought, one must constantly keep in mind that their use of the term is highly specialized and informed. Noting that ‘ritual’ is related to the Indo-European *RJ* (meaning ‘flow’),⁶⁷ the Turners understand religious ritual, and pilgrimage, as a creative and even subversive force, capable of breaking up old structures and renewing spiritual and social life.⁶⁸ This aspect of the Turners’ work, while it remains paradigmatic, will draw criticism in the work of later analysts of the pilgrimage process from a social point of view.⁶⁹

An example of processual analysis is found in the definition of *liminal*. In 1979, Turner adopted the concept from van Gennep, together with its process: separation, transition and re-integration.⁷⁰ This fit Turner’s observations of pilgrimage: pilgrims set out, leave home and venture far away (separation), lose their customary status and their regular social role and become free of their parochial structure, to cross into a sacred realm (transition), and finally return home to rejoin their parish, and are recognized as recipients of a special grace (incorporation).

Some problems arise from this analysis. Unlike a rite of passage in a tribal society or a penitential journey in the Middle Ages, pilgrimage today is not required (except in Islam)⁷¹ of the pilgrim. The separation mode of the process, then, can become like taking a vacation. Similarly, since modern religious structures do not ordinarily

⁶³ Turner, *Process, Performance* 150.

⁶⁴ “Pilgrimage, in its essence, is an opportunity for the expression of the ‘*communitas*’ experience”, A. Morinis, *Sacred Journeys* 8.

⁶⁵ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage* 243.

⁶⁶ For the place of ritual in sociological theory, cf. Randall Collins, *Sociological Insight: An Introduction to Non-Obvious Sociology* (Oxford Univ. Press 1982) 53-59.

⁶⁷ *Image and Pilgrimage* 244.

⁶⁸ Turner, *The Ritual Process* 131-132.

⁶⁹ “None of these studies [referring to observations of pilgrimage world-wide from 1974 to 1984] has confirmed Turner’s hypothesis. In place of the recurrence of a levelling ‘*communitas*’ situation, a wide variety of behaviors and experiences has been described.” – A. Morinis, *Sacred Journeys* 8.

⁷⁰ *Process, Performance* 149. Cf. van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage*.

⁷¹ It is significant that the Muslim religious requirement of the *hajj* pertains only to the *hajji*’s one pilgrimage to Mecca. A journey to Jerusalem or Medina, called a *ziyarah*, while termed “an essential aspect of Muslim piety” (cf. “Pilgrimage”, in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 11; NY: Macmillan 1987; 345), is optional.

confer blessing or recognition or new visible status to returning pilgrims (again, *hajji* excepted), the parallel to the incorporation (re-aggregation) process of initiation is weak. It is the transition stage (liminality), at the center of the pilgrimage process, which retains the greatest similarity to the rite of passage model. Here, however, the traditional ritual process becomes engaged with the contemporary categories of play, leisure, entertainment, contractual relations, pluralism and individualism.⁷² While the Turners make every effort to maintain a ritual process theory for pilgrimage, these interfaces with secular travel, especially tourism, eventually erode the confidence of both analysts and participants in the sacred “pilgrimage fellowship” of *communitas*.

“The Center Out There” is also revealing of another essential ambivalence in the Turnerian tradition, an ambivalence involving religious experience and scientific observation. In the midst of his examination of Mexican pilgrimage sites, Turner includes an aside about what he calls his “Durkheimian” methodology:

As Durkheim has often said, a thing is whatever imposes itself upon the observer. To treat phenomena as things is to treat them as data which are independent of the knowing subject. To know a social thing the observer... cannot fall back upon introspection; he cannot come to know its nature... by seeking it from within himself. He must... come to know that thing through objective observation.⁷³

Durkheim’s work on the sociology of religion is important here, not because his theories are still regarded as having authority, but because he prefaced them by enunciating the fundamental problem: “It is necessary to begin by defining what is meant by religion.”⁷⁴ This problem, as we have already seen, is destined to engage us in various forms throughout our study of pilgrimage as a religious phenomenon. For Turner (at least in his “Durkheimian” stage), a religious phenomenon is primarily an object of analysis. In Turner’s view, at the time when he began his research, pilgrimage had not received sufficient attention from anthropologists. He posited

⁷² These play a central role in Turner’s system (cf. *Process, Performance* 23ff) and in its later critiques. ‘Work’ (Greek *ergon*) is both sacred and profane in pre-modern, pre-industrial societies. ‘Liturgy’ is ‘work’ (*ergon*) of or for the people (*laos*). ‘Play’ (OE *plegan* – to move briskly; Middle Dutch *pleyen* – to dance) is hardly distinguishable from ‘work’ in ritual. For example, only post-industrial society actually practices a distinction between ‘foreplay’ (= ‘play’) and ‘procreation’ (= ‘work’) in sexual relations. ‘Entertainment’ (OF *entretenir* – to hold apart) is understood in ritual as the creation of a liminal space for sacred performance. ‘Leisure’ (Latin *licere* – to be permitted; Indo-European *leik* – to bargain) implies freedom, choice, contract, exchange. In Turner’s words – “Exchange is more liminal than production” (*Process, Performance* 35). Only post-industrial society posits a ‘leisure state’ or ‘class’, involving freedom from obligation and freedom to enter a world of play and fantasy.

⁷³ “Center Out There” 205.

⁷⁴ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* 23. Eliade (*Image and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* 1952; new ed. (trans. P. Mairet) London: Harvill 1961, 23 footnote 8) comments on Durkheim: “*Les formes elementaires de la vie religieuse*... sometimes almost a work of genius, but tiresomely lacking in foundation... Considerably better informed than Freud, Durkheim fell into the same error of method, by trying to find the ‘origin’ of religion in totemism.” Cf. also Robin Gill (*Moral Leadership in a Postmodern Age*; Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1997; 106-107): “I believe that this problem [what is religion?] should worry sociologists and religionists more than it apparently does... Durkheim’s overall theories about the social function of religion may still be interesting, but the way he established them is now... thoroughly discredited.”

that this was not only because anthropologists are accustomed to analyzing highly localized rather than highly mobile structures, but also because they tend to analyze pragmatics rather than symbolics. Turner set about changing all that, by analyzing symbolics; his analysis of symbols, and of processes involving symbols, is the very heart of his work. However, his general definition remained unchanged: pilgrimage is a religious phenomenon, and therefore something that not only can be, but should be, analyzed “objectively”.

Turner did not mean literally to reify pilgrimage. He constantly refers to it as a “process, beginning in a Familiar Place, going to a Far Place, and returning, ideally changed, to a Familiar Place.”⁷⁵ But the “process” is the object of analysis, not the occasion for participation or sacred interpretation, and certainly not for devotion or any other subjective approach that might jeopardize the objective scientific view of the anthropologist.

Turner’s focus on the scientific analysis of a religious phenomenon had certain consequences. One of these was his special interest in group as opposed to individual experience. Although experiences of individuals are to some extent amenable to social analysis (as in the famous case of Durkheim’s study of suicide among members of different Christian denominations), group behavior is for obvious reasons much more quantifiable. The dreams and fears, the prayers and despairs of an individual are more mysterious and less accessible than the stated aims and recorded histories of groups. Even in their joint work, the Turners struggle with this dichotomy between the hidden (personal) and the observed (social), and reveal their attraction to the former while analyzing the latter. “What is secret in the Christian pilgrimage,” they write, “is the inward movement of the heart.”⁷⁶

A second result of Turner’s “objective” anthropology is his interest in visible shrines. These have always been part of the pilgrimage process; Turner however gives them centrality, defining the experience of the pilgrim in terms of the “pilgrim’s goal”. There are certain elements of this “goal” that need to be pointed out.

Turner parallels the geographical movement toward the shrine to a sociological movement – the passage through initiation to a new social status.⁷⁷ For Turner, a ritual stepping across the threshold of a doorway and a long pilgrimage to a sacred shrine are symbolically similar in this respect. This is very much open to question. Turner does not seem to distinguish between the ‘obligatory’ motivation of the initiand (for whom the stepping into the sacred center will change his existential position in society) and the voluntary liminality of the pilgrim, who may be seeking grace or healing, but not necessarily an existential change of *social* character. Further, the element of danger and difficulty on the pilgrim path is of symbolic importance – but is it “initiatory”? Turner notes⁷⁸ that in contemporary Mexican pilgrimage it is considered meritorious to travel by foot, and to visit each sacred way station along the route. In other words, the exact route to the shrine, with all its attendant difficulties, is itself ‘enshrined’ – a phenomenon familiar in pilgrimage to

⁷⁵ Turner, “Center Out There” 213.

⁷⁶ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage* 8.

⁷⁷ Turner, *Process, Performance* 17.

⁷⁸ “Center Out There” 227.

other places as well – like Jerusalem and especially Compostela. It is unclear whether this phenomenon is a remnant of medieval penitential pilgrimage, or a particular aspect of devotion (like the Via Dolorosa) rather than a parallel to a rite of passage.

The geographical features of the pilgrim road itself, with its way-shrines and places of accommodation and provisioning, together form what Turner calls a “pilgrimage field”. This is “comparable to a series of overlapping interpenetrating ellipses whose common area of overlaps has the shrine at its center.”⁷⁹ This image of the elliptical journey has aspects of renewal, such as encountered in the baptismal practice of going down into the water by one stair and coming up by another. However, it would be more applicable in the case of pilgrimage if pilgrims actually travelled a different route home, rather than the same route hurriedly. The initiatory process implied here seems reducible to a vague human tendency to “get on with it” rather than a processual symbol – some kind of theological or ritual marking of “two ways”.

Turner also claims an influence of a pilgrimage center on social and political developments within its “field” – i.e. the area affected by it. Here we see that he tends to regard a “religious impulse” as more or less equivalent to a “shot in the arm” for a regional economy.⁸⁰ He describes the broad effect of pilgrimage routes, and market places situated naturally near shrines, on the development of urban centers. Then he refers to the “pilgrimage ethic” (by which he means not a form of morality or intentionality but simply the proliferation of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages) as a foundational cause of the national and international systems of economic capitalism in the post-medieval periods.

In sum, Turner’s positive comparison of the “pilgrim journey” to the “initiation journey” entails a mixture of social, physical, psychological and economic observations – not all of which are compatible with his thesis.

Secondly, for Turner the shrine or pilgrim center itself is understood as the place where a divine or supernatural manifestation is remembered. “The scenes of such manifestations are thought to be gaps in the curtain, tears in the veil [between spiritual and material orders].”⁸¹ Pilgrim centers are described as being on the periphery of major urban centers, and associated with boundaries; as practical examples Turner cites Lourdes, Fatima and La Salette. This is because, for Turner’s thesis, it is important that the pilgrimage center represent a threshold associated with initiatory experience such as that in tribal society. The center is a “place and moment ‘in and out of time’”, where the pilgrim seeks “direct experience of the sacred”.⁸² Turner’s literal equation of peripheral shrines with liminal states begins to seem forced and somewhat mechanical. What are we to make, for example, of the

⁷⁹ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage* 22-23: “When the pilgrim advances toward his... sacred goal, he tends to stop at every major way station, there to... prepare for the holy climax at the central shrine. When he returns,... his aim is to reach home as swiftly as he can, and his attitude is now that of a tourist rather than a devotee... The road is thus two roads; the apt metaphor is an ellipse, not a straight line.”

⁸⁰ Turner, “Center Out There” 228.

⁸¹ *Image and Pilgrimage*, 205-206; cf. “Center Out There” 210.

⁸² “Center Out There” 212-214.

major Christian pilgrimage shrines inside urban centers like Jerusalem, Rome and Canterbury?

Thirdly, Turner points to shrines as reflecting different sorts of cult. He devises a categorization of religious rituals in relation to sacred shrines which are either “ancestral/political” – representing power division and group distinctions and therefore “exclusive” in character, or “earth/fertility” – representing ritual bonds between groups and therefore “inclusive” in character. He speaks of a “polar distinction between cultural domains of exclusivity and inclusivity.”⁸³ The former he relates to religious structures like churches, synagogues and mosques, the latter he relates to the “system of pilgrim centers”.⁸⁴

If Turner could show a clear correlation between “inclusive” cults/shrines and the “universal” fellowship of *communitas*, these categories would be useful to his thesis. However, in fact he is forced to show that religion and culture always include the “model structures” of local mosques, churches, temples, etc. together with the “anti-structural” pilgrimage centers, the whole system being contained within an overarching religious orthodoxy. While the parochial and limited nature of *communitas* may bind together diversities within the structure, the very same *communitas* is capable of igniting violent negative responses to alternative structures, as in the abuse of pilgrimage in the form of crusade and holy war.⁸⁵ The same dynamic is observable in Jerusalem at the Orthodox Easter Ceremony of the Holy Fire, when pilgrims (and residents!) of different denominations confront each other in violent displays of animosity which demonstrate the very real limits of *communitas*.

Turner offers a brief theology based on his “topography of pilgrim centers.” It is a theology of “energizing compromise” between (institutional) structure and (quasi-universal) *communitas* – “in theological language, a ‘forgiveness of sins’, where differences are... tolerated rather than aggravated into grounds of aggressive opposition.”⁸⁶ The question must be raised, not only whether this is what happens empirically, but whether this is the real, demonstrable theological function of pilgrimage in the world religions, and in Christianity in particular.

To appreciate the impact of Turner’s literal concept of “pilgrim center” on subsequent research about pilgrimage, it is instructive to compare it with Eliade’s mythical view of a “religious center”. The differences here, when recognized and extended into the field of the religious experience of pilgrimage, are substantial. Eliade’s “Center” is not a “place out there” in the physical or social sense at all - certainly not a “pilgrim shrine” which might develop into a medieval city or a modern tourist attraction.

The Center... is pre-eminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality. The road leading to the center is a “difficult road”... and this is verified at every level of reality: difficult convolutions of a temple...;

⁸³ Turner, “Center Out There” 207.

⁸⁴ “Center Out There” 208.

⁸⁵ “Center Out There” 220.

⁸⁶ “Center Out There” 222.

pilgrimage to sacred places...; wanderings in labyrinths...; difficulties of the seeker for the road to the self, to the “center” of his being....⁸⁷

The development of a coherent pilgrimage theology will need to come to grips with the contrast between Turner’s “Center Out There” and Eliade’s “Center In Here”. With the secularization of religious activity, the urbanization of peripheral areas, and the rapid disappearance of visible social correlates for the “Out There”, the focus will return to the inward journey.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of Turner’s methodology is the way in which his categories of “liminality” and “communitas” are deeply conditioned by “social relatedness.” This is not surprising in the case of “communitas”, which would be a meaningless concept in a world of separated individuals. “Liminality”, however, has an intrinsic personal, even mystical quality in its original context – i.e. the lexicon of the initiatory “rite of passage”. Turner has some difficulty with this quality, and chooses to describe “liminality” as an “in-between” position in reference to a broad social structure in which the initiand seeks change of status. At the same time, Turner is aware that this is an insufficient scope for “liminality”. When he brings “limen” into his discussion, Turner writes that “the liminal stage... is extremely rich in cosmological meaning, conveyed largely by nonverbal symbols.”⁸⁸ This is very close to recognition of a religious event not as a phenomenon to be observed, but as a communication to be experienced. Turner however does not acknowledge this, but returns to an objective stance.

Turner again reveals the ambivalent theological subtext of his theory when he describes the process of “communitas” and its effects:

The pilgrim becomes himself a total symbol; indeed a symbol *of* totality; ordinarily he is encouraged to meditate as he peregrinates upon the creative and altruistic acts of the saint or deity whose relic or image forms the object of his quest... [This meditation is] participation in a sacred existence, with the aim of achieving a step toward holiness and wholeness of oneself, both body and soul.⁸⁹

The inherent ambiguity of Turner’s method, with its tension between anthropology and theology, is demonstrated in the dialectical tone of his work. Throughout his comprehensive anthropological study of pilgrimage we find a contrast between themes of structure and anti-structure, social norm and social rebellion, the rational and the irrational. These are all ambivalent dichotomies. Throughout the compilation of data for *Image and Pilgrimage*, the Turners seem to grapple as objective scholars with the religious and theological nature of their material. At times, we find an admission that a clearly “subjective” and personal element is at play. These admissions, however, are kept parenthetical. In view of the Turners’ own methodological ambivalence, it is perhaps not surprising that they do not give the theological content of pilgrimage the full treatment given to its sociological envelope.

⁸⁷ Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 18.

⁸⁸ Turner, “Center Out There” 213.

⁸⁹ “Center Out There” 221.

Introspection is, however, evident in the Turners' work. In a postscript to his 1979 work on symbols,⁹⁰ Turner writes of a "liberated anthropology". It is not from superstitious religious subjectivism that he would like anthropology to be freed, but – quite the contrary – from an overdose of scientific objectivity. He rejects the materialistic ideal of Galileo ("to measure everything measurable and to make what is not measurable capable of being measured") and the determinism of George Spindler ("If it happens, you can count it"). Finally, Turner shows his personal (if not outright theological) bias in abandoning what he here calls the "perspectival (i.e. objective) model" in favor of a "post-modern" participatory model of pilgrimage as *social drama*.⁹¹

In his social drama analysis, however, Turner again pursues his commitment to social (non-individual) and essentially non-religious descriptions of the pilgrimage process. Again, he interprets van Gennep's "rite of passage" – *separation, limen (transition) and aggregation (incorporation)* – as an essentially social process. Using the defining elements of work, play and leisure (all socially understood), Turner emphasizes the distinction between "liminal" and "liminoid". "Liminal" now refers to ritual activity in societies where work and play are hardly to be distinguished, while "liminoid" activity is found in industrial and post-industrial societies, like ours, where the distinction between work and play is sharp and "leisure" appears.

Throughout Turner's work, a tension between theology and science is at play. In his distinction between "liminal" and "liminoid", the ambivalence becomes acute. Turner's thesis posits pilgrimage as an authentic rite of passage, which he understands as a social (observable) phenomenon, in Durkheim's (functional) rather than Eliade's (hermeneutic) sense. Turner's categories of liminality and *communitas* are paradigmatic for his analysis, the "liminal state" being the context for the appearance of *communitas* – again a manifestly social phenomenon.

However, Turner defines "liminal" as associated with *obligation* – that is, the structured expectations (with strictures or sanctions) of a traditional (tribal) religious society which requires initiation of an individual as a prerequisite for a social status transition. It must be emphasized that the unprecedented social liberties granted to initiands are nevertheless liminal and obligatory. "Innumerable are the forms of topsy-turvydom, parody, abrogation of the normative system... *even the breaking of rules has to be done during initiation.*"⁹² Because of his focus on "objective" and "social" phenomenology, Turner does not at this point adopt Eliade's conceptual transition into the "imaginary universe" of the unconscious, where "inititiatory symbols and scenarios survive" for individuals in a modern, Western society.⁹³ On the contrary, Turner concludes that "liminal" phenomena in the West can only be encountered in defined social contexts that have "obligatory" characteristics (e.g., churches, sects, clubs and fraternities).⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Turner, *Process, Performance* 61 ff.

⁹¹ *Process, Performance* 62.

⁹² *Process, Performance* 38 – emphasis mine.

⁹³ Cf. the discussion of Eliade's challenge above.

⁹⁴ *Process, Performance* 54.

For activities outside such societies of obligation, Turner uses the term “liminoid”, which is associated with optation – that is, individual expectations or possibilities (options) which do not require social compliance on the individual level. As only one pilgrimage (the Muslim *hajj*) is actually required in any religious context today, all Christian forms of pilgrimage are, for Turner, liminoid phenomena.⁹⁵ This poses a major difficulty for his thesis of pilgrimage as an authentic rite of passage. “One works at the liminal,” writes Turner, “one plays with the liminoid.” Do pilgrims “play” with the sacred journey? If so, where is the original context of the life-changing and culture-renewing existential *communitas*? Is this nothing more than a social form of playful (“ludic”) behavior – a kind of “chumminess”?

Emphasis on the “liminoid” will draw the Turnerian school steadily away from theological considerations; it seems only a short step from “liminoid pilgrimage” to tourism. But the ramifications go deeper. Since, for Turner, the “liminoid” is associated with the “individual, non-cyclical, plural, fragmentary, idiosyncratic, personal psychological,”⁹⁶ the human experience and the inter-human bond in the “liminoid” (optional) contexts of modern pilgrimage will be seen as lacking the sacred and integrating impact of the “liminal” (obligatory) social rite of passage. Increasingly, contemporary pilgrims will be regarded by Turnerian analysts as religious tourists, whose devotional activities are more comparable, anthropologically speaking, to the ludic behavior of people on vacation than to the transformative rituals of initiands. In contrast, Eliade advocated recognition of the role of personal imagination and communicative myth (creative narrative) as *obligatory* (not optional) for a sound hermeneutic of religious experience. Without that recognition, it is difficult to see any necessity for pilgrimage, and equally difficult to give an intelligent explanation for the burgeoning practice of religious pilgrimage in an increasingly “optional” society.

II. JOURNEY

(a) THE PILGRIM'S WAY THROUGH HISTORY

Motivations for pilgrimage have always given specific shape to the kind of journey envisioned and undertaken. Historically, the Christian reasons for pilgrimage in general can be summarized as the quest for relics, the desire for blessings and the determination to fulfil a vow.⁹⁷ In the case of Christian journeys to historical Palestine in particular, the blessings desired included seeing the very places where Jesus taught and worked (understood in a historical sense), confirming the Gospel accounts, arriving at a better understanding of the Bible in general, and a devotional

⁹⁵ Turner's summary of differences between 'liminal' and 'liminoid': 1) liminal = tribal and agrarian societies of “mechanical solidarity”/ liminoid = societies of “contractual relations”; 2) liminal = collective and cyclical / liminoid = individual and non-cyclical; 3) liminal = integrated into social process (even when disguised or inversive) / liminoid = separate from social process , plural, experiential; 4) liminal = group history, collective representations / liminoid = personal history, idiosyncratic representations; 5) liminal = supportive of social structure (even when apparently inversive) / liminoid = critical of social form, exposes social flaws and evils.

⁹⁶ Turner, *Process, Performance* 153.

⁹⁷ Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today* 22ff.

yearning to touch the ground made sacred by Jesus, and to stand somehow in his presence. This last form of motivation is of a personal rather than a historical nature, and corresponds to an ancient Christian perception that a journey of faith is a strong healing for all kinds of spiritual ills:

I beseech you all that if any is in despondency, if in disease, if in insult, if in any other circumstances of his life, if in the depth of sin, let him come hither in faith, and he will lay aside all those things, and will return with much joy, having procured a lighter conscience from the sight alone.⁹⁸

Davies cites a list of “sacred journey” categories or types for medieval pilgrimage. These are: exilic pilgrimage (an ascetic exercise based on biblical references like Heb 11:13 and 1 Peter 2:11, and on a sense that to be a Christian in this world means to be homeless, like the “*gyrovagus*” or wandering saint of Irish and Russian traditions); penitential pilgrimage (undertaken voluntarily with the devout intention of acquiring indulgences); judicial pilgrimages (a type of penitential pilgrimage imposed by church or civil authority to punish criminals), and the crusade (in some senses a combination of all the other types, with the added ingredient of desire for victory over the infidel and the liberation of the Holy Places).⁹⁹ Davies’ journey types cannot be assumed irrelevant to the understanding of pilgrimage in modern and postmodern times. They should be examined in the context of other historical studies of the chronological and spatial contexts of past pilgrimages, and compared to the conceptual itineraries of present pilgrimages for the interests of our study.¹⁰⁰

Historical study of Christian pilgrimage in its various forms rests on meticulous documentation of primary sources reporting actual journeys. For over a century (since 1887), *The Palestine Pilgrims’ Text Society* encouraged the systematic collection of pilgrims’ records, from the fourth century “St. Sylvia of Aquitania” (i.e. Egeria) and “Holy Paula” through the seventh century “Arculfus”, and on into the Middle Ages and beyond.¹⁰¹ The annotated critical texts and translations of Egeria’s journal recounting her devout adventures in the Holy Land are also examples of the quickening interest in the subject.¹⁰² Egeria was to become something of a “patron saint” of scholars and researchers of Holy Land pilgrimage (if not of contemporary pilgrims themselves, who are still often ignorant of her writings). Her record is of special interest for the theological aspects of Holy Land pilgrimage through the

⁹⁸ John Chrysostom, *Panegyricus in S. Ignatium*, 5.

⁹⁹ Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today* 14.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Davidson and Dunn-Wood (eds) *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages: A Research Guide*; *Garland Medieval Bibliographies* (Vol. 16); *Garland Reference Library of the Humanities*, Vol. 1379 (New York: Garland 1993); E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire: AD 312-460* (Oxford: Clarendon 1982); Barbara N. Sargent-Baur (ed.), *Journeys Toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade*; SML xxx; *Medieval Institute Publications* (Kalamazoo Michigan 1992); John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris and Philips 1977) and *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099-1185* (London: Hakluyt Society 1988), as well as the authors cited in this chapter.

¹⁰¹ Cf. for example Felix Fabri, *The Wanderings of Brother Felix Fabri to the Holy Land*, Aubrey Stuart (trans.), in: *Palestine Pilgrims’ Text Society (PPTS) Vol. 10 (London 1887-97)*; AMS reprint in 2 vols. (New York 1971).

¹⁰² Cf. Gingras and Wilkinson translations of Egeria noted above.

centuries.¹⁰³ A further instance of this historical/documentary genre of pilgrimage research is to be found in Mitchell's The Spring Voyage,¹⁰⁴ a detailed chronicle of a fifteenth century sea journey to Jerusalem.

From a social and theological point of view, a nuanced literary reflection of a *possible* pilgrimage can be more instructive than a dry chronicle of an *actual* one. The potentially formative role of the journey on the pilgrim is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, and studies of medieval pilgrimage are incomplete if they do not acknowledge the impact of the Tales on our understanding of the phenomenon. This is apparent in two important works on pilgrimage from a literary point of view: Zacher's Curiosity and Pilgrimage (1976) and Owen's Pilgrimage and Storytelling in the Canterbury Tales (1977). Both appeared while Turner was still engaged in his early development of "liminality" and "communitas".¹⁰⁵ While apparently unaware of Turner's work, Zacher and Owen both engage interesting aspects of the Turnerian categories as observed through literary theory.

It must be remembered that the philosophy of pilgrimage encountered in Canterbury Tales is that of Chaucer himself, and cannot necessarily be attributed to any of the "real pilgrims" who were the anonymous models he is fictionalizing. Chaucer is using the pilgrim story as what Zacher calls a "framing device" for his own social concerns. Even Chaucer's guiding prayer in the Tales is less a genuine prayer than a masked recommendation of Chaucer's own social and religious interpretation of his characters:

Jhesu, for this grace with me send
To shewe you the wey, in this viage
Of thilke parfit gloriouse pilgrimage
That highte Jerusalem celestial.

We need to read Chaucer and, say, Egeria or Arculf, with very different presuppositions. Chaucer's social intentionality will cause us to be more cautious of the theology of his characters than we need to be of the devotion of pilgrims who present their reflections in their own words. Zacher, for instance, attributes to Chaucer the intention of posing the "contest of tales" as a test of "the viability of each pilgrim's sense of fellowship."¹⁰⁶ We are left in ignorance of how those "real pilgrims" themselves might have "tested" their own communitas without Chaucer's expert help. It is nonetheless true that the general pilgrimage ethos reflected in The Canterbury Tales is authentic, and has bearing on the theological understanding of the historical practice. In other words, the dynamic of Chaucer's literary pilgrimage

¹⁰³ For further theological reflections on aspects of Egeria's account, cf. Ronald H. Miller, Enlightenment Through the Bath of Rebirth: The Experience of Christian Initiation in Late Fourth Century Jerusalem (New York: Fordham University Dissertation 1972).

¹⁰⁴ R. J. Mitchell, The Spring Voyage: The Jerusalem Pilgrimage of 1458 (London: John Murray 1964).

¹⁰⁵ Christian K. Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press 1976), and Charles A. Owen, Jr., Pilgrimage and Storytelling in the Canterbury Tales: The Dialectic of "Ernest" and "Game" (University of Oklahoma Press 1977).

¹⁰⁶ Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage 88.

into social relationships has a close affinity to the system of symbols and realities encountered by “real pilgrims”.

Owen’s analysis of the *Tales* hinges on the tension between Chaucer’s categories of “*ernest*” and “*game*” - equivalent perhaps to Turner’s “liminal” and “liminoid” states. In addition, we see that, at the end of their journey, the pilgrims are “different as a group, and many of them are different as individuals”¹⁰⁷ – which reminds us of the question of “*communitas*” and social transformation.

One of the most important insights in the Owen and Zacher essays is the essential *ambiguity* of the pilgrimage enterprise at the heart of Chaucer’s work. This ambiguity arises from a tension between the “stability” of life before the pilgrimage (a stability which includes Christian piety, social status and “overt morality”) and the “instability” of the actual journey to Canterbury (an instability which includes “distraction from piety”, “curiosity”, storytelling, and fellowship with travellers of questionable morals).

The ambiguous position of the pilgrim in an unstable zone on the pilgrim road raises significant theological issues. Among these is the question of transformation: how will this instability change the pilgrim as an individual and as member of the pilgrim society, and of the home society of the parish to which he or she returns? Zacher’s overall view of the medieval moral category of “curiosity”, and Owen’s more specific dialectic of Chaucer’s “*ernest*” and “*game*”, both lead very close to the Turnerian characteristics of “liminoid”, especially the “ludic” behavior of a pilgrim “*communitas*”, which we will discuss more thoroughly below.

The most influential work published in the 1970s on the history of Christian pilgrimage is Jonathan Sumption’s *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion*.¹⁰⁸ The importance of Sumption’s enterprise lies not only in the numerous historical documents he cites but equally in his detailed summaries of the religious aspects of the medieval pilgrimage era. Recognizing the value of his research into the historical progress and the social context of the “pilgrimage ethos” of medieval religion (i.e. Christianity), it might be tempting to overlook the theological insights he provides. As in the case of earlier scholars, the value of Sumption’s work for the theologian lies in its interpretation and application. In his study of pilgrimage categories like *relics*, *mission*, *miracles*, *healing* and *penitence*, he provides us with essential, well-documented resources for a renewal of theological reflection on the pilgrimage experience applicable to modern contexts.

At least as early as the death of Polycarp at Smyrna in the mid-second century, remains of the martyrs were venerated by Christians, due to their association with the merit of the saint. The cult of *relics* is then one of the earliest contexts of pilgrimage. What is remarkable about this, as Sumption describes it, is not so much that relics held such broad appeal, but that there were so few in the church who denounced them. “Opposition to the cult of relics as such was extremely rare.” Even the relatively sceptical Guibert of Nogent only criticized the veneration of relics kept in other people’s churches, not those in his own abbey. In his defence of relics in

¹⁰⁷ Owen and Zacher, *Pilgrimage and Storytelling* 217.

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion* (London: Faber & Faber 1975).

general, he summed up the theological basis for the practice: “that which is connected with the divine is itself divine, and nothing can be more closely connected with the divine than God’s saints.”¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, Guibert’s sincere spiritual search for an “inward world... where there is neither time nor place” is all the more striking in the context of the literal and visible piety of his time. It is characteristic of Sumption’s sources that a tension exists between cultural naivete and spiritual sophistication. A summary of the theological power of relics and an explanation of the popularity of journeys to their shrines can be found in “the passionate desire to translate the mysteries of the faith into realities.”¹¹⁰

Pilgrimage and *mission* are also linked at a very early stage. The search for miraculous deeds and wonderful healings reflects another aspect of “passionate desire” – the missionary zeal to proclaim and propagate the Christian faith. Here, the theological theme has an ambivalent nuance: miracles were not always considered desirable or necessary. Augustine of Hippo taught that miracles were graceful anomalies for which there would be no need when the faith was universally established.¹¹¹ Since, however, new heresies were constantly threatening faith, miracles again and again take center stage, thrusting theological reasoning aside, as in the case of Gregory of Tours’ dispute with an Arian, resolved by a miraculous ordeal of boiling water.¹¹²

Just as the celebration of a miraculous event appears as a popular (anti-intellectual) category in medieval religion, so the public displays of devotion surrounding particular saints or their relics are examples of the ‘grass-roots’ origins of pilgrimage. It was the piety of ordinary lay folk that often established a place as a locus of sanctity, and common acclaim often determined the canonization of a saint on the basis of miracles performed. “The initiative for the proclamation of miracles almost invariably came from the laity.”¹¹³ The implication of this insight for modern pilgrimage studies should not be overlooked. It should be asked whether pilgrimage still serves a kerygmatic purpose in today’s religious structures, and if so, who is ‘in charge’. Anthropological studies in pilgrim shrines worldwide bear out the proposition that pilgrimage initiative comes into tension with ecclesiastical authority over the issue of canonization and the determination of shrine locations and the proper conduct of pilgrims there.

Pilgrimage has always had a *miraculous* aspect. Sumption offers no other definition of ‘miracle’ than Hume’s “violation of the laws of nature” – an insufficient definition which Sumption himself acknowledges is “open to legitimate theological objections.” His corresponding stand on miracles is characteristic of the historian, who “can only work on the basis that miracles never happened, though the descriptions of them which contemporaries have left may provide valuable evidence of the attitudes of those who wrote them.”¹¹⁴ This whole subject is fraught with difficulty for the scholar and theologian, as it combines the weaknesses of historical

¹⁰⁹ Sumption 43.

¹¹⁰ Sumption 48.

¹¹¹ “Miracles were the milk-teeth of the Church, superfluous after the earliest years.” (Sumption 60).

¹¹² Sumption 58.

¹¹³ Sumption 71.

¹¹⁴ Sumption 55.

empiricism with those of subjective imagination. It is impossible, however, to construct a coherent theology of pilgrimage in the contemporary context without reference to the 'miraculous'. The key will be to establish what 'miraculous' signifies, i.e. to subject the term to Eliade's hermeneutics and incorporate it into a theology which has gone some distance beyond both literalism and positivism. The participation of the 'witness' to the miracle is already implied in one medieval theological definition: "We speak of a miracle whenever anything is done contrary to the normal course of nature, at which we marvel."¹¹⁵ In an era of post-Newtonian mechanics, scientific relativity and chaos theory in physics, our positioning of the miraculous in the pilgrimage experience will need to take into account a new appreciation of the 'normal' by the narrator/observer/witness implied in the words "we speak" and "we marvel".

The same applies to the subject of pilgrimage and *healing*. Sumption introduces the theory that pilgrimage played a role in providing distance and therefore relief from certain unhealthy conditions – e.g. ergotism ('Ignis Sacer') caused by moldy rye harvested in wet districts.¹¹⁶ Pilgrims in the Middle Ages, of course, attributed cures to the intervention of the saint whose shrine they went to visit. All sickness was regarded as caused by sin, and especially by demonic possession. The dynamics of healing which attracted thousands to pilgrim shrines included many visible elements, such as the proximity of the tomb of the saint, physical contact with the saint's relics, including drinking water or wine into which the relics had been immersed.¹¹⁷ There were also, however, equally important psychological elements: a strong desire to be cured, a belief that forgiveness and recovery were linked, and a strong commitment to the proclamation of the miracle once experienced. Hope and faith combine in a remarkable way on the pilgrim road, in phenomena referred to by Sumption as 'faith-healing'. In simple terms, this means that the patient pilgrim is a participant in the healing process; the question will be to what extent and under what conditions.

It is the pilgrimage to Jerusalem that is regarded by Sumption as "consistently the most spiritual pilgrimage of the middle ages [*sic*],"¹¹⁸ although by now his criteria for "spiritual" apparently indicate "intelligent, reasonable and not overly miraculous". The special nature of this pilgrimage may be attributed to the Byzantine pilgrim's motivation: the desire to encounter the historical reality of Christ outweighing the urge to collect relics. Early pilgrims to the Holy Land, like Melito of Sardis, Origen, Paulinus of Nola, Egeria (called by Sumption 'Etheria'), Jerome and his disciple Paula, were all inspired by what they saw as the miraculous evidence of Christ's redemptive acts, not in unnatural occurrences but in the very places themselves.

Here too the role of the pilgrim imagination is found in the intensity and intimacy of devotional experiences at the shrine of the Nativity, Mount Tabor, the Mount of Olives, and the empty Tomb of Christ. If the literal eating of candle wax and dust at the grave of a saint in medieval Europe was associated with physical healing, then the Jerusalem pilgrim in earlier times was healed of uncertainty and doubt through a

¹¹⁵ Caesarius of Heisterbach, quoted by Sumption, 65.

¹¹⁶ Sumption 75.

¹¹⁷ Sumption 83.

¹¹⁸ Sumption 89.

diet of scripture and sacred topography. Both processes were aided by the power of the human imagination and by the ministrations of church officials, shrine keepers, resident ascetics, monks and nuns. All were engaged in what Sumption describes as “a continuously repeated drama of the life of Christ” – the goal of which was not only healing but the inspiration to live in *imitatio Christi*.¹¹⁹

The personal and mystical aspects of pilgrimage were, then, enhanced by the special biblical context of the Holy Land. Pilgrims who became permanent residents, like Jerome, encouraged others to see their journey as a form of asceticism, renouncing the evil world and embracing the perfection of the Gospel:

To Jerome, a pilgrim was not a vulgar tourist, an audience for the lying guides who plied their trade in the Holy City. He was a monk... Even the sites of the Crucifixion and Resurrection were of no intrinsic value unless the pilgrim was ready to carry the cross of the Lord and be resurrected with him.”¹²⁰

Irish monasticism, Sumption points out, demonstrated an extreme form of the imitation of Christ, under the inspiration of the desert fathers and mothers of Egypt and Palestine. It is the voluntary exile of the Irish saints, who strove to “be exiles for God’s sake, and go not only to Jerusalem but everywhere, for God is everywhere,”¹²¹ that led eventually to the penitential pilgrimage which became so characteristic of medieval piety and Reformation critique.

Two levels of *penance* in pilgrimage are distinguished by Sumption: one developing from the voluntary ‘exemplary exile’ of the Celtic wanderers, the other serving a later ‘judicial’ function: punishment for scandalous sins. It was this latter form that put pilgrimage on the ‘tariff’ of penances from the sixth century until the fourteenth, and on the black list of the reformers after that. What is curious about the development of early penitential pilgrimage is the fact that for a long time there seemed to be no provision for pardon when the penitent reached a particular shrine. One of Sumption’s examples is the case of the convicted patricide Frotmund, who wandered back and forth aimlessly between Rome and Jerusalem until his fetters finally broke, apparently worn out by the strain.¹²² The spontaneous nature of these journeys contrasts with the later categorization of pilgrimages to various shrines according to their penitential value, a value that could eventually be redeemed in monetary form without actually making the physical journey. This description of the origin of the indulgences system is a sobering example of the abuse of the pilgrimage experience.

The stark contrast between the voluntary spirituality of the fourth-century Egeria and the enforced exile of convicted criminals in the Middle Ages raises once again the theological question of motivation and disposition. Sumption’s historical method limits him to records of past pilgrimages, while anthropological concerns led the

¹¹⁹ Sumption 92-93.

¹²⁰ Sumption 95.

¹²¹ Sumption 96.

¹²² Sumption 102.

Turners to study modern examples. In both, the parameters of the pilgrimage experience are drawn along lines of “voluntary” and “obligatory” action.

Keeping in mind the axiomatic centrality of Turner’s “liminality”, it is intriguing that Sumption opens his study by emphasizing a similar idea: that pilgrimage provided an opportunity of escape for the medieval individual from the restrictions of ordinary parish life. “A surprisingly large numbers of pilgrims seem to have left their homes solely in order to deny their parish priest his monopoly over their spiritual welfare.”¹²³ This motivation, however (unlike that associated with the liminoid aspects of modern pilgrimage by Turner), was not really “anti-structural”. It was in some ways a very conservative search for forgiveness, blessing and miraculous healing (“to exorcize my sins from my wretched body” in the words of one pilgrim¹²⁴) which sent the medieval pilgrim on the way, not a desire to “create culture”, experience “flow” or achieve a pre-structural “communitas”.

Medieval pilgrimage, according to Sumption, is rooted in “profound pessimism... one of the principal characteristics of mediaeval religion.”¹²⁵ The terrible evils that beset the daily lives of these people, including demonic forces, early death and the conviction that most humans are damned, could not be avoided by setting out upon the road. The hope of pilgrims was not that simple. What a pilgrimage *could* promise was access to a possible remedy: the saving power of God, in the person of his saints, encountered in imagination or in fact at the pilgrim shrines.

Sumption’s *Pilgrimage* enables the student of pilgrimage to develop understandings of material in two related fields: (1) the social structure of the pilgrim’s journey, and (2) its theological content and significance. Examples of the former can be found, for example, in Sumption’s chapter entitled “The Journey”.¹²⁶ How does a pilgrim prepare for the voyage into an experience which is *sui generis* – a “liminal” moment and therefore unpredictable? How are pilgrims distinguished (if at all) from non-pilgrims – by dress (or lack of dress), by speech, or by behavior? What is the “optimal” mode of travel? For example, in the age of “planes, trains and automobiles” are pilgrims more essentially pilgrims if they walk?

The journey motif is generically religious; the structure of pilgrimage is closely linked with the structure of quest. Considering the origins of “pilgrim” in the “wandering” of a *peregrin*, to what extent can a pilgrimage be either “safe” or “planned”? What is the function of danger and risk? How does the encounter with new culture (and the accompanying “culture shock”) figure into the pilgrimage? Is it important that the languages of the shrine-keepers and hosts are not the same as the dialects of the pilgrims? Is there significance to the nature of the pilgrim’s companions, and to the level and mode of hospitality offered to pilgrims at the shrine or in its vicinity?

All of these aspects of the pilgrimage journey, outlined here in relation to the past, are today being developed in detail (and sometimes with credit actually being given

¹²³ Sumption 13.

¹²⁴ Sumption 13.

¹²⁵ Sumption 2.

¹²⁶ Sumption Chapter 11.

to Sumption for blazing the trail) with reference to contemporary pilgrimages to Compostella, Rome, Jerusalem, Lourdes, and many other shrines.

Sumption's analysis of the social form and dynamic of medieval pilgrimage may have been developed in recent studies of modern pilgrimages, but his clear view of the theological content of those pilgrimages has not. In a sense, the opening chapters of Sumption's book provide an outline of the theological challenge that lies before us in forging a contemporary theology of Holy Land pilgrimage. The challenge is all the more acute when we realize that each of the terms used to describe a theological reality of, say, the sixth or the twelfth century is now obsolete, although the experiences represented by these terms are not.

Examples can be found in the material reviewed above of Sumption's pilgrimage categories of relics, mission, miracles, healing and penitence. It is not enough to say that these are anachronistic terms and are not relevant to modern pilgrimage. If we are serious about theological continuity, each of these will need to be closely watched for signs of the essential dichotomies and ambiguities it conceals, in order to trace the corresponding tensions and questions which arise in the pilgrimage process, although under different names, today.

In the realm of "relic cult" we might ask, what is a "cult", and what a "relic"? If a medieval pilgrim could rejoice in obtaining "dust from the land of our redemption",¹²⁷ what bearing might this have on our theology of "earth", "land", "sacred space" and "shrine"? What is it that we seek to "contact" in pilgrimage? Is what we seek of "intrinsic" value, or is its value "merely subjective", provided by our search? If there was an archaic relationship between "dream" and "relic" (and therefore between "dream" and "journey"),¹²⁸ what is the role of psychotherapy in modern pilgrimage? What is the "rational criterion" for knowing the authenticity of a "relic" (or an "encounter")? Do we encounter "reality" or "invention"? Considering the widespread medieval habit of *furta sacra* (theft of relics¹²⁹), is the gain of pilgrimage experienced as "gift" or "acquisition", as "grace" or "work"?

Under the rubric "mission and the pursuit of the miraculous", we might ask, what are the "laws of nature" and the "laws of God"? Are our perceptions a matter of "evidence (proof)" or "attitude"? Is our search motivated by "self-interest (greed)" or by "innocence" or "altruism"? What is the relationship of "miracle" to "mission" and "conversion"? Keeping in mind Sumption's historical observation that medieval pilgrims "accepted the evidence for particular miracles because they passionately desired to believe in miracles in general,"¹³⁰ what then is the role of "desire" (the archaic "*desiderium*" of Egeria and other pilgrims) in our own pilgrimage theology?

Looking at the related issue of "healing of the sick", we should ask about pilgrimage as a search for wholeness, both physical and psychological. What, then, is the theological meaning of "sickness", and is it different from "disease"? Remembering

¹²⁷ Sumption 25.

¹²⁸ Sumption 26.

¹²⁹ Cf. Patrick J. Geary's entertaining *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princetown University Press 1978).

¹³⁰ Sumption 53.

the Canterbury pilgrims' search for "The holy blisful martir.../ That them hath holpen whan that they were sick", what might be the link in pilgrimage between "person" (or "holy person") and "healing"? Is there a sense in which pilgrimage today offers health, or is that too subjective and relative a motivation?

Finally (although this is by no means a complete program), we will need to relate to "penitential pilgrimage". In this context we might ask, what is "forgiveness of sin"?¹³¹ Is this at all relevant to pilgrimage today? Are penance and absolution desirable or even possible in a global village whose existence (not just moral sensitivity) is daily threatened by individual actions once considered a matter between the individual and God, and by corporate actions once considered beyond criticism? Lastly, and I believe most importantly, is it possible for any pilgrimage to any human and social context, no matter how "sacred" or remote, to be undertaken without a conscious "pilgrim ethic"? Is there not a need for an articulated and theologically sound code of attitude and behavior that will avoid the tendencies to turn pilgrimages into archaic crusades, chauvinistic "missions" or thinly disguised trips of exploitation and voyeurism? Where will today's theologian turn for new terms, new descriptions, new theological guidelines, for the profoundly personal and yet very responsible social experience of pilgrimage?

"Pilgrimage," writes Sumption in conclusion, "...had begun as an accessory to the moral teaching of the Church, and ended as an alternative."¹³² He was apparently unaware of Turner's remarkable anthropological insights into the "alternative" origins of pilgrimage in its similarity to "liminal" initiation rites, and in its focus on "existential communitas". Sumption's own view of ritual as an abstract and late development of religion, rather than as one of religion's most original manifestations, leads him to downplay the theological significance of pilgrimage for today. He seemed to be unaware that even as he wrote, pilgrim routes, far from "maintaining a fitful existence",¹³³ were thronged with millions of present-day people from both the centers and the peripheries of modern religion, especially Christianity. Although he identified the major themes that must inform a theology of pilgrimage, Sumption wrote as a historian, with a kind of archaic detachment, as if pilgrimage were an artifact, perhaps even a slightly superstitious relic, of the past. It was not, after all, his task or his intention – as it is ours - to ask how pilgrimage might be an image, not only of medieval religion, but of postmodern faith as well.

¹³¹ Turner's suggested answer ("Center Out There" 221-222) is one of his few explicitly theological observations: "Pure communitas knows only harmonies and no disharmonies or conflict; I am suggesting that the social mode appropriate to all pilgrimages represents a mutually energizing compromise between structure and communitas; in theological language, a 'forgiveness of sins,' where differences are accepted and tolerated rather than aggravated into grounds of aggressive opposition." We might ask if this is an adequate theological treatment of the traditional (archaic) aspect of penitential pilgrimage, or of its modern equivalent.

¹³² Sumption 289.

¹³³ Sumption 302.

(b) AN AMBIGUOUS APPROACH

The application of the medieval categories cited by Sumption and others is not as historically limited as one might think; past or present, the form and practice of “sacred journey” is always determined by inner dispositions and their juxtaposition with exterior contingencies. As noted above, the Turnerian description of the “elliptical journey” of pilgrimage takes into account the differing social-spiritual values of the “outward” and “homeward” stages. Nor is the sheer physical difficulty of the pilgrim’s way entirely forgotten. For the pilgrim in the later Roman Empire, the journey was “no cosy devotional passage around the sacred sites, but a mammoth effort of travel along the major routes of the empire... exposed to all the hazards and discomforts which beset any kind of lengthy spell on the road.”¹³⁴ Even today, there is a sort of *askesis* (or denial thereof) in the travel consciousness of even the most modern tourist, and certainly an edge of effort, even of penance, is regarded by many contemporary pilgrims as a good thing.

Those pilgrims who... place all their hopes in arriving at some wished-for chapel or shrine, are unaware of the true purpose of their pilgrimage; for the fulfilment of that purpose resides equally in the exhausting approach, the chosen encounter and the silent journey home.¹³⁵

There is an underlying recognition that a pleasure outing is not an essentially serious form of travel, while a pilgrimage is. The English word “travel” implies *travail*, i.e. suffering or ordeal. *Travel* is thus intrinsically related to *experience*, and to the related components of “trial”, “test” and “risk” – all implicit in the Indo-European root *per*, which persists in the English *peril*, and, of course, *peregrin*.¹³⁶

The pain or loss entailed in generic travel is, however, also contrasted with the blessing of pilgrimage, just as within every journey the sorrow of departure is counterbalanced with the joy of arrival. These are not contradictory but complementary descriptions of the same phenomenon. Eric Leed, in his overall travel theory, associates suffering with necessity and pleasure with freedom, and contrasts the “protest, grief, despair and mourning” prompted by departure¹³⁷ with the potential for “power, good, reputation, health and augmentation of social being” brought about by a “properly” entered arrival.¹³⁸ It is departure that expresses the sorrow of exile, and arrival that embodies the joy of forgiveness. Between these two is the way itself – rendered painful by necessity or pleasurable by the exercise of freedom. The spiritual content of this central phase can range widely from the vicious and selfish victory of the Crusader to the compassionate and selfless freedom of the wandering saint.

¹³⁴ E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire: AD 312-460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1982) 56.

¹³⁵ Robert Grudin, *Time and the Art of Living* (San Francisco: Harper and Row 1982) 157. Cf. also Jean Chelini and Henry Branthome, *Les Chemins de Dieu* (Paris: Hachette 1982) 191: “C’est le long cheminement, les perils évités et les difficultés vaincus qui donnaient toute sa valeur purificatrice à la pérégrination.”

¹³⁶ Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (Basic Books 1991) 5.

¹³⁷ *The Mind of the Traveler* 29.

¹³⁸ *The Mind of the Traveler* 89.

Particular meaning is attached to the place toward which one travels, and at which one intends to arrive. However, “the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”¹³⁹ The level of preparation and the point of departure are more significant in pilgrimage than modern travel practice seems to allow for. Simplicity is a virtue when applied to packing and agenda, and too much preparation can destroy inspiration, as Joseph Campbell knew.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, too little attention to mental and spiritual preparation can reduce a pilgrimage to a pointless and soul-less vacation even before it starts. “Chance favors the prepared mind,” said Louis Pasteur, and pilgrims who have given thought to their journey are most likely to encounter blessing.

Historically (and still in some contexts today) the journey begins with some rite or sign of departure designed to set the journey apart from the rest of life. Davies reports¹⁴¹ that a moral preparation (confession, absolution, restoration of debts, and an undertaking of a just life) was consonant with a practical set of actions like making a will, asking for the permission and blessing of the pilgrim’s spouse, etc. – and all sorts of preparations were symbolized by the donning of a gray robe, a gray hat with a red cross, the growing of a long beard, and the taking up of the pilgrim satchel (“scrip”) and staff.

The difficulties of the journey were seen, not as something to be avoided or regretted, but as a sign of the inner disposition of the pilgrim and an outward sign of his or her sincerity and blessing.

May God give those who call this pilgrimage an easy exercise the power of feeling its sorrows, that they may learn to have the compassion for pilgrims to the Holy Land which they deserve. It requires courage and audacity to attempt this pilgrimage. That many are prompted to it by sinful and idle curiosity cannot be doubted; but to reach the holy place and return to one’s home active and well is the especial gift of God.¹⁴²

An intercessory prayer for pilgrims – called “bidding of the bedes” - was recited in church during their absence and indicates that the pilgrim journey was regarded as a significant and dangerous one:

Also ye shall pray for all true pilgrims and palmers, that have taken their way to Rome, to Jerusalem, to St. Catherine’s or to St. James, or to any other place, that God of his grace give them time and space well for to go and to come, to the profit of their lives and souls.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Lao Tzu (570-490 BCE).

¹⁴⁰ When an eager pilgrim on her way to Greece showed him her detailed itinerary, Campbell responded with: “Dear lady, I sincerely hope that all does not go as planned!” Cf. Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* 75.

¹⁴¹ Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today* 14ff.

¹⁴² Felix Fabri, *The Wanderings of Felix Fabri* (PPTS, VII-X; AMS reprint, NY 1971) Vol. I, p. 47 (Davies, 46).

¹⁴³ Recorded by Wynkyn de Worde in 1532; cf. Davies, 49.

Ascetic practices along the way¹⁴⁴ underlined the journey's value. The pilgrim was not expected to simply float along the road toward the distant shrine, oblivious of the spiritual challenges that presented themselves. These challenges were symbolized by the wearing of a hair shirt (perhaps against forgetfulness), or of chains (against the illusion of freedom enjoyed by ordinary travellers), the practice of silence (as protection against the banalities of discourse), and of travelling alone (an extreme form of silence). In addition, priests were expected to celebrate the Eucharist daily, an exercise which would remind also the un-ordained of the mystery of Christ's life, death and resurrection in the places toward which all the pilgrims made their way.

III. SHRINE

(a) SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY AND THE "PILGRIM GAZE"

Pilgrims go to "sacred places", which are traditionally called "shrines".¹⁴⁵ As Philip Sheldrake points out, all such places are more than extension, distance or situation. Like texts (which are more than words) and icons (which are more than images), places have meaning because they are functions of the "geography of our imagination".¹⁴⁶ They are contexts of continuity and self-understanding, as well as contexts of encounter. For pilgrimage in particular, shrine/sacred place is "multivalent" because the perceptions and self-understandings of pilgrims are so different. Theological consideration of the meaning of the shrine must be preceded by awareness of the diversity of pilgrim responses.

The goal of Christian pilgrimage is closely linked with what is often called "spiritual geography". This term is ambiguous. Geography denotes the "marking" ("writing") of the earth – i.e. the cognitive knowledge of our physical context. How can this be "spiritual"? This question accompanies every pilgrim most acutely at the moment of "arrival" at a geographically determined ("located, placed, situated") shrine. At this moment, the identity of the traveller (as tourist, voyeur, or pilgrim, etc.) is in some way "determined" by what the traveller "sees". Pilgrims in this respect are indeed, as MacCannell envisioned, ambassadors of postmodern thought.

There is a growing body of literature that reflects a multidisciplinary expansion of radical thought in the postmodern era. The concept of place as a means of human identity is clearly evident in literature....

¹⁴⁴ Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today* 50.

¹⁴⁵ "Place" as distinct from "space" – in the sense laid down by Walter Brueggemann (*The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*; Philadelphia: Fortress 1977, 5): "Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations." I use "shrine" instead of "goal" in the pilgrimage context (*pace* Morinis, *Sacred Journeys*, 17) because the word "goal" can be confused with "motivation" or "expectation", and because "shrine" has the right intrinsic religious connotation.

¹⁴⁶ Philip F. Sheldrake, "The Sacredness of Place", in: *Studies in Spirituality*, Vol. 6, 1996, 258-275.

Two recent examples of this literature of identity and “sacred place” are cited by Martha Henderson¹⁴⁷: Griffin’s *Beliefs and Holy Places* and Norris’ *Dakota*. Both books have the phrase “spiritual geography” in their subtitles.¹⁴⁸ The complementary approaches of these two works exemplify the two perceptions of the “shrine” that we encounter in these pilgrim interviews. As Henderson points out, for Griffin “spiritual geography is about a place of religious tradition” – i.e. the experiences of “others” historically enshrined in regional symbols. For Norris, spiritual geography is “the place where I’ve wrestled my story out of the circumstances of landscape and inheritance” – i.e. an intimate and *sui generis* place/person sacralization. Henderson describes these two approaches as “out-of-place” and “in-place” – useful terms in our context. The pilgrim, for example, who approaches Jerusalem as the “locus” of Christ’s redemptive death might walk the Via Dolorosa in “out-of-place” mode. The pilgrim for whom Cana is a reminder of a deceased husband might grapple with “in-place” emotions. What is common to both, in Henderson’s phrase, is that “place becomes the text of what it means to be human.”

The common denominator linking these diverse aspects of relationship to the shrine is to be found in the constructive power of the “pilgrim gaze”. Neither “out-of-place” nor “in-place” can be determined by an external discourse alone. As John Eade and Michael Sallnow wrote, in their 1991 critique of Turner, the structure of the shrine is merely “ritual space for the expression of a diversity of perceptions and meanings which the pilgrims themselves bring to the shrine and impose upon it.”¹⁴⁹ The most cogent shrine theory that encompasses the greatest range of actual pilgrim experiences, and not merely the orthodox presentations of guides and professional shrine-keepers, is that summarized by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky:

Landscape... is shaped, in the very act of our perceiving it, by our mindscape... On our mental as well as physical pilgrimages we traverse... maps identified as territory... People have not only perceived and constructed space in many different ways, but have also crystallised their experience of the sacred in their view of space.¹⁵⁰

For the actual mode of translation by which landscape is “mapped” by mindscape, our best description is John Urry’s concept of the “tourist gaze”:

There is no single tourist gaze as such... [Tourist] gazes are constructed through difference... [The] gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite... What makes a particular tourist gaze depends

¹⁴⁷ Martha L. Henderson, “What is Spiritual Geography?”, in *Geographical Review*, Vol. 83 (Jan. 10 1993) 469ff.

¹⁴⁸ James S. Griffin, *Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Pimeria Alta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press 1992); Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1993).

¹⁴⁹ John Eade and Michael Sallnow (eds.) *Contesting the Sacred: the Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (New York: Routledge 1991) 10.

¹⁵⁰ R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Introduction: Mindscape and Landscape”, in *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land* (Kedar and Werblowsky, eds., Macmillan: London and Jerusalem 1998) 10. Werblowsky acknowledges the collaborative sources of this idea in Merleau-Ponty, Bardieu, Eliade, Allan Grapard and Jonathan Smith.

upon what it is contrasted with; what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be.¹⁵¹

Urry's analysis of the tourist gaze brought to bear on landscape is especially helpful in applying the "tourist gaze" idea to pilgrimage. Referring to "romantic" notions of countryside in English tourism, Urry cites Cosgrove on the "landscape idea":

... a way of seeing which separates subject and object, giving lordship to the eye of the single observer. In this the landscape idea either denies collective experience... or mystifies it in an appeal to transcendental qualities.¹⁵²

This is precisely what happens at a pilgrim shrine, most especially in the case of pilgrims from the reforming traditions. By the nineteenth century, the Holy Land had "wide appeal to people of a hegemonic faith, [and] had the strong potential for being translated into a trenchant image in the collective consciousness, or cultural 'mind'..."¹⁵³ Lester Vogel develops the term "image/reality" to describe the "perceptual process whereby the collective view of the Holy Land was formed,"¹⁵⁴ and this "perceptual process" is very much evident in my reading of contemporary pilgrim narratives as well. I propose, then, to read pilgrim shrine narratives as the "mapping" of sacred landscape through a particular "way of seeing". The correlates of the "pilgrim gaze" (the compass-directions on the resultant map of sacred space) will be complex permutations of "in-place" and "out-of-place". The focus will be identity: "sacred other" enshrined in historical symbol, or "sacred self" wrestled out of personal story.

(b) EARLY SHRINES

Christianity before the fourth century seems to have been quite free of "geopieté"¹⁵⁵ – i.e. "the expression of dutiful devotion and habitual reverence for a territory, land or space."¹⁵⁶ Devotion was universally given to Christ, not to the land where he was born, and the contexts of salvation were seen as cosmic and personal, not topographical. Early Christians took pride in the geographical inclusivity and structural simplicity of their religion, but that all changed with the Constantinian era. *Delubras et aras non habemus* ("we have no shrines or altars!") was the cry of the persecuted Christian, but not of the emancipated one. The energy with which the Holy Land was equipped with holy structures after the Council of Nicea is legendary. The very presence in the Holy Land of so many shrines and churches that trace their foundations to the Constantinian revolution shifts our attention inevitably from the journey itself to the locus of pilgrim arrivals: the shrine.

¹⁵¹ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society* (London: Sage Publications 1990) 1.

¹⁵² *The Tourist Gaze* 97-98.

¹⁵³ Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press 1993) 4.

¹⁵⁴ *To See a Promised Land* 7.

¹⁵⁵ The term was coined by John Kirtland Wright, *Human Nature in Geography* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1965).

¹⁵⁶ *To See a Promised Land* 8.

Attitudes toward the Holy Places became intense, not least because pilgrimage was not a “cosy devotional passage”, but an odyssey requiring a year or more of dangerous travel from Europe to Jerusalem. And that journey, far from being a mundane prelude to a pious arrival, was permeated with fervor and excitement,¹⁵⁷ qualities summed up in the one word found so frequently in Egeria’s journal: *desiderium* (heart’s desire).¹⁵⁸ The liturgical nature of the journey could be exaggerated intentionally on occasion, as was the case with Gregory of Nyssa,¹⁵⁹ or the enthusiastic pilgrim appropriately named Hero, who strode 40 miles through the deserts of Egypt reciting Bible passages while his poor companion Palladius fell far behind.¹⁶⁰

In the particular case of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the journey’s most significant part was what Davies calls the “mini-pilgrimage” – devotions at the various holy places themselves upon arrival. I believe it is preferable to relate to this aspect of historical pilgrimage in its own right, as relating more to the shrine than the journey. The arrival at the shrine can usually be distinguished from the journey proper, even in the classical pilgrim sources, by a moment of joy, weeping, clamor, wonder and other emotions which mark the pilgrim’s arrival at the Holy City or on the shores of the Holy Land. In many cases, what follows the arrival is an elaborate form of liturgical action involving various aspects of the shrines and the people associated with them.

The essential actions of liturgical pilgrim in Jerusalem have been carefully studied by several modern scholars. Wilkinson¹⁶¹ gives a convenient summary based on both Egeria and the Armenian Lectionary. The activities of pilgrims in these early times around and in the holy shrines included the reading of psalms, the saying of prayers, lessons from scripture, homilies and eucharistic meals. “Stational liturgies” – so called because of their association with particular sites (stations) related to events in the life and death of Jesus, are given special attention by John Baldovin.¹⁶² Baldovin puts special emphasis of the origins of stational liturgy in a happy concord between the unique “sacred topography” of the Holy City, and the presence and influence of the bishop (in Egeria’s case, this was Cyril), without whom the liturgical cycles could not take place.

By the time pilgrimage had developed into its medieval form, the shrine was the scene of further specific actions: kissing the ground, kissing the holy cross, drinking from a cup or well or spring, immersion in the holy river (the Jordan), throwing stones (just as Jewish pilgrims stoned the tomb of Absalom, Christian pilgrims used to stone the tomb of Goliath), removing shoes and walking barefoot on portions of a path (e.g. the Via Dolorosa), looking at and touching holy relics of the saints and

¹⁵⁷ Hunt, Holy Land Pilgrimage 51, 60.

¹⁵⁸ Egeria, *It. Eg.* 3:2 “*non sentiebatur labor, quia desiderium, quod habebam, iubente Deo videbam compleri*”; cf. Carse, Liturgical Pilgrimage, 5.

¹⁵⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 2:13.

¹⁶⁰ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 26. The eager Hero lost some of his pious panache when he had an affair with an actress in Alexandria.

¹⁶¹ Wilkinson, Egeria’s Travels 54ff.

¹⁶² John Francis Baldovin, The Urban Character of Christian Worship in Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople From the Fourth to the Tenth Centuries: the Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy (Yale University, PhD dissertation, 1982).

filling flasks of holy oil from the saints' tombs. Pilgrims also commonly brought gifts to the shrine and the shrine-keepers: alms, discarded crutches and chains, votive candles, birds or animals, 'exuvial' offerings (kidney stones etc.) and replicative ex-voto models (of cured limbs, babies, etc.). Lastly, there is the practice of incubation in a shrine, i.e. sleeping inside the closed space, or alternatively inserting a diseased limb into "limb holes" for healing.¹⁶³

An adequate appreciation of the moment of arrival at the holy shrine can arise from a reading of texts that document this moment expressed in the pilgrim's own words:

I leap for joy as I write, and am altogether in the spirit with that holy grotto [the cave of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem]... I am thrilled at the thought of the Saviour's love for me and his extreme poverty through which he made me worthy of the kingdom of heaven.¹⁶⁴

In a similar but nuanced vein, an enhanced (interpreted) understanding derives from texts which give an "objective" observation of a pilgrim by someone else. Perhaps the classic example is Jerome's observation of the devotions of the pilgrim Paula upon her arrival in Jerusalem from Rome:

In visiting the holy places so great was the passion and enthusiasm she exhibited for each that she never could have torn herself away from one had she not been eager to visit the rest. Before the cross she threw herself down in adoration as though she beheld the Lord hanging upon it...¹⁶⁵

The credulous tone of Jerome's account contrasts with the tongue-in-cheek critique of Felix Fabri when he observes the behavior of some pilgrims he saw, who

...out of excess of devotion lost all command of themselves, forgot how they should behave, and out of excessive zeal to please God, made strange and childish gestures. It was indeed pleasant [i.e. funny] to behold the earnest and yet different [i.e. strange] behavior of the pilgrims as they prayed at the holy places, which places have a wonderful power or moving to tears, groans and sighs, men who in any other place could not be moved...¹⁶⁶

Fabri's ironic tone here should be obvious. His reference to the wonderful power of the shrine to move callous men to tears, for example, is clearly not to be taken at face value, but as a veiled accusation that these same men were groaning and sighing only to impress others and "do the expected thing". The leap from devout and appreciative observation in Jerome to something bordering on sarcasm in Fabri is much more than a leap in time and attitudes. It represents a significant shift in the interpretation of the holy shrine in terms of its relation to the pilgrim, leading eventually to the postmodern apprehension of the shrine as an extension of the subjective action of the "pilgrim gaze" rather than as a source of objective and intrinsic sanctity.

¹⁶³ Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today*, 55-77.

¹⁶⁴ Phocas the Cretan, *The Pilgrimage of Joannes Phocas in the Holy Land*, 1185 (PPTS, V, 1896) 32.

¹⁶⁵ Jerome, *Epistolae* 108.9f.

¹⁶⁶ Felix Fabri, *The Wanderings*, I. 283f.

An unexplored aspect of the effect of the shrine in the pilgrim experience is the invitation to meditation rather than to loud exclamations and demonstrative behavior. Not surprisingly, Felix Fabri (who is clearly put off by demonstrative displays) addresses this request to his fellow pilgrims before they leave the Anointing Stone of Christ in the Church of the Resurrection:

I beg you, beloved pilgrim, not to leave this place... without previous meditation.¹⁶⁷

Naturally, nineteenth century nature romanticism completely transformed the traveller's attitude to any shrine found within the city walls, and largely contributed to the double process of either uprooting shrines to remove them from the crowded pollution of the city (like the "discovery" of the Garden Tomb as an alternative to the less salubrious Church of the Holy Sepulchre) or erasing the Jesus shrines from the city altogether.

It was not here [in Jerusalem] that Jesus found the men and women who believed in Him and loved Him, but in the quiet villages, among the green fields, by the peaceful lake-shores. And it is not here that we shall find the clearest traces, the most intimate visions of Him, but away in the big out-of-doors, where the sky opens free above us...¹⁶⁸

The same conviction, that the intrinsic value of geographical freedom demonstrates a moral freedom and purity, is reflected in various ways in the travel literature of the period:

The beaten track is often the best track, but devote most of your time to the by-ways. In no other way can you so quickly reach the heart of a country.¹⁶⁹

Through the steady influence of post-Enlightenment pilgrims in the reforming tradition, shrines were emptied of innate sanctity. The "open sky" and "open road" became inseparably linked with right teaching and right interpretation of the Gospels. In pilgrims' experiences of encounter with the truth and with the sacred, this element of modern thought will play a significant role.

IV. ENCOUNTER

(a) IN THE FAITH OF THE BEHOLDER

Because both departure and arrival are relational as well as geographical, the moment of encountering an "other" is intimately linked in pilgrimage experiences with both "Journey" and "Shrine". In fact, the meeting of the pilgrim with a hosting group, a

¹⁶⁷ Felix Fabri, *The Wanderings*, I. 291.

¹⁶⁸ Van Dyke, quoted by David Klatzker, "Sacred Journeys: Jerusalem in the Eyes of American Travelers before 1948", in: Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (eds), *Jerusalem in the Mind of the Western World, 1800-1948* (Praeger: Westport CN 1997) 50.

¹⁶⁹ Frank Tatchell, *The Happy Traveller: A Book for Poor Men* (1923).

relevant rite, a significant person or some other being (holy or unholy), plays a mediating role between the journey's hopes and fears on one hand, and the shrine's satisfactions or disappointments on the other.

What the medieval pilgrim encountered, and whom, was largely determined by a well-defined set of expectations. Blessing, healing, and forgiveness were the desired and expected fruits of the journey, and therefore people and circumstances that could bestow these were the chief points of encounter. Even as early as the fourth century (in the diaries of Egeria and the anonymous Bordeaux Pilgrim) there is practically no mention by the pilgrim of meeting or interacting with anyone outside the given agenda of "geopiety". It is as if diverse human discourse and genuine serendipitous meetings have disappeared entirely, or have been replaced by dutiful prayer.

Pilgrimage after the Enlightenment is a much more complicated reality. In fact, it is in the realm of encounter that the contrasts between the particular characteristics of today's Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant pilgrimages are most evident.¹⁷⁰ From Egeria's descriptions of the liturgies of Jerusalem in the fourth century to the contemporary Russian pilgrim's veneration of the icons at the tomb of Christ, the encounter of the Orthodox pilgrim is almost exclusively a "collective participation in the eternity imaged in the places where Christ had worked his redemptive mission."¹⁷¹ The Roman Catholic tradition of pilgrimage, with its attention to "moral benefit" (formerly in terms of relics and indulgences) is today more likely to inspire pilgrims to "be renewed in their faith so that they can subsequently re-engage their ordinary lives with... a revived sense of purpose."¹⁷² In both of these basic pilgrimage traditions, encounter is more or less confined (with some exceptions, especially in Catholicism) to the parameters of piety laid down in the historical paradigms of the early centuries.

Pilgrimage in the reforming traditions, however, presents a much richer narrative of encounter. Originally, the condemnation of pilgrimage by leaders of the Protestant Reformation¹⁷³ was an effort to be consistent with the teaching of salvation by faith alone. However, travellers from Protestant contexts continued to make their way to the biblical lands, and continued to encounter moving experiences there:

Before noon I had sight of the Holy City, and thereupon kneeling down and saying the Lord's Prayer, I gave God hearty thanks for conducting me to behold with my eyes this Renowned Place.¹⁷⁴

Many travellers to the Holy Land in this later period were not pious at all. Yet for all that, they exhibited a remarkable determination to alleviate their doubts through a journey into their more faithful past:

¹⁷⁰ I follow Glen Bowman, "Christian ideology and the image of a holy land", in Eade and Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred* 98-121.

¹⁷¹ "Christian Ideology", 110.

¹⁷² "Christian Ideology", 112.

¹⁷³ Cf. especially Martin Luther ("To the Christian Nobility", in: *Works* (54 Volumes; St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress 1958) *passim*, and also Calvin (*Institutes* 4.13.7).

¹⁷⁴ Nathaniel Crouch, *Two Journeys to Jerusalem* (1695) 59.

One Protestant preacher... let the cat out of the bag when he recommended a trip to the Holy Land chiefly as a way to “renew” one’s interest in biblical literature.¹⁷⁵

In other words, the journey to the Holy Land was seen in this later period as an effort to “breathe new life into the biblical narratives,” an antidote to doubt, spiritual lethargy and even disbelief, rather than (as in the earlier accounts we have seen) a devout expression of an already enthusiastic faith. And many travellers evidently experienced the hoped-for enhancement, as one mid-nineteenth century woman wrote of the paradoxical juxtaposition of “rude awakening” with a simultaneous boost to her faith:

Traveling here takes away the poetry and the romance with which we invested the Scriptures, but I am glad to be able to tell you that it has increased our belief in their truthfulness.¹⁷⁶

Categories of mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century attitudes to travel to the Holy Land cover, as might be expected, a range of mind-sets including but not confined to pilgrimage.¹⁷⁷ First among these, *nature-romanticism*, was an extension of the contemporary disgust with the city and all its vices, and the corresponding “sanctification” of the countryside and everything rural and simple. Nature romanticism gave birth not only to socio-political theories like those of Henry David Thoreau, but to a form of New Testament theology which sees Jesus as a divine representative of rural purity versus the corruption of urban culture. Even Jerusalem – that “City of the Great King”, seen as perfect in the eyes of many early pilgrims – did not escape the reforming gaze of travellers like Henry Van Dyke, who wanted “to make acquaintance with the soul of that land... to walk quietly and humbly... in fellowship with the spirit that haunts those hills... under the influence of that deep and lucent sky.”¹⁷⁸

Another influence from this period is the scientific and pseudo-scientific *search for authenticity*. The theme of authenticity in the pilgrim experience will need to be explored in detail to appreciate its importance in the theological interpretation of the enterprise in postmodern times. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, it was recognized that modern travellers are not only the viewers but also the destroyers of what they see. It was not only that commercialization (which had fuelled the pilgrim endeavor for centuries without apology) was now suddenly seen to be a “threat to the promise of sacred moments.”¹⁷⁹ The problem goes deeper, and affects the authenticity of the one encountering as much as the authenticity of what is encountered. The disappointment that the traveller on the threshold of modernity

¹⁷⁵ Klatzker, “Sacred Journeys” 47ff.

¹⁷⁶ Emily Severance, *Journal Letters of Emily A. Severance, Quaker City, 1867* (Cleveland: Gates Press 1938); quoted in Vogel, 76. The sentiment is expressed - without the paradox – earlier by William C. Prime (*Tent Life in the Holy Land*; NY: Harper&Bros. 1857, 313-316): “Every step that I advanced on the soil of Palestine offered some new and startling evidence of the truth of the sacred story.” Cf. Robert T. Handy, *The Holy Land in American Protestant Life 1800-1948: A Documentary History* (NY: Arno Press 1981) 108.

¹⁷⁷ The following summary is taken from Klatzker’s article cited above.

¹⁷⁸ Henry Van Dyke, *Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land* (1908; Reprint, NYC: Arno Press 1977) 5-7.

¹⁷⁹ Klatzker, “Sacred Journeys” 51.

feels when confronted with pre-modern religious phenomena is equalled only by the self-criticism and even self-loathing the same traveller feels for being an obtrusive and unbelieving voyeur. When journalist Charles Dudley Warner visited the Western Wall (“Wailing Wall”) in Jerusalem in 1875, his remarks concerning the mourning of the devout Jews he saw there revealed the inner tension between observer and observed which was soon to become the hallmark of aesthetic – and ontological and theological – deconstruction:

I myself felt that if this were genuine, I had no business to be there with my undisguised curiosity, and if it were not genuine, it was the poorest spectacle that Jerusalem offers to the tourist.¹⁸⁰

In terms of establishing coherent categories for the understanding of the pilgrimage experience, the effects of the “authenticity quest” – and the critical attitude it engenders – must be figured into our interpretation of pilgrim encounters in general. Here, the experience is as much about self-image as it is about pilgrimage. We should be prepared to see that this “image/pilgrimage” dichotomy is not just modern or postmodern, but intrinsically linked with human perceptions (“gaze”) of any kind. The “angry traveller” or “angry tourist” syndrome is a very real function of pilgrimage; it fractures and reforms the traditional community of pilgrims on the road together, in blissful unity of heart and mind. It also conditions the way these same now-isolated pilgrims will perceive “sacred encounters” at their goal.

... the angry traveler is declaring that he is not a tourist. Far from desiring a sense of *communitas* with their co-travelers, [“angry travelers”] found it necessary to segregate themselves from tourist parties in order to experience the mystical power of Jerusalem.¹⁸¹

As we will see, the “angry traveller” and the “reluctant pilgrim” are siblings, and both are offspring of the radically critical mind and the radically confined emotions of modernity, the revolution in measures of individual authenticity since the Enlightenment, and the Protestant Reformation. Postmodern pilgrimage – understood theologically – must take the “negative” attitude of the angry traveller into account.

Authenticity is intrinsically linked, as will be demonstrated in the comparison between pilgrimage and tourism, with the issue of cost. The perception of the symbolic meaning of tourism as a “rite of society” (in this case, a consumer society, interested in acquisition) was already presaged in Herman Melville’s astute quotes from his Jerusalem guide:

Here is the stone Christ leaned against, and here is the English Hotel. Onder is the arch where Christ was shown to the people, and just by that open window is sold the best coffee in Jerusalem.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Charles Dudley Warner, “Jerusalem”; *Atlantic Monthly* 38 (August 1876) 154.

¹⁸¹ Klatzker, “Sacred Journeys” 52.

¹⁸² Melville (1857), quoted by Klatzker, “Sacred Journeys” 51.

(b) "TO THE EDGE OF CHAOS"

As "worship in motion", pilgrimage has an intrinsic liturgical dimension that provides a constant point of encounter with both the divine and human aspects of the "other". "Liturgy leads regularly to the edge of chaos", wrote Urban Holmes,¹⁸³ "and from this flirt with doom comes a theology different from any other". The same could be said of pilgrimage. The journey of Egeria (381-384 CE), the "best documented of all fourth-century pilgrimages", was for her an extended act of adoration, and of participating in the prayers of the Jerusalem church. She was always delighted when invited to the hospitable celebrations of the holy mysteries of the eucharistic meal (she calls them "sacrifices") along the way, and her every step was enlivened by Scripture and prayer.

It was not "heroism" or human will-power which inspired Egeria to climb Mount Sinai cum grande labore, but an exercise of Christian hope, as she wrote: "I was seeing my hopes coming true!"... Her whole enterprise was powered by the grace of desiderium, not by sheer determination, agility or luck.¹⁸⁴

Egeria's Holy Land pilgrimage was a full realization of the pastoral vision of Cyril of Jerusalem. If Baldovin is correct in his critique of Dix,¹⁸⁵ the liturgical pilgrimage espoused by Cyril was not simply a "reconciliation with time" after the traumatic eschatology of the persecution period, but in fact a dramatic and representational celebration of "sacred topography", in which the pilgrim actually meets Christ in his or her own experience. In other words, there is in the Jerusalem liturgy a theological progression from eschatology through history to drama – the latter being understood as a mode of worship that is "pilgrim-oriented, participatory, processional, engaging, mobile and emotionally eloquent."¹⁸⁶

The sacramental character of pilgrimage is powerfully stated by Paulinus of Nola in the fifth century, when in a letter he urges a friend to "make pilgrimage abroad to increase the grace of charity in you."¹⁸⁷ It is not only in a fragment of the True Cross, but in the pilgrim's own experience, that the suffering and glory of Christ are encountered, if only we "look with the inner eye", ready to "tremble and also rejoice."¹⁸⁸

Remnants of *desiderium* and the sacramental grace of encounter have survived the innocent age of early Christian pilgrimage and the more cynical approaches of later times, and appear regularly in the reflections of pilgrims today.

¹⁸³ Cf. Aidan Kavanagh, On Liturgical Theology (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press 1992) 73.

¹⁸⁴ Carse, Liturgical Pilgrimage 6.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Baldovin, The Urban Character of Christian Worship, 152-154; Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Glasgow: University Press 1945) 305, 434ff; and also Kenneth Stevenson, Jerusalem Revisited, The Liturgical Meaning of Holy Week (Washington: Pastoral Press 1988) 4ff.

¹⁸⁶ Carse, Liturgical Pilgrimage 12.

¹⁸⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 5:14.

¹⁸⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 31:1.

(c) SAINTS AND INFIDELS

Encounter with other human beings (as opposed to divine beings and representatives) is an aspect of pilgrimage which is never as fully developed in the historical material as encounter with the shrine itself, or with the presence of Christ there symbolized. It is true that Egeria and other early pilgrims were eager to meet “living heroes of their faith, whose discipline, holiness and sufferings had rendered them famous.”¹⁸⁹ However, it is not until after the Enlightenment that the real human diversity of life in Jerusalem is brought under scrutiny. Pilgrims in ancient times, from Egeria to Felix Fabri, all seem to ignore the diverse nature of Jerusalem society, or to simply reduce it to a choice between “holy men and women” on one hand, and “infidels” on the other.

Even in the nineteenth century, the general level of education concerning Jewish, Muslim and Oriental Christian realities was so meager in the West, that travellers “were tested by the bewildering variety of human beings they encountered there, and they found it very difficult to identify with what they were experiencing”¹⁹⁰ At least, it must be said, however difficult the encounters were, these travellers did not totally ignore them. However, the “pilgrim gaze” of these “enlightened” Westerners in the Holy Land was deeply conditioned by their images of poor and dispossessed people elsewhere, and even more deeply evocative of emotional reactions that were as inevitable as they were inappropriate. Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), for example, could not shake his Anglo-Saxon American aversion for the Arabs he observed in Palestine, not because he had any knowledge of Arabs, but because they reminded him of uncomfortable encounters closer to home.

They sat in silence, and with tireless patience watched our every motion with that vile, uncomplaining politeness which is so truly Indian and which makes a white man so nervous and uncomfortable and savage that he wants to exterminate the whole tribe.¹⁹¹

Of course, extremes of intolerance in Christian attitudes toward Jews is, if anything, even more common in the travel literature of this period, sparked by a perceptual system that saw Jews as a cursed people, “once the chosen of God, ...now wanderers and sojourners on earth, without a distinct nationality and without a Redeemer.”¹⁹²

V: RETURN

The homeward journey is an integral part of the pilgrimage, with particular significance in light of the ambiguities of the competing discourses encountered in “sacred place” – especially in the Holy Land. The fulfilment of a pilgrimage cannot be grasped in the moment of arrival at the shrine; it requires the reflection and integration, as well as the decision and social action, of return.

¹⁸⁹ Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* 14.

¹⁹⁰ Klatzker, “Sacred Journeys” 55.

¹⁹¹ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, 340 (quoted by Vogel, *To See a Promised Land*, 77).

¹⁹² Jacob Freese, *The Old World* (Philadelphia: Lippencott 1869) 81.

In general travel theory, and in tourism theory in particular, there is a profound sense of malaise associated with the “outward” journey, and a corresponding new emphasis on the “inward” (“homeward”) journey, as the world “out there” shrinks and becomes more homogenous, less authoritative, and therefore less “authentic.” One aspect of this “homeward” shift is the emergence of “post-tourism”, meaning that the tourist knows that it is impossible to visit anything truly unique “out there.” Increasingly, tourists substitute nostalgia for adventure, and eventually abandon the actual journey altogether, in favor of the virtual experience of gazing upon a “site/sight” via television, video, or internet.¹⁹³ The radical and pessimistic conclusion of “post-tourism” envisioned by Leed¹⁹⁴ is the “bitter end of the dialectic” between traveller and “other”, so that the original “outward” quest for uncrossed boundaries can now only be pursued “within”:

The force of travel is corrosive, stripping and wasting, an experience of continuous loss... The historical journey outward – no longer possible now without expensive space technology – creates a necessity for the journey back, inward, to origins and what has been left behind.

By contrast, pilgrimage still visits and celebrates the sanctity of the “other”, thereby contradicting the social pessimism of “post-tourism”. The return of the pilgrim to the parish of origin is not a form of cultural defeat, a flight to the familiar, but rather a constructive element with social significance transcending the individual journey. Pilgrims return to their church contexts both as “strangers” (bearing new journey narratives) and as “homecomers” (seeking the affirmation of the familiar community narratives). A productive balance between these is hard to achieve:

Both the homecomer and the home community must be disabused of the belief that neither has really changed. In fact both have changed... The homecomer’s experience... is bewildering because the Christian community with its familiar narratives and faith appears to the homecomer to have changed, or the homecomer... is no longer the same person who once lived in the community.¹⁹⁵

The return home for the medieval pilgrim was a journey every bit as fraught with danger as the journey of arrival. Before leaving Jerusalem, pilgrims could avail themselves of the blessings of their hosts and protectors (who, during many centuries, were the monks and nuns of the Franciscan or other monastic orders).

When the camels were loaded, and asses chosen and saddled, we went over to the Church of Sion and received the pilgrims’ blessing from the venerable guardian of Mount Sion, who embraced each of us, blessed him, and dismissed him with a kiss... Not without sadness of heart, not without tears did we depart.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Cf. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* 100.

¹⁹⁴ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler* 288, 292.

¹⁹⁵ George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM Press 1981) 173-174.

¹⁹⁶ Felix Fabri, *The Wanderings*, II. 398.

In traditional accounts, however, emotional engagement seems to suddenly end here. A certain “seamlessness” characterizes the journey home, when compared to the accounts of outward journeys. This is perhaps a natural result of the eagerness of the pilgrim to get back to the familiar and safe terrain of the home parish, or perhaps a function of the literary form of the pilgrim tale, which sees more relevance in the detail of the journey toward the shrine, and less in the return. Or, we may see here the reflection of a theology focused more on the attaining of a sacred prize at the shrine than on an application of sacred lessons learned in the context of “ordinary” life. The reality, of course, was that the homeward trip could also be dangerous, even fatal, and that a pilgrim after the pilgrimage lived not in a vacuum but in a community. The joy of travellers upon homecoming must have been objectively as passionate as their more devout rejoicing at their first sight of Jerusalem. The community waiting to receive the pilgrim included, after all, family and loved ones, in the familiar context of the home parish. The gifts that pilgrims brought home from the sacred shores were outward signs of the invisible inward marks of a life-changing experience.

If they survived their ordeals and eventually reached home... the pilgrims were full of gratitude to God for preserving them... They would present their scrips and staffs to their parish churches....¹⁹⁷

In contemporary terms, it is remarkable how little attention is given to the art of homecoming by travel agents and pilgrimage organizers, and even by some pilgrimage theorists, who focus instead on the journey to reach the “goal” – i.e. the “sight” or the “shrine” – leaving the pilgrim’s homeward path as an anticlimactic afterthought.¹⁹⁸ And yet, in Joseph Campbell’s words, “the ultimate aim of the quest, if one is to return, must be neither release nor ecstasy for oneself, but the wisdom and the power to serve others.”¹⁹⁹

The pilgrim’s return remains the category of pilgrimage least developed in the literature and most critical in theological context. In fact, it is in evaluating the role of the pilgrim’s metaphorical and physical homecoming, and in anticipating the application in the home context of the insights gained from ambiguous and transforming encounters along the way, that the greatest theological challenge and contribution of this research is to be found. The routes travelled by pilgrims toward the Holy Lands, and the shrines they visit there, may remain largely unchanged since the middle ages, but the ambiguous imperatives and the dilemmas of identity associated with postmodernism have radically altered the homeward path.

¹⁹⁷ Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today* 79.

¹⁹⁸ Alan Morinis (*Sacred Journeys* 14ff) reduces the components of pilgrimage to “The Journey” and “The Goal” – with no mention of “Return”.

¹⁹⁹ Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By* (quoted in Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*, 217).

EXCURSUS: POSTMODERN PILGRIMAGE IN CONTEXT

1. ON THE BOUNDARY OF MODERNITY

Some of the historical pathways established by medieval pilgrimages are today so crowded with modern pilgrims that environmentalists fear for the physical survival of the ways themselves. On another plane, pilgrims travel by mass transport to join the throngs of vacationers in Rome, Canterbury and Jerusalem. Pilgrims are everywhere, yet the secrets of their motivations go largely unquestioned, and the thematic footpaths they walk (biblical faith, mission, miraculous healing, penitence and thanksgiving) are still unmapped for contemporary theological significance.

Taken in continuity, the work of Eliade, Sumption and the Turners can be seen to pose a challenge to contemporary practical theology concerning the nature and practice of pilgrimage. The primary focus of this challenge is in the ambivalence of modern historical and anthropological attitudes toward religious experience. The Turners' use of the category of liminal, and reference to initiation and an existential change for the pilgrim, imply *personal* motifs for the sacred. *Communitas*, on the other hand, implies the *social* quality of communion. "Pilgrimages," wrote the Turners, "are the expression of the *communitas* dimension of any society, the spontaneity of interrelatedness, the spirit which bloweth where it listeth."¹ A practical theology of pilgrimage which goes beyond historical analysis must grapple with these two categories – personal and social – and integrate them into one system.

At the heart of the Turners' thesis lies a vision of the pilgrim as someone who crosses from the limits of confining social religion to the transforming potentialities of personal faith:

A pilgrim is one who divests himself of the mundane concomitants of religion... to confront, in a special "far" milieu, the basic elements and structures of his faith in their unshielded, virgin radiance.²

There are issues of gender in this definition which are relevant to a broader discussion of "gendered" pilgrimage, and the identifications inherent in the "pilgrim gaze".³ Putting these aside for the moment, we note that the tone of this definition is essentially mystical and ecstatic. We have already seen in the Turners' thought the latent desire of the

¹ Turner and Turner, Image and Pilgrimage 32.

² Image and Pilgrimage 15.

³ The use of masculine pronouns, verbs taken from confrontation/conflict contexts, and the "virgin" feminine as both idealized and vulnerable aspect of the pilgrim goal, all belong to the field of gendered travel – see especially Eeva Jokinen and Soile Veijola, "The Disoriented Tourist", in: Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory (Chris Rojek and John Urry, eds., London: Routledge 1997) 23ff. As we have noted, the "pilgrim gaze" incorporates elements of how all voyagers balance their own emerging identity with what they "see" of the "other"; cf. Urry, The Tourist Gaze, chap. 1.

anthropologist to cast analytical objectivity to the winds, to live among the natives, to celebrate the “encounter between self as subject and self as object.”⁴ They want to see their work, not as scientific musings from a modern ivory tower of knowledge, but as “counter-cultural activity”, or even as an “underground form of Marxism.”⁵

The Turners’ categorization of pilgrimages into prototypical, archaic, medieval and modern (or anti-modern)⁶ should not be construed to mean that all of these types might not appear synchronically in a pilgrimage of the twenty-first century. In the absence of a “perspectival consensus”, themes of theological validity from one type are just as relevant to any other type.

Numerous theological themes emerge from the pages of *Image and Pilgrimage*. These include: the potentiality for change (conversion?) in the liminal (or liminoid) religious experience of pilgrimage; the escape from sin and the experience of forgiveness (equivalent of Sumption’s penitential pilgrimage); the importance of difficulty and trial (a comparison between pilgrimage and “tribal affliction rituals”); the anti-magical quality of pilgrimage; the importance of icon and person as signifier and signified (the sacramental value of pilgrimage); pilgrimage “communitas” as creating new (religious) cultures while prophetically critiquing the old; and the idea of pilgrimage as a “good work” (i.e. the moral and ethical aspect).

In the Preface to the 1978 edition, the Turners wrote that their intention was to examine “theological doctrines and popular notions which promote and sustain Christian pilgrimage.”⁷ Did they realize their intention? They focused, by their own admission, not on what motivates individual pilgrims theologically, how they behave, and what they say they believe, but rather on “institutional analysis... the structure of the values, norms, symbols, customs, roles, relationships”⁸.

There is an ambiguity here. “Relationships” of contemporary pilgrim communitas (or its lack) at a pilgrim center like Lourdes cannot be understood by simply quoting passages from a thirty-year-old history book, or by observing how “tourists and pilgrims gaily sip their wine and coffee”⁹ An element of participatory research is missing if the pilgrims do not speak for themselves, in their own words – a possibility not regarded as “scientific” methodology. The Turners write that it was their wish that “psychologists, historians and psychological anthropologists”¹⁰ will ask the “individual questions” which will put flesh on their “institutional” analysis. Their wish was granted in the form of anthropological observations of pilgrim groups, and psychological and

⁴ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, original preface, xv (xxv in paperback).

⁵ *Image and Pilgrimage* xiv.

⁶ *Image and Pilgrimage* 17-19.

⁷ *Image and Pilgrimage* xxiii.

⁸ *Image and Pilgrimage* xxiv.

⁹ *Image and Pilgrimage* 230.

¹⁰ It is significant that theologians are not on this list - an omission that is perhaps the best evidence of how the Turners saw theology as distanced from pilgrimage studies.

sociological studies of individual behavior, at shrines from Lourdes to Graceland. But, the “individual questions” here are those of the researchers, not of the pilgrims.

The Turners began their work, as we have seen, with the goal of objective analysis. In time they are embraced by the ambiguous nature of their subject, and signal a readiness to explore the uncharted realms of individual religious experience. They are following a path not only into the past (as Sumption did for the medieval period), but into the future. “Pilgrimage is vulnerable to history”;¹¹ it transcends history as well.¹²

Like the phenomenon they describe, the Turners move perceptibly away from “modernism”, and especially from the “modern” compulsion to define. One year after Image and Pilgrimage, Victor Turner openly renounced the “perspectival model” of observation in favor of the “social drama” model – essentially participatory. Here we find a serious indication of the postmodern condition, in Turner’s recognition that in anthropology, as with all disciplines, the “perspective” of a single consensual view point is an illusion. It is the participation which counts. He must have recognized the ironic similarity of contemporary descriptions of the postmodern condition (by Lyotard and others) to liminal rites of passage. The postmodern characteristics of separation, fragmentation of social norms, pluralism and relativism are large-scale social forms of Turner’s “blurring of distinctions” in liminality.¹³ Rather than seeking a unified pattern in pilgrimage motivation, Turner in his later work proposes a more “fragmented” perception: “a set of loosely integrated processes with some patterned aspects... but controlled by discrepant principles of action”.¹⁴

Demythologizing pilgrimage through anthropological discourse on “institutional analysis” does not destroy it; neither does it lead to complete understanding. In Eliade’s terms, the challenge of a “total hermeneutic” requires more than observation. But how are we to engage the symbols of the sacred when these same symbols shift their context from worship to leisure, from liminal to liminoid, from “ergic” to “ludic”, from the realm of the sacred myth to the realm of the secular holiday?¹⁵ How do we communicate about the sacred when our language has apparently lost its grammar?

“We look forward to the unsayable, not back to just dirt. Times have changed.”¹⁶

With this candid admission, Edith Turner introduced the paperback edition of Image and Pilgrimage, more than a decade after Victor Turner’s death. The major themes of

¹¹ Turner and Turner, Image and Pilgrimage 231.

¹² Cf. Eliade (Images and Symbols 33) on transcending history: “[A person] has only to listen to good music, to fall in love, or to pray, and he is out of the historical present, he re-enters the eternal present of love and religion... It has been too lightly assumed that the authenticity of an existence depends solely upon the consciousness of its own historicity... The more a consciousness is awakened, the more it transcends its own historicity.”

¹³ Turner, Process, Performance 18.

¹⁴ Process, Performance 62.

¹⁵ What the Turners call (Image and Pilgrimage 237) “the migration of signifiers from the sacred to the humanistic spheres”.

¹⁶ Image and Pilgrimage (Preface to the paperback edition xvii).

“liminality” and “communitas”, and the recognition of the power of pilgrimage as a creative and transformative social symbol, are carried forward from the medieval world with its fear of sin and divine wrath, through the modern world with its terror of social disintegration, nuclear war and ecological disaster, and into the new dreads posed by postmodernism’s measureless pluralism. Religious structures and social domains have shifted, but the sacred and renewing promises of pilgrimage still remain.

The Turners saw the open horizon of their research, and the need to renounce “knowledge” and “possession” of pilgrimage, in order to give it to future generations, even if their future seems unsure:

In our own time we see... a tendency to *re-sacralize* symbols by way of depth psychology, consciousness-raising techniques, and liturgical experiments. Here, too, the study of pilgrimage symbols has its part to play, as does the study of pilgrimage *as* a symbol. Pilgrimage has long stood for voluntaristic mobility in a rooted system. In a destabilized system, life has become one long pilgrimage, without map or sacred goal.¹⁷

“Destabilized” life and culture are the matrix of postmodernism. Practice of and discourse on pilgrimage in the postmodern era will go beyond both ancient and modern boundaries, categories and differentiation.

2. POSTMODERN RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

Many scholars are unsure what, if anything, reference to “postmodern” thought signifies. One sociologist remarks that “the signifier ‘postmodern’ is free-floating, having no connections with anything real, no minimal shared meaning.”¹⁸ A growing consensus, however, indicates certain characteristics of the times as signifying an attitude, or stance, which may be called the “postmodern” end (or stage) of modernity.¹⁹ Robin Gill, in reference to Christian ethics,²⁰ summarizes the following five traits which characterize postmodern thinking: incredulity towards meta-narratives,²¹ fragmentation, privatization, eclecticism, and moral relativism and pluralism. Gill points to the dilemma of Christian ethics in an atmosphere where moral relativism is increasingly the norm. “The problem

¹⁷ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage* 237.

¹⁸ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* 83.

¹⁹ Cf. Brian McHale, *Postmodern Fiction* (New York: Methuen 1987) 5 – “Postmodernism follows from modernism... more than it follows after modernism... Postmodernism is the posterity of modernism.”

²⁰ Robin Gill, *Moral Leadership in a Postmodern Age* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1997), 23 and 153.

²¹ This means that over-arching explanations of how and why things are the way they are can no longer claim broad credence. Examples offered by Gill include: “European Christian ethos”, “Judaean-Christian culture”, “secular rational progress”, etc. Gill (*Moral Leadership* 67) points out that even the planks of “modernism” – i.e. “autonomous rational thought and empirical demonstration” – have been deconstructed.

of the church leader in a postmodern... society is how to offer moral leadership without being able to presume a common moral framework.”²²

Common moral frameworks have gone the way of myths, and there is a strong temptation to abandon all religious discourses for lack of consensual credibility. This pessimism is countered, however, by the evident growth of non-consensual religion in contemporary society, a growth symbolized and typified by the increasing popularity of pilgrimage not only to traditional but also to “fringe” eclectic shrines. This raises a question concerning the growth of certain kinds of religious practice (rather than others) in societies which define themselves in increasingly secular terms.

In a classic study in the sociology of religion, Peter Berger wrote: “secularization has resulted in a widespread collapse of the plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality.”²³ This recognizes the crisis of religious institutions grappling with the erosion of their authority in realms now occupied by the sciences. Berger’s early view postulates not a hostile but rather a symbiotic relationship between religion and secularism, based on the thesis of a dialectical view of religion and society. For Berger, both religion and society are functions of *praxis* and *ideation*. They influence each other in both, but they are not linked through “mechanistic causality.” The irony for Berger in contemporary terms (i.e. in the late 1960s) is that the “modern secular world” is the result of processes sparked by ancient biblical ideas. “Once formed, however, this world precisely precludes the continuing efficacy of religion... Here lies the great historical irony in the relation between religion and secularization... Historically speaking, Christianity has been its own gravedigger.”²⁴

Berger’s early prognosis was that “we can assume the continuation of the secularizing trend and then proceed to ask what options this leaves for religion and theological thought.”²⁵ He then went on to outline three responses to secularization, i.e. *sectarianism*, *surrender* and *accommodation* (*‘aggiornamento’*).²⁶ His somber conclusion is that accommodation eventually leads to increasing loss of religious relevance. “The theologian who sups with [the devilry of modernity] will find his spoon getting shorter and shorter – until that last supper in which he is left alone at the table, with no spoon at all and with an empty plate.”²⁷

²² Gill, *Moral Leadership* 23.

²³ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Doubleday: Anchor Books 1967; published in the U.K. as *The Social Reality of Religion*, Penguin University Books, Middlesex, England 1973) 127.

²⁴ *Sacred Canopy* 128-129.

²⁵ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumour of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Penguin Books 1969) 31.

²⁶ Berger describes *sectarianism* as the creation of a “countercommunity” (or a kind of ghetto) of “cognitive deviance”; *surrender* as the translation of all religious affirmations “into terms appropriate to... modernity”; *aggiornamento* as a bargaining with modern thought, surrendering some religious items, retaining others.

²⁷ *A Rumour of Angels* 37.

In a later work,²⁸ Berger *et al.* attribute the disruptive influence of secularization to the modern phenomenon of *pluralization*, which forces the individual into contact with others who do not believe as he or she does, and thus “weakens the hold of religion on society and on the individual.”²⁹ This is an intriguing thesis in the context of our study, as it assumes that “religion” is a particular and uniform denominational religious commitment, and that “faith” is, normally, a “socially given” faith. When this “taken-for-granted status of religious meanings” is challenged by pluralization (i.e. the encounter with the “other”), then the individual is plunged into a lonely condition of suffering, specifically a “homelessness... a metaphysical loss of ‘home’”.³⁰ As a result, for Berger, secularization is ultimately perceived as a threat to “the age-old function of religion – to provide ultimate certainty amid the exigencies of the human condition.”³¹

A more recent, and contrasting, consideration of the same topic is offered by Stark and Bainbridge, in their study of contemporary religion in America.³² They see secularization, not as an outside force bent on destroying religion, but as an essential element of the “economy of religion” – by which religions are constantly renewed. “Secularization... is the primary dynamic of religious economies, a self-limiting process that engenders revival...”³³

Does secularization result in the traumatic loss of faith’s certainties, or does it catalyze a dynamic of religious renewal? This question is relevant to pilgrimage, particularly in its liminal role as mediator between “one” and “many”, “self” and “other”, “church” and “world”. Understanding the actual processes of secularization will help us position pilgrimage rightly in its contemporary religious context. We have opened with a preliminary definition of pilgrimage as religious journey – in Eliade’s terms a mythic and initiatory journey. Moving into anthropological studies, we then saw that the essentially social motivation of pilgrimage in medieval praxis can be contrasted with the quest for personal transformation and/or individual fulfillment through incorporation into the Turnerian *communitas*. We now proceed to a realization of postmodern pilgrimage as enacted within – and as a response to – a primarily lonely and “homeless” secular culture. Here our understanding of religion will need refinement to accommodate the paradox of a *de-constructive* secular dynamic giving birth to a *re-constructive* religious revival. This is all the more pertinent to our thesis when we consider that pilgrimage itself is now commonly seen as a religious response to a “secular dynamic” – essentially a form of tourism. We will need to consider “secular” phenomena – like “transitional” phenomena in initiation ceremonies – as being in their way conducive rather than hostile to the experience of the sacred.

²⁸ Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness (Penguin Books 1973).

²⁹ The Homeless Mind 76.

³⁰ The Homeless Mind 77.

³¹ The Homeless Mind 166.

³² Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Culture Formation (Berkeley: University of California Press 1985).

³³ Stark and Bainbridge, The Future of Religion 430.

“Secular” means simply “of the world”. This would seem to preclude the “supernatural”. The secular/supernatural dichotomy is, however, an oversimplification, resting as it does on the either/or of autonomous rationalism – no longer as widely invoked as it once was. It must now be asked whether postmodern theology can limit its attention to theism. Stark and Bainbridge insist that “a religion lacking supernatural assumptions is no religion at all,”³⁴ and that “efforts to create nonsupernatural ‘religions’ will all fail for want of that vital resource that always has been the *sine qua non* of religions: the gods.”³⁵ Gill, on the other hand, while firmly supporting a “commitment to transcendence” in the ethical debate with a secular and pluralist world,³⁶ has reservations about such typical western definitions of religion as “the invocation of the supernatural” and “belief in spiritual beings.”³⁷ Stark and Bainbridge, in quoting Frazer’s two elements of religion: “belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them”,³⁸ would also provoke a protest from Eliade.³⁹ *Pacem* Stark and Bainbridge (who follow Durkheim here), the sacred, while transcendent, cannot be fenced off as the domain of “the gods” (or “God”) alone. The universal appearance of mysticism, participatory and sacramental liturgical ritual, and pilgrimages of all sorts (other, perhaps, than penitential) all argue against a view of religion as simply an effort to “please God” (or “gods”).

Stark and Bainbridge are motivated in their “supernatural” definition of religion by the need to distinguish “church”, “sect” and “cult” (and their various supernatural discourses or assumptions) from other groups that do not make supernatural claims and therefore are not “religious”. For the purposes of pilgrimage, however, the important distinction is not so much between “church” and “world” as between “church” and “sect” (“cults” as understood by Stark and Bainbridge are, I believe, the subject of a different kind of study). Whatever the supernatural assumptions, “church” and “sect” are clearly related to each other, and derive from and respond to each other in a social matrix. It is this relational quality which is the religious “home” of pilgrimage, and the source of its creative and ambiguous role.

The social analysis of religious structures adopted by Stark and Bainbridge has its origins in the work of Ernst Troeltsch, who speaks of three types of religious institution: “church”, “sect” and “mysticism” (the last of these was modified to “cult” by Stark and Bainbridge, in a demonstration of their views on the limits of religion). For Troeltsch, the relationship between “church” and “sect” was a dialectic of creative tension. “Church” is an “overwhelmingly conservative” structure, accepting and stabilizing the existing social order, and eventually compromising with the State and losing “the radical individualism of the Gospel... its radical fellowship of love, uniting all in the personal

³⁴ Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* 3. Is Buddhism not considered here a religion?

³⁵ *The Future of Religion* 8.

³⁶ Gill, *Moral Leadership* 29-30.

³⁷ *Moral Leadership* 108, quoting Wilson and Tylor.

³⁸ *The Future of Religion* 5.

³⁹ Eliade implies that theism and monotheism are responses to the “terror of history”, including the loss of the archaic religious experience of mythic “archetypes and repetition”. Cf. *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 161-162.

centre of life.” A “sect”, on the other hand, is a small group, a “voluntary community”, aspiring to inward perfection, aiming at a direct “personal fellowship between the members”, and by its nature reclaiming the “original radicalism of the Christian ideal.”⁴⁰

The implications of Troeltsch’s “church”/“sect” dichotomy for pilgrimage theology are now clear. Turner’s observation of *communitas*, and the social anti-structure of pilgrim groups, is essentially a description of a sect-like phenomenon, in the religious sense posited by Troeltsch. The mobile identity of the pilgrim is formed in response to, and as a renewal of, the more “stable”, conservative, and therefore compromised “church” (the familiar and ordinary religious context) out of which the pilgrim moves into “liminal” pilgrimage “*communitas*”. The theological ramifications of this insight include the conclusion that pilgrimage is to be understood as an aspect of the “moral function of religion”, for Troeltsch’s “sect” is not simply a dissident splinter group from orthodoxy, but rather a prophetic voice challenging church society to self-examination and new growth.

The theological foundations of postmodern religion, then, include a paradoxical element: the increasing discovery of sacred activity in the “worldly” (“secular”), the “non-churched” and the sectarian. This is not really surprising, considering the direction of postmodernism away from differentiation toward pluralism and the “merging” of realms formerly kept distinct. Postmodernism has been termed “a regime of signification whose fundamental structuring trait is ‘de-differentiation’”.⁴¹ Although sociologists tend to see this breakdown in distinctiveness of separate spheres as relating to social groupings (“high” and “low” culture, “scholarly” and “popular” pursuits, etc.), a theologian will find the phenomenon of “de-differentiation” just as readily in religious spheres, where it will pertain to a cross-fertilization of belief and practice.

“Sociology of Religion” is a typically postmodern field. The increasingly mutual relationship between theology and sociology has been illuminated recently in work on Christian ethics.⁴² It is no longer axiomatic for these two disciplines to maintain an aloofness from each other. On the contrary, as Gill points out, they share essential methodological and conceptual similarities. Not only are sociological tools now widely

⁴⁰ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (first published as *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, 1911); trans. Olive Wyon, vol. 1 (London: George Allen & Unwin 1931) 331-343. For a convenient summary, cf. Robin Gill (ed.), *Theology and Sociology: A Reader* (New York: Cassell 1996) 56-68.

⁴¹ S. Lash, *Sociology of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge 1990) 11 – cited by Urry (*The Tourist Gaze* 84), who refers to the ‘structural differentiation’ of modernism, and the de-differentiation of postmodernism, where “there is a breakdown in the distinctiveness of... spheres of social activity.”

⁴² E.g. R. Gill, *Christian Ethics in Secular Worlds* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1991). The overlapping of theological and sociological discourses gives rise to some remarkable statements, which in the present atmosphere of rapprochement barely seem to cause a ripple: “Reflection on social processes can know nothing whatever about God. Nevertheless God is meaningful... through word and image, and these images are the measure of transcendence. Signs are the means of grace: God is known in the making of signs.” (D Martin, *The Breaking of the Image: A Sociology of Christian Theory and Practice*; London: Blackwell 1980, quoted by Gill, 34).

used in theology (especially in New Testament studies⁴³), theological texts are now increasingly analyzed and critiqued by sociologists.⁴⁴

It is hardly surprising, then, to find, concurrently with the work of Turner and Turner, a steadily increasing sociological interest in pilgrimage, paralleling the appearance of pilgrimage motifs in psychology.⁴⁵ As Sumption tells us about a different era:

There was a vogue of mystical alternatives to pilgrimage, inspired by allegorical writings which likened the whole of human life to a pilgrimage... 'We ben pilgrims when that we ben born', a Lollard pamphlet, the *Lanterne of Light*, proclaimed...⁴⁶

Today, however, this idea of "life as pilgrimage" does not lead to a rejection of external pilgrimage to Santiago or Jerusalem. If anything, the metaphorical use of pilgrimage is encouraging its more literal traditional counterpart. Turner writes that "pilgrimages, like many other liminal or 'underground' ... manifestations of the religious... are surfacing once again as significant, visible, social phenomena, just as they surfaced in the past in periods of destructure and rapid social change."⁴⁷ That surfacing is not only in the form of journeys to traditional shrines but of a general ideational mobility between social and religious structures, as individuals seek solace, inspiration, meaning, faith and identity in troubled times. Pilgrimage is becoming culturally visible; it is on the move as a "sign" of postmodern society, secular and religious alike.

3. THE TOURIST/PILGRIM

In 1976, Dean MacCannell published *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*.⁴⁸ The remarkable thesis of this book would have an impact on pilgrimage studies as significant in its own way as that of the Turners' *Image and Pilgrimage*, which appeared two years later. Writing from a sociological point of view, MacCannell set out to discover an ethnography of "modern" (or, in fact, postmodern) culture. This project was accomplished, as he describes it, with the unwitting aid of the millions of contemporary tourists who travel the world, perceiving and creating a cultural discourse consonant with pluralism, de-differentiation and eclecticism.⁴⁹ The role of the tourist in this world

⁴³ An outstanding recent example is Bruce Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London: Routledge 1996).

⁴⁴ Gill, *Christian Ethics* 35.

⁴⁵ A popular recent example of the psychological pilgrimage is M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (London: Random House Arrow Books 1990), first published (like Turner and Turner) in 1978.

⁴⁶ Sumption 300.

⁴⁷ Turner, "Center Out There" 196.

⁴⁸ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken 1976).

⁴⁹ "I saw in the collective expeditions of tourists a multibillion dollar research project designed, in part, around the same task I had set myself: an ethnography of modernity" (*The Tourist* 4). The importance of ethnography is likened by MacCannell to that of psychoanalysis (174) – an intriguing comparison in light of postmodern emphasis on *narrative history*.

is seen as a radical (if sometimes absurd) response to, or rejection of, “modernity’s most salient feature: its chaotic fragmentation, its differentiation.”⁵⁰ It is the sense of alienation from their own work and home that sends the “modern” (postmodern) tourists on their quests for authenticity and integrity in the work place and in the home environment of “the others”.⁵¹ These “others” are more than simply “strangers”; they represent “self-discovery through a complex and sometimes arduous search for an Absolute Other.”⁵² Throughout The Tourist, MacCannell uses the contrasting terms “industrial man” and “modern post-industrial man” – the latter more often than not in contexts that are today associated with postmodernism.⁵³ When he became aware of this, he was careful to reject fashionable negative stances toward postmodernism, and emphasized instead that

...postmodernism and tourism are only the positive form of our collective inarticulateness in the face of the horrors of modernity... The need to be *postmodern* can thus be read as the same as the desire to be a tourist: both seek to empower *modern* culture and its conscience...⁵⁴

Tourists then, for MacCannell, are contemporary, postmodern, pilgrims. They are dedicated, not to the pursuit of artificial “pseudo-events”,⁵⁵ but to the equivalent of a quest of mythic proportions – the search for meaning and authenticity. In this, MacCannell reverses the traditional abhorrence of and disdain for tourists (especially by other tourists) - summed up in the dictum: “I am a traveller, you are a tourist, he is a tripper.”⁵⁶ MacCannell’s validation of tourism as religious experience, like pilgrimage and rites of passage, is evident from the outset, when he describes tourist attractions as “precisely analogous to the religious symbolism of primitive peoples.”⁵⁷

The common ground between MacCannell and Turner is considerable. Ironically, their works are cited by one writer as emblematic of contrasting views:

⁵⁰ MacCannell, The Tourist 46.

⁵¹ “Modernity is transforming labor into cultural productions attended by tourists and sightseers who are moved by the universality of work relations – *not* as this is represented through their own work (from which they are alienated), but as it is revealed to them at their leisure through the displayed work of others.” The Tourist 36.

⁵² The Tourist 5.

⁵³ Recognizing the advent of postmodernism as coinciding with the original publication of his book, he wrote in the introduction to the 1989 edition: “Much of the material that would eventually be analyzed under the heading “postmodern” already put in an appearance in The Tourist.” In her forward to the 1999 edition, Lucy Lippard writes that MacCannell “identifies much of the quicksand trod by postmodernism a decade later.”

⁵⁴ Introduction to the 1989 edition, xvi and xix.

⁵⁵ MacCannell’s chief argument is with Daniel Boorstin (The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, New York: Harper and Row 1961), whose thesis was that tourists are passive sightseers who satisfy themselves with “pseudo-events”. Boorstin’s attitude is shared by others, including Claude Levi-Strauss, who wrote: “Travel and traveller are two things I loathe,” but added, “and yet here I am, all set to tell the story of my expeditions.”

⁵⁶ Keith Waterhouse, Theory and Practice of Travel (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1989) 18.

⁵⁷ The Tourist 2.

In the sociological literature on tourism, a contrast is found between authors like MacCannell..., who conceive of tourists as serious seekers of authenticity, and others who, [like] V. Turner, see them as 'ludic' (i.e. playful) pilgrims... In fact, both kinds of tourists are empirically observable.⁵⁸

The "contrast" between pilgrim and tourist is here understood in terms of Turner's crucial distinction, already familiar, between "liminal" and "liminoid". "Liminal", it will be remembered, refers to rites which are "ergic" – (i.e. necessary and obligatory "sacred work" in the context of archaic tribal society); "liminoid" refers to optional activities (pilgrimage included, but also liturgical worship) which are "passage-like" and also often "ludic" (i.e. connected with leisure – and thus "playful"). The Turners themselves wrote that "a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim half a tourist", and "modern pilgrimage is blended with tourism".⁵⁹ Turner recognized and accepted the implied ambiguity, which is, after all, characteristic of the liminal stage of initiation: the initiands are ambivalent, masked, *incognito*. In pilgrimage, this "masking" is not required or mandated by society; it is entirely optional. Since the tourist also leaves the familiar by choice while essentially travelling in disguise (with bermuda shorts or bikinis as "costume", and with camcorder "masks"),⁶⁰ the pilgrim is today visibly – empirically - indistinguishable from the tourist. To the objection that the pilgrim has a different "intention", MacCannell would now add that pilgrim and tourist are alike *especially* in intention: the tourist encounters the "attraction" as the exact equivalent of the pilgrim's "sacred goal".

The full consequences of applying the category of "liminoid" to pilgrimage are now becoming evident. Turner did not explore the theological implications of this application. He did, however, give much attention to the distinctive traits of "work", "play" and "leisure" – all essential also to the definitions of tourist. "Optation" (free choice – implying intention) certainly characterized the earliest Christian pilgrimages (Egeria's in the late fourth century as a good example); "obligation" developed through medieval penitential and judicial pilgrimage. In time, pilgrimage was forbidden in some traditions, but then returned to "optation" and "intentionality" again. Sacred value might be assigned to journeys either of optation or of obligation, depending on whether one sees intention or obedience as the greater virtue in a particular historical context. Such assignation would be superficial, however, just as it is superficial to call tourists "serious" or "playful". Because the quest for authenticity and truth is a shared quest, in terms of MacCannell's thesis, tourists *are* pilgrims.⁶¹ As Archbishop Runcie put it: "In

⁵⁸ Erik Cohen, "The study of touristic images of native people: mitigating the stereotype of a stereotype", in D. G. Pearce and R. W. Butler (eds.), *Tourism Research: Critiques and Challenges* (London: Routledge 1993) 42.

⁵⁹ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage* 20 and 240.

⁶⁰ For reflections on disguise, appearance and pretence in tourism, and the link between tourism and play, cf. James W. Lett, "Ludic and Liminoid Aspects of Charter Yacht Tourism in the Caribbean", in *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol. 10, No. 1 (1983) 35ff.

⁶¹ Put another way: "If one strips the language of frivolity and gravity from the concepts of tourism and pilgrimage, how can they be distinguished?" (Bryan Pfaffenberger, "Serious Pilgrims and Frivolous Tourists: the Chimera of Tourism in the Pilgrimages of Sri Lanka", in *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1983) 61). Cf. Nelson H. H. Graburn, "The Anthropology of Tourism", in *Annals of Tourism*

the middle ages [*sic*] people were tourists because of their religion, whereas now they are tourists because tourism is their religion.”⁶² This is not to say that tourists have no religion, but that tourism, when properly observed, reveals the “secular” dynamic (following Stark and Bainbridge) of religious experience.⁶³

MacCannell, in fact, opens his thesis with a reprise of Erving Goffman’s equation between tour and ritual.⁶⁴ Importantly, though, while Goffman sees modern guided tours as “extensive ceremonial agendas involving long strings of obligatory rites”, MacCannell points out that “under conditions of high social integration, the ritual attitude may lose all appearance of coercive externality... Sightseeing is a ritual, but perfunctory has become voluntary.”⁶⁵ This is a crucial observation. The ritual (“sacred”) nature of the tourist’s journey is not visible to an observer, yet it may nonetheless remain an important motivation in the experience. In fact the “ritual attitude” is identified by MacCannell as the invisible link between the beginning of the tourist’s voyage and the goal of that voyage – i.e. the “sight”.

“Tourism,” writes MacCannell, “is a ritual performed to the differentiations of society.” Although the tourist need not be consciously aware of this, “the thing he is going to see is society and its works.” The tourist attraction – the “sight” – is not a static “thing” to be observed and photographed. It is a “cultural experience” involving the conscious or unconscious collaboration of many factors. These include: 1. A model (representation or ideal version of the experience); 2. An influence (a response, a change in feeling evoked by the model); 3. A medium (something that will connect the model to the influence – like a group, sign, or loudspeaker); 4. An audience (tourists who stand around the model and are influenced by it/her/him); 5. A producer (director, agent, guide) who stands behind the model and directs the medium. All of these taken together are what MacCannell calls a “cultural production”. It is important to MacCannell’s thesis that a cultural production be recognized as more than a “pseudo-event; it is “authentic” as well as “staged”. In fact, a “cultural production” is in many ways similar

Research 10, No. 1 (1983) 9-33: “[A tourist is] ‘a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change’ (quoted from V. Smith, Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism (Philadelphia: Univ. of Philadelphia Press 1977)... If tourism has the quality of a leisure ritual that takes place outside of everyday life and involves travel, is it not identical to pilgrimage?” This question is now *de rigueur* for each anthropologist studying tourism and pilgrimage; it is by now difficult to determine which is the prototype and which the copy.

⁶² Dr. Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, *Observer* 11 (December 1988).

⁶³ I have already quoted the Turners’ dictum (Image and Pilgrimage 20) “A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist. Even when people bury themselves in anonymous crowds on beaches, they are seeking an almost sacred... mode of *communitas*”. More recently, Graburn wrote (“The Anthropology of Pilgrimage” 15,29): “Tourism is a ritual expression – individual or societal – of deeply held values about health, freedom, nature, and self-improvement, a re-creation ritual which parallels pilgrimage... Tourist behavior and aspirations are direct indicators of what is significant and meaningful in people’s lives”.

⁶⁴ Cf. Erving Goffman, Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order (New York: Basic Books 1971) and Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings (New York: Free Press 1963). Goffman’s definition of ritual is: “perfunctory, conventionalized act through which an individual portrays his respect and regard for some object of ultimate value” (cf. The Tourist 42). For a brief summary of Goffman’s *interaction ritual* theory, cf. R. Collins, Sociological Insight 53ff.

⁶⁵ The Tourist 42-43.

to a pilgrimage. It may be argued that a pilgrimage *is* a cultural production, as well as a personal spiritual experience. The personal experiences of the pilgrim are in fact occasioned and conditioned by models, influences, mediums and producers of pilgrimage events.

A tourist attraction is exactly that – an attraction. It exerts a powerful pull and a transforming influence on the tourist, and establishes an essential rapport linking tourists with each other:

Participation in a cultural production... can carry the individual to the frontiers of his being where his emotions may enter into communion with the emotions of others....⁶⁶ Society is renewed in the heart of the individual through warm, open, unquestioned relations, characterized by a near absence of alienation.⁶⁷

The profoundly social nature of the tourist attraction is repeatedly emphasized by MacCannell. “No one can ‘participate’ in his own life; he can only participate in the lives of others.”⁶⁸ This urge to be in communion with the “other” in a “cultural experience” is enhanced by the feeling of alienation which the tourist feels is his or her normal lot “back home”. It is also marked by a sense of an almost sacred duty to transcend the “craziness of mere distinctions... [and] explore beyond the frontiers of traditional prejudice.”⁶⁹

The similarities between MacCannell’s “participation in cultural production” and Turner’s “*communitas*” are evident. The ideas that link them, briefly put, are those ideas associated with “liminoid” states, especially “play” and “flow”. “Play” was recognized by Durkheim as a mark of ritual, which exhibits “effervescence, pleasure, games... all that recreates the spirit that has been fatigued by the too great slavishness of daily work.”⁷⁰ The classic definition of “play”, found in Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*, still rings true:

Play is a free activity, standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life... absorbing the player intensely and utterly... [having] no material interest, and no profit... with its own proper boundaries of time and space... promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to... stress their difference from the common world.⁷¹

⁶⁶ MacCannell, *The Tourist* 26.

⁶⁷ *The Tourist* 55.

⁶⁸ *The Tourist* 106. MacCannell is also responding here to Boorstin’s depiction of the tourist as demanding “pseudo-events” and avoiding any real contact with real people.

⁶⁹ *The Tourist* 40.

⁷⁰ E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, quoted by Graburn, “The Anthropology of Tourism” 12.

⁷¹ J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon 1950), quoted by J. Lett, “Ludic and Liminoid Aspects” in *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol. 10, No. 1 (1983). 40; cf. also D. B. Harned (*Theology and the Arts*; Westminster Press 1966, 24-25) who emphasizes that play is

“Play” also includes elements of the surprising and “crazy”; it is something like an elaborate (and enjoyable) ritualization of normal processes, which are now presented as if they are novel and remarkable.⁷²

The achieving of something surprising, unexpected or unimaginable, so essential to play, is also a trait of Csikszentmihalyi’s category of “flow”,⁷³ which for Turner was analogous in some way to the unity of “communitas”.⁷⁴ For our purposes, “flow” can be summarized as “the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement... experienced in play and sport... and religious ritual... made possible by a centering of attention... and often a set of rules.”⁷⁵ Because of their theological implications for pilgrim experience, Turner’s musings on flow should be quoted here:

What I call communitas has something of a “flow” quality, but it may arise, and often does arise, spontaneously and unanticipated – it does not need rules to trigger it off. In theological language it is sometimes a matter of “grace” rather than “law”. Again, “flow” is experienced within an individual, whereas communitas at its inception is evidently between or among individuals... “Flow”... is already in the domain of what I have called “structure”; communitas is always pre-structural... But “flow”, for me, seems to be one of the ways in which “structure” may be transformed or “liquefied” (like the famed martyr’s blood) into communitas again.⁷⁶

If there are so many distinctions between “communitas” and “flow”, why does Turner make so much of the “flow” aspect of pilgrimage? The answer lies in the potential of “flow” to facilitate the emergence of “anti-structure” out of “structure”, to transform a “church” by the radical movement of a pilgrim “sect”, to enliven the individual with a

“voluntary”, has an element of “conflict or tension”, and “calls us away from ordinary life into a realm with rules all its own.”

⁷² Two “playful” examples – “galumphing” (“a patterned elaboration or complication of a path towards a goal”) and “noise” (“a random component of communication that does not relate to the pattern”) – are offered by Stephen Nahmanovitch Miller (“The Playful, The Crazy, and the Nature of Pretence”; *Rice University Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer 1974) 36 and 47). Miller stresses (48) the hermeneutics of play: “Play comes... often in the form of re-interpreting something familiar so that you make it novel.” Citing the basic human need for “noise” (novelty), Miller here makes an intriguing reference to the “gendering” aspects of travel: “You can make a noise by introducing something from outside the system. The ubiquity of this principle is seen in sexual reproduction (for species)... and exploration (for individuals).”

⁷³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: HarperPerennial 1990).

⁷⁴ In *Image and Pilgrimage* (137-139), the Turners describe the “egoless state” of the ascetic practices at Lough Derg in terms of “flow”.

⁷⁵ Turner, *Process, Performance* 154.

⁷⁶ Turner, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology”, in *Rice University Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer 1974) 89. This essay provoked the comment: “It is impossible for Professor Turner to write anything that is entirely without merit, although he may disguise the meritorious part... with a barrage of verbiage.” (J Buettner-Janusch, “Commentary” in the same volume, 94).

sense of “creative participation” in the lives of others, who had been strangers. For Turner, “flow” (similar to “play”) is the essential charisma of pilgrimage.

Central to MacCannell’s thesis of “touristic authenticity” is the conviction that people subjected to the narrow horizons of “industrial” life - with its highly specialized forms of mechanized labor - suffer a loss of happiness and identity, which in turn compels them to seek elsewhere. Specialization marks the industrial context, while broad horizons characterize the “post-industrial” (i.e. postmodern) mind, which is capable of the courageous choice for a culture with significance.⁷⁷ The cultural counterpoints to the mind-numbing mechanisms of the industrial labor ethic include “music, sports, church and political scandal” – in other words: *leisure*.⁷⁸ Modernity, for MacCannell, has deconstructed the leisure class entirely, distributing to *everyone* – not just to the very rich - the invaluable asset of access to cultural productions, not only those contained in theaters but more importantly those available to the “tourist gaze” in other contexts. The perception of one’s own mechanical work as repulsive and one’s own home life as meaningless combines with the powerful attraction of a distant opportunity to witness “others”, who appear to enjoy their work and to be at home with their authenticity. The result is that “leisure”, “travel”, “meaning”, “authenticity” and “culture” become nearly synonymous.

With the insights derived from MacCannell and Csikszentmihalyi, the ambiguity of the pilgrimage process reaches new heights. Pilgrimage is a sacred journey, a rite of passage, but since it is not imposed by a religious structure it is “liminoid”, not “liminal”. Pilgrimage enters fully into the common human experience of leisure, tourism included. It is not only sacred and existentially transforming (like initiation), but challenging, enjoyable, even playful (like “flow”). Yet, as for Egeria in the fourth century, suffering still accompanies the pilgrim, along with the joy of achieving one’s *desiderium* - the heart’s desire. An effort is needed, a threshold must be crossed. The intentions of the pilgrim and the tourist may be existentially the same, but they are not entirely “ludic”. There is something else at work here. Pilgrims are responding, not to advertisement or whim, but to an inner compulsion as strong as any social or religious obligation.

MacCannell’s tourist is engaged in a quest for “real life”. “Modern man has been condemned to look elsewhere, everywhere, for his authenticity.”⁷⁹ That search is no laughing matter, however enjoyable the outward journey may be. For in the impossible search for his or her own reality in the “real life” of others, the tourist experiences a great obstacle. The reality he or she seeks is not accessible. It is hidden, more surely than any sacred relic or icon, in a “back region”. The “attraction” which is advertised as

⁷⁷ The positive example cited (*The Tourist* 34) is from Lewis Mumford’s description of Albert Schweitzer as a man who sacrificed specialization in any particular field (there were several in which he excelled) for the sake of expanding “the significance of his life as a whole.”

⁷⁸ *The Tourist* 36; MacCannell adopts not only the title of his book but the basic social theory of leisure from Thorstein Veblen’s 1899 work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: American Library 1963).

⁷⁹ *The Tourist* 41.

authentic is often only a “marker” where the authentic has once been. Day by day, the host culture creates a layered environment of “markers” designed to attract tourists and at the same time prevent them from invading the “real life” of the hosts. It is not the gorgeous view, the theme park, the Eiffel Tower, or the Dome of the Rock, that inspires the tourist’s voyage, but the hope of being engaged in the real life of the host’s “back stage”, the true context of authenticity. But, of course, “what is being shown to tourists is not the ... back stage... Rather, it is a staged back region, a kind of living museum.”⁸⁰

The concept of “staged authenticity” is an important contribution to travel theory in general, and must raise questions about pilgrimage in particular. Is a pilgrim motivated by the quest for the “back regions” of spiritual encounter? Are these regions at all accessible, or is the pilgrim limited to “front regions” which are decorated or “totally organized to look like “back regions”?”⁸¹ To what extent are pilgrim shrines, or even pilgrim roads (like the well marked pilgrims’ way to Santiago or the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem) themselves “staged back regions” of a religious nature? How will this social process insight affect the way pilgrims interact with and derive inspiration from a shrine or pilgrim way?

MacCannell’s most poignant description of modern culture, and of the dilemma of the pilgrim/tourist, is this image of someone entrapped in the voluntary journey toward the “back region” of authenticity, moved by the best of intentions – the desire to meet the really “other”:

Once tourists have entered touristic space, there is no way out for them so long as they press their search for authenticity.⁸²

Ludic aspects aside (or included), Turner’s pilgrim is as serious as MacCannell’s tourist; no more and no less. Both are on an ambiguous journey. The difference between them does not lie with their intentions, which are in any case often unknown to themselves.⁸³ Rather, the important difference lies in the nature of the “center” of their quest – the “sacred” for the pilgrim, the “authentic” for the tourist. Turner’s conviction is that the pilgrim finds the “Center Out There” in the very act of journeying to the sacred shrine, leaving a familiar home, passing through a liminoid state, encountering the gradually sacralized environs of the shrine, and finally being embraced in *communitas* with other pilgrims in the symbols of the shrine itself. The pilgrim has witnessed the birth of a new religious culture which will breath life into the old church, parish or family of faith. This optimistic synopsis of the pilgrimage enterprise is one of the aspects of Turner’s theory most challenged by empirical study.

MacCannell in 1976 was much less optimistic for his postmodern pilgrim/tourist. While championing the tourist as the “modern pilgrim”, he knows that the quest for the

⁸⁰ MacCannell, *The Tourist* 99.

⁸¹ *The Tourist* 102.

⁸² *The Tourist* 106.

⁸³ “The tourist remains mystified as to his true motives, his role in the construction of modernity. He thinks he is going out for his own enjoyment.” *The Tourist* 178.

“authentic other” is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible. “Real life” is hidden behind more and more “staged authenticity”. Each “production” promises access to the back regions, but the promise is never kept. If it were, the “authentic” hosts would be soon crowded out of their homes, to become postmodern pilgrims, if involuntary ones, themselves.

Over twenty years on, in his epilogue to the 1999 edition of *The Tourist*, MacCannell offers a mature evaluation of the state of the tourist quest. The note of warning is still audible in his description of the cynical commercialization of the touristic field by corporate tourism conglomerates. “Reproduction of the past, of nature, and of other cultures is motivated by the need to control the desire for ‘otherness’ and to charge admission for the satisfaction of this desire.”⁸⁴ There is also a sober understanding of the long-term entrapment of the contemporary individual in a meaningless life and in the elusive dynamic of “relief” for tourists who “travel at great cost to remote destinations that are no different from where they live and work in a kind of imbecilic literalization of ‘mobility’.”⁸⁵

In the final analysis, however, MacCannell is true to his vision of the tourist as a seeker and creator (usually unconsciously) of culture. It is primarily a human search for “other” human beings as significant and in some way precious that motivates tourists, not the urge to “possess” the experience of some distant famous place or its “markers”. In theological terms, it is the sacramental fellowship of pilgrims that makes the journey sacred, not the shrine or its functions. In fact, MacCannell adds these reflections to his earlier concept of “sight sacralization” – the process by which a touristic attraction takes on magnetism and worth:

The place became something more than a spatial coordinate... It became, in addition, the locus of an urgent desire to share – an intimate connection between one stranger and another, or one generation to another, through the local object. It is the ‘you have to see this,’ or ‘taste this,’ or ‘feel this’ that is the originary moment in the touristic relation, which is also the basis for a certain kind of human solidarity.⁸⁶

4. FORGING A PILGRIMAGE PHENOMENOLOGY

MacCannell’s thesis of touristic authenticity revolutionized travel theory, and it has had its critics. Already in 1979, Erik Cohen challenged MacCannell’s positive generalization of the touristic experience, with the claim that it was based on very selective observations of tourists who were mostly young and ‘postmodern’.⁸⁷ Rather

⁸⁴ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 1999 edition (University of California Press) 198.

⁸⁵ *The Tourist*, 1999 edition, 200.

⁸⁶ *The Tourist*, 1999 edition, 203.

⁸⁷ Erik Cohen, “A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences”, *Sociology: The Journal of the British Sociological Association*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan. 1979) 180.

than advocating a return to the negative view of Boorstin *et al.*, Cohen proposes a more radical phenomenology of the touristic experience, based on an acknowledgement that different travellers have different motivations. In this context, he reintroduces Eliade's concept of 'center' as a point of reference for all travel, secular and religious alike. 'Center' is here understood in E. Shils' broader social sense as "the charismatic nexus of [a society's] supreme, ultimate moral values."⁸⁸

Of all possible social centers (political, religious, cultural), the focus of Cohen's thesis will be the individual's 'spiritual' center, symbolizing ultimate meanings for that individual in the context of a particular society. This particular social center is not 'sacred' or even 'religious' *by definition*. Further, individuals have differing attitudes toward their given spiritual social 'center', ranging from total conformity to complete rejection ('decentralization'). Cohen suggests that "traditional pilgrimage" requires a "spiritual social center" which is a "religious center" (not just a cultural or political one), and also requires movement ('journey') *toward* that religious center. In other words, the pilgrim travels ever closer to the ultimate values of the pilgrim's world (as defined by the religious form of social 'center' that symbolizes those values). "Modern tourism", by contrast, entails "a movement *away* from the spiritual, cultural or even religious centre of one's 'world', into its periphery, toward the centres of other cultures and societies."⁸⁹ It should be emphasized that 'center' here denotes a social category of values – it is a moral, not a geographical or theological term, and does not necessarily refer to a belief system, a particular organization, a church or a shrine. A pilgrim may leave his or her parish to travel to a distant desert and still be seeking the 'center'. A tourist, on the other hand, may join thousands of others flocking to the hub of a great entertainment facility like Disneyland and still be "getting away" from the 'center'. What Cohen emphasizes is the importance of the 'Center In Here', in contrast to Turner's 'Center Out There'. In this sense, according to Cohen, pilgrimage is 'morally centripetal', while tourism is 'morally centrifugal'.

Cohen's five modes of touristic experience – recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential - are balanced between the completely centrifugal and the completely centripetal. These five modes develop the distinctions between 'this tourist' and 'that tourist' which never surface sufficiently in MacCannell's general scheme. Most importantly, the modes indicate the decisive role of *intention* as the most salient characteristic in the tourist/pilgrim continuum of experience.

At the recreational end of the continuum is the stereotyped tourist seeking Boorstin's 'pseudo-events'. Here too, Cohen avoids judgmental attitudes, acknowledging that the appeal of recreational tourism lies exactly in its entertainment and recreational value; in this sense the tourist gets exactly what he or she looks for. As a development of this theme, the diversionary mode is adopted by tourists wanting not only rest but actual escape from the alienating routines imposed by the contingencies of their respective social centers. Cohen sees recreational tourism as "meaningful" in that it provides

⁸⁸ Cohen, "Phenomenology" 180, quoting E. Shils, "Center and Periphery", in *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago & London: Univ. of Chicago Press 1975) 3-16.

⁸⁹ "Phenomenology" 183.

renewal of energy for a return to the 'center'; diversionary tourism however is "meaningless" since it is "center-less".⁹⁰

It is in the modes of experiential, experimental and existential tourism that Cohen sees parallels with MacCannell's "touristic consciousness... motivated by the desire for authentic experience."⁹¹ Cohen clarifies the context of these modes by stating that "the search for authentic experiences is essentially a religious quest"⁹² – an important bridging concept for establishing a "secular dynamic" for contemporary pilgrimage. Whether or not we accept this equation, it is important to observe that economic and pleasurable/recreational factors recede into the background and do not play any part in the discussion of tourists' motivations here.

In the context of experiential tourism, Cohen makes some remarks comparing pilgrimage with tourism at this level. Most importantly, he contrasts the vicarious and therefore *aesthetic* experience of the tourist with the participatory and therefore *religious* experience of the pilgrim, "fully involved in and committed to the beliefs and values symbolized by the centre."⁹³ This crucial – but arguable – distinction between vicarious and participatory must be taken into account in any serious contemporary phenomenology of pilgrimage.

From the standpoint of pilgrimage studies, the most original insight in Cohen's analysis is his identification of pilgrimage with a particular form of existential tourism. Here the tourist crosses a threshold of commitment to the life-way and cultural/religious context of a 'different world' – what Cohen calls an 'elective' spiritual center. If, however, he or she cannot take the dramatic pragmatic decision to "switch worlds", moving to live permanently in the 'elective' center, there is an alternative: to travel periodically to visit the center, deriving therefrom existential nourishment for a life lived in 'exile' from the center.⁹⁴ This Cohen describes as "existential tourism", pointing out its similarities with pilgrimage, especially in the Turners' description of the existential nature of pilgrim *communitas*.

Despite the parallels he has indicated with the Turners' system, Cohen makes a further distinction regarding the nature of the respective 'centers'. The Turners' pilgrim 'center' is *given* - i.e. it is within and part of the pilgrim's religious world, not something foreign and utterly different. A Jewish pilgrim, Cohen would argue, does not go to Mecca. "The pilgrim always undertakes his journey to the spiritual center of *his* religion [emphasis Cohen's]."⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Cohen, "Phenomenology" 186. It is interesting that Cohen defends the meaningfulness of recreation but not of diversion. Perhaps this is only in respect to the structure of the 'center' itself: recreation ultimately strengthens the center, while diversion ultimately weakens it.

⁹¹ MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings", *American Journal of Sociology*, 79 (3), 1973, 589-603.

⁹² "Phenomenology" 187.

⁹³ "Phenomenology" 188.

⁹⁴ "Phenomenology" 190.

⁹⁵ "Phenomenology" 188. Notice the consistent absence of feminine pronouns.

Cohen's existential tourist, on the other hand, *chooses* the 'elective' center, in a process analogous to a 'conversion' – the 'center' was *outside* his or her world, entirely other, but now it has become *his* or *her* 'center'.

The arbitrary use of religious terminology at this point obscures the direction of Cohen's thought. "Traditional" pilgrimage does not necessarily provide a total paradigm for "contemporary" pilgrimage. It is doubtful, for example, if contemporary pilgrims can be confined absolutely to 'centers' of *their* religion only. It is far more likely that Jewish, Christian and Muslim pilgrimages to Jerusalem, for example, are distinctive through *intention*, not destination. And if so, the distinction between pilgrim and existential tourist collapses, unless one insists on a certain use of language or mode of transport or dress to distinguish them.

Cohen further claims that a pilgrim does not experience 'exile' from a spiritual center because the daily abode is 'hallowed' through the center, while a tourist *does* experience 'exile' from the 'elective center' because it does not 'hallow' his life, being "beyond the boundaries of the world of his daily existence."⁹⁶ Here one must admit that Cohen's distinctions have become too convoluted to be useful. Are we to believe that an intelligible distinction between "pilgrim" and "tourist" can be found in the measure of their respective feelings of "nostalgia" for an absent "center"? How could such feelings possibly be quantified? More tellingly, Cohen's "nostalgic exile" criterion is not supported by the actual pilgrimage experiences of members of exiled communities (Jewish, Armenian, Native American, Aboriginal, Palestinian, and others) to shrine-centers situated in their spiritual or ethnic homelands. These pilgrims do indeed experience 'exile', and sometimes, paradoxically, at the very moment of their longed-for arrival at the 'center'. Visitors to the Western Wall in Jerusalem (often known, significantly, as the 'Wailing Wall') often witness – and experience - this paradoxical "homecoming nostalgia" empirically.

A much more helpful aspect of Cohen's phenomenology is his insistence that expectations, ideals, illusions and realities are correlates of all modes of tourism and pilgrimage. He does not see the recreational or diversionary tourist as necessarily a 'dupe' of false touristic settings, since many types of recreation use artificial settings to advantage and without deceit. On the other hand, MacCannell's "authentic" tourists (i.e. Cohen's experiential, experimental and existential tourists – and by extension pilgrims) are more likely to be 'duped', since what they seek – i.e. 'life as it really is' – requires considerable effort and sophistication (to say nothing of wisdom) to achieve, and because the tourist establishment (and might we add, the ecclesiastical establishment responsible for the upkeep of pilgrim shrines) is adept at making clever forgeries of 'life'. The complex relations between expectations and realities in the tourist's experience correspond closely to moral and theological questions we have already seen recurring in the history of pilgrimage. It is here that Cohen's phenomenology comes closest to practical theology:

⁹⁶ Cohen, "Phenomenology" 190.

Is the 'true' life at the centre indeed commensurable to [the tourist/pilgrim's] high hopes and expectations? Does it enable the traveller to live authentically, to achieve self-realization? This is a problem which existential tourists share with pilgrims. The centre, of course, symbolizes an ideal... The geographical centre symbolizes the ideal one; between the two, however, there is necessarily a discrepancy: Jerusalem may be the Holy City, but ordinary human life in Jerusalem is far from holy."⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Cohen, "Phenomenology" 190.

CHAPTER TWO: PILGRIMS VERBATIM

(A) THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

1. WHAT DO PILGRIMS SAY?

In July of 1988 an “Interdisciplinary Conference on Pilgrimage” was convened in London, attended by both anthropologists and historians researching the field. In his report on this conference for *Anthropology Today*, Glenn Bowman emphasizes the contrast between the two disciplines attending: 1) the *historical/descriptive* approach adopted by scholars who focused on particularities of pilgrim sites and practice, and 2) the *anthropological/analytical* approach preferred by scholars who see pilgrimage as a reflection of broad social processes. The historians, whose chief interest was “reconstructing the (largely European) past”, experienced frustration at the anthropologists’ unwillingness to discuss pilgrimage as a bounded entity. On the other hand, the anthropologists followed a “deconstructive impetus” and approached pilgrimage in terms of social aggregation, operations of ideologies, etc. So acute was the contrast in methodology that one historian remarked, after the departure of a group of anthropologists, “Now that the anthropologists are gone, we can get down to talking about pilgrimage.”¹

Neither historians nor anthropologists were inclined to pay much attention to the contributions of the pilgrimage facilitators attending. In their own remarks on the same conference, Coleman and Elsner point out that “the proponents of these two disciplines did appear to unite in their relative lack of interest in a third approach... that of religious functionaries.”² Bowman’s account bears this out, although he emphasizes the differences of opinion among “those drawn together by their empiricist bias” (i.e. historians, geographers and religious functionaries) about the “use-value” of the material gathered. In other words, priests and guides wanted to know how to use data for the service of pilgrims, while historians and geographers asked rather how knowledge of local shrines could contribute to the reconstruction of the past. Anthropologists, of course, in their search for “theoretical capital” for “general theories of human practice,” were not primarily interested in either specific itineraries or generalized pastoral care.

The developing attitudes toward pilgrimage of church officials, pilgrim pastors and theologians are still under discussion and study.³ Many churches at least condone pilgrimage in principle, but an essential ambivalence seems to prevail, due to the vitriolic opposition to the practice during and after the Reformation, an opposition that has not left even the Roman Catholic Church unaffected. Religious responses to the challenge of world-wide travel can be found in the work of anthropologists like

¹ Glenn Bowman, “Pilgrimage Conference”, in *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 4, No. 6, Dec. 1988, p. 20.

² Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage: Past and Present in the World Religions* (London: British Museum Press 1995) 200.

³ *Pilgrimage Past and Present* 200: “Anthropologists seek to define the sacred *through* the filter of society, [while] scholars such as Eliade – and, of course, priests and practitioners actively involved in practising and teaching their faith – have sought to affirm the existence of the sacred *beyond* society.”

Roger Millman⁴ and others, who stress the theological concept of an original alienation from God and the quest for the "lost Eden" of grace. While these writers do not incorporate the positive semiotic insights of the MacCannell school, their theological descriptions use similar terminology. They tend to regard tourism at best as a symptom of alienation - a flight from God, their fellow-humans and even from themselves, and a search for false "consolation" in a make-believe Garden of Eden (the imagined or "staged" authenticity of touristic contexts). Pilgrimage, on the other hand, is inspired by the grace of return. We have the choice of making a pilgrimage back to God (like the prodigal son) or of risking "manipulation and enslavement by consumerism."⁵ This last warning is reminiscent of MacCannell's "entrapment" of the tourist in the perpetual and sterile quest for authenticity.

For the proponents of this particular "theology of tourism", it is the role of the churches in some way to redeem the promise of Paradise. This can be done, not only by the "missionary" activity of encouraging the restless souls of this age to seek consolation in more spiritual activities, but by insisting upon a tourism which is "responsive"⁶ and sensitive to the question: "What makes tourism authentic and thereby contribute to making society more just, participatory and sustainable?" One response proposed by Millman is the commitment to "creative encounters with other people, places and cultures... through travel styles which include home stays, or at least, home visits."⁷

These efforts toward a theology of modern travel are cited here, not for their intrinsic theological merit, but rather as indications of voices that are not necessarily bound by the methodological constraints of rational anthropological and historical analysis. To call these voices "subjective", "unscientific" or "irrational" begs the question of how to honestly and accurately study religious experiences. At the foundation of the sociological study of religion lies the (essentially Durkheimian) realization, not only that religion has roots beyond the rational, but that "society itself is ultimately based not upon reasoning or rational agreement but upon a nonrational foundation."⁸ There is a well-authenticated common interface between society and religion, and it is there that both tourism and pilgrimage make their appointed rounds.

What, then, is the best technique to discover the "real experience" of the journey - analysis or synthesis? At this point in our discourse, the Turners' half-acknowledged urge to "go native" resurfaces openly, in the emergence of *qualitative* gradually replacing *quantitative* approaches in tourism and pilgrimage studies. For tourism, the issue of approach appears under the guise of a critique of MacCannell's "authentic" tourist. "Authentic" from whose point of view? Essentially, authenticity is typically judged by the criteria of the researcher, the observer. Cohen's

⁴ Roger Millman, "Just Pleasure: The Churches Look at Tourism's Impacts", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1988) 555ff. Millman also cites K. Srisang (ed.), *Liberating Discovery: A Theological Reflection on Tourism* (Bangkok: Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism 1986), and J. A. Walter, *A Long Way Home: A Sociological Exploration of Contemporary Idolatry* (Exeter: Paternoster Press 1979).

⁵ "Just Pleasure" 555.

⁶ Millman writes for The Centre for the Advancement of Responsive Travel in the UK.

⁷ "Just Pleasure" 557.

⁸ Randall Collins, *Sociological Insight: An Introduction to Non-Obvious Sociology* (Oxford Univ. Press 1982) 4.

phenomenological modes of tourism exemplify a proposal to shift the viewpoint from the observer/researcher to the tourist/participant. The recreational tourist is no more "inauthentic" than the existential tourist, because the former gets what he or she seeks (recreation in admittedly artificial contexts), while the latter seeks (and hopefully finds) a deeper commitment to the 'elective' center. "What the vacationer experiences is real, valid and fulfilling, no matter how 'superficial' it may seem to the social scientist."⁹ Methodologically, such experiences can be perceived *qualitatively*, but not measured *quantitatively*. A journey can be evaluated only in terms of the travellers' own understanding of the journey's meaning, not by comparison to an external system.

In a 1988 article titled "Traditions in the Qualitative Sociology of Tourism"¹⁰ Cohen sums up the new developments in qualitative discourse on tourism. He cites both Boorstin and MacCannell, and includes Turner's pilgrimage studies as examples, because "his ideas of processual anthropology, liminality and antistructure and world reversals contribute to the sociology of tourism."¹¹ Cohen sees a developing "research program" in the works of these and other scholars, moving from Boorstin's ideological critique through MacCannell's sociological paradigm of touristic semiotics, to the processual pilgrimage model of the Turner school. As we have already seen, Cohen regards Turner's analysis as the most coherent, since "Turner's 'Center Out There'... embodies the characteristics of both the Center and the Other"¹² – providing Cohen with the two poles of his tourist/pilgrim continuum described above. Most importantly, Cohen now feels that it is legitimate, in the Turnerian tradition, to advocate the perspective shift from an 'etic' view of authenticity (the researcher maintaining objectivity, evaluating experiences with an extraneous yardstick), to an 'emic' view (the researcher abandoning judgmental stances and trying to understand the experience "from within").¹³

The published proceedings of the 1988 London Pilgrimage Conference took the form of a research anthology entitled *Contesting the Sacred*.¹⁴ The title indicates a full recognition not only of the "heterogeneity of the pilgrimage process" but of pilgrimage as "an arena for competing secular and religious discourses... for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and *communitas* and for counter-movements towards separateness and division."¹⁵ Eade and Sallnow point out the weaknesses of both the positivist (functionalist) theories, which would describe pilgrimage as a tool of social unification (Durkhiem) or as a machine of ecclesiastical control (Marx), and the dialectical (anti-structuralist) views, which cast the pilgrim as a pioneer of subversion of social order through *communitas*, "a state of egalitarian association" (Turner). The "competing discourses" paradigm challenges the notion of an inherent sacredness in the shrine, and poses new questions about the nature of the 'pilgrim center': "the power of a

⁹ Gottlieb, "Americans' Vacations", *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol. 9 (1982) 165-187

¹⁰ *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1988)

¹¹ Cohen, "Traditions in the Qualitative" 37

¹² "Traditions in the Qualitative" 39.

¹³ "Traditions in the Qualitative" 41.

¹⁴ Eade and Sallnow (eds.) *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (New York: Routledge 1991).

¹⁵ *Contesting the Sacred* 2-3.

shrine... derives in large part from its character almost as a religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings.”¹⁶ These meanings, of course, are brought to the shrines by the pilgrims themselves, or are proposed as alternatives to pilgrim meanings by local authorities. The point is that the “meaningfulness” of pilgrimage is derived, not inherent, and can be known only through a careful qualitative study of the responses of pilgrims to the psychological, political, national, regional, ethnic and ecclesiastical discourses involved.¹⁷

Contesting the Sacred has set the tone for postmodern, qualitative, pluralist, and discursive research of pilgrimage modes, and of pilgrim narratives, into the new millennium. The themes that will accompany this research into the future are developed beyond the parameters of the Turner system, leaving behind the belief that *communitas* is a “transhistorical and omnipresent archetypal form.”¹⁸ The liminal position of the sacred center will be more clearly the place of encounter between “us” and “other” discourses, including the inner discourses of the pilgrim’s self-awareness. This is an indication of what Eade and Sallnow call a “personification of the sacred center” – not only in the external sense of a physical shrine regarded as the body of a sacred being, but more personally as the “relocation” of a geographical shrine in the body (or tomb/relic/memorial) of a sacred person.¹⁹ The ultimate form of this personification is the identification of the “sacred center” with the pilgrim’s own spirit, a psychological process so subtle and secret that it leaves only the faintest of traces in the exterior world.

A new practical theology of pilgrimage is needed. This theology will derive not from academic eisegesis but from careful exegesis of actual pilgrim narratives and experiences. What might be the guidelines for this sort of “meaningful hermeneutic”?

In light of the studies we have cited, a practical theology of and for pilgrimage will take into account the sacred ‘center’ represented by the pilgrim’s body and psyche²⁰, and not attempt to confine the sacred to the ecclesiastical normative shrine. It will also recognize the organic link (especially for Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem²¹)

¹⁶ Eade and Sallnow, Contesting the Sacred 15. This insight is called by Eade and Sallnow “deconstructing the center”; what it really amounts to is a deconstruction of attitudes toward and levels of commitment to the center – a process similar to Cohen’s work on “modes” of tourism.

¹⁷ This is especially evident in pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where “Judaism, Islam and a variety of Christianities jostle with one another in an atmosphere of deep suspicion” (Contesting the Sacred 13). Cf. also Glenn Bowman’s “Christian ideology and the image of a holy land”, in Contesting the Sacred 98ff., and his “The Politics of Tour Guiding: Israeli and Palestinian Guides in Israel and the Occupied Territories”, in David Harrison (ed.), Tourism and the Less Developed Countries (London: Belhaven Press) 121ff.

¹⁸ Coleman and Elsner, Pilgrimage Past and Present 201.

¹⁹ Contesting the Sacred (6-7) cites this dynamic as an example of how an ecclesiastical structure can “reclaim” a pilgrim site for orthodoxy, by memorializing the sacred person after his or her death: “The personification of the sacred center is a movement to the limits of ecclesiastical control, a control which begins to be regained only with the death of the saint and his or her transformation into a mute, hieratic, domesticated shrine.”

²⁰ Cf. Contesting the Sacred 16: “The Suffering Body in Pilgrimage Discourse”.

²¹ “The purpose of pilgrimage to Jerusalem is, in a sense, to verify and materialize the sacred scriptures, to make them real...” Contesting the Sacred 9; cf. also Coleman and Elsner, Pilgrimage

between *person*, *place* and *text* – with *text* understood in its broadest social sense both as “cultural performance” and “communication of ultimate meaning”. It is through this link that we may glimpse the important distinctions between religious cultures of “belief systems” and those rooted in “sacred place”. When the text is present to mediate between the “place” and the “belief”, the pilgrim is offered a form of sacred self-identification. By “becoming the text” (i.e. living out as closely as possible the personified meaning of the text), the pilgrim has access to sacred power.²²

A thorough theological contextualizing of the verbatim reports of actual Christian pilgrims is undertaken in this thesis in terms of the five pilgrimage categories already outlined above. However, only a rigorous translation of these into their postmodern (and ambiguous) permutations will move our understanding of today’s pilgrimage process beyond the pages of history and into a living narrative. What directions might the required translation indicate to us?

Motivation: The contemporary *desiderium* of pilgrimage must be interrogated in terms of pilgrims themselves, and their chosen discourses.²³ Do these include elements of mission or conversion,²⁴ or of death and rebirth, like the heroic journey of Gilgamesh, or of an “escape from civility”, as in the cry of Kinglake at the borders of the Jordan: “You joyfully know that you are on the frontier of all accustomed respectabilities”?²⁵

Journey: The way itself must be “sacred-traced”, in all its nuances of planning, peril, wandering and arrival.²⁶ Is it a necessary, or a voluntary journey – marked by “I had to go!” or by “Let’s go!” - a vacation mode?²⁷ What is the shape of the journey: straight line, circle or ellipse? Are the conditions of the journey difficult, and if so, in what way?

204-205: “In actual experience (as opposed to analytical abstraction) the elements of ‘person’, ‘place’, and ‘text’ coincide.”

²² Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred* 9: “For the pilgrimage to the very cradle of Christianity... the power of person and the power of place recede against the far greater power of the word.”

²³ Cf. Alan Morinis, “Introduction: The Territory of the Anthropology of Pilgrimage”, in A. Morinis (ed.), *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (Westport CN & London: Greenwood Press 1992) 19-20. “Almost any conceivable purpose can motivate a pilgrimage... The motives pilgrims give for their pilgrimage reveal the conscious model of the pilgrimage within which the individual plans and executes actions. We find here statements about the power of the divine, notions of the efficacy of thought and action, and... statements of belief in the nature of the pilgrimage quest. The anthropology of pilgrimage has given too little attention to the personal side of pilgrimage, of which motives are one aspect.”

²⁴ For an excellent study of conversion and pilgrimage in a case study on the local level, cf. Adrian Cooper, “Landscape, Place and Personal Pilgrimage experience”, in S.M. Bhardwaj, G. Rinschede and A. Sievers (eds.), *Pilgrimage in the Old and New World; Geographia Religionum: Interdisziplinäre Schriftenreihe zur Religionsgeographie*, Band 8 (Berlin: Deitrich Reimer 1994) 81 ff.

²⁵ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler* 29, 42.

²⁶ For “sacred trace” (borrowed from the language of nuclear physics because it refers to an invisible reality made tangible through traces left in physical media), see James J. Preston, “Spiritual Magnetism: An Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage”, in A. Morinis, *Sacred Journeys* 40.

²⁷ Cf. Ian Reader and Tony Walters (eds.), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan Press 1993) 234 - “Pilgrimage, even though ostensibly voluntary, may contain a great degree of compulsoriness.”

Shrine: The *sacred place* or *center* will be the focus of a particular set of questions. How are these envisioned or imagined by pilgrims? How does each pilgrim reach “sacred space” (walking, on the knees, or only by prayer)? What kind of space/place is it (city, shrine, cave, mountain, desert)? What are the possible/appropriate responses to landscape which is also mindscape, or to use Hopkins’ term from poetic theory, ‘inscape’?²⁸

Encounter: *Meetings* along the way and at the shrine will form the heart of the experience. Are these encounters social or personal; ordinary or extraordinary;²⁹ mundane or miraculous? Are the pilgrim’s meetings lonely or sociable, or both?³⁰ In light of contemporary (post-MacCannell) travel theory, what is the role of the five senses in pilgrimage encounter?³¹ How (if at all) is pilgrimage a “gendered” or “gendering” activity – i.e. is it to be viewed (as tourism classically is) as an extension of societal male/female stereotypes, or is it a radical departure from these?³² What is the role of the “pilgrim gaze”? What are the personal and social components of how a pilgrim actually *perceives* (and imprints in memory) the sacred encounter?

Return: This aspect must receive theological attention beyond its minor role in the literature. Return is the equivalent not only of van Gennep’s ritual re-integration into society after an initiatory journey, but also of the biblical experience of *teshuvah* – repentance. Does the pilgrim experience the homecoming as a transformation of the pilgrim’s belief systems – as in Chateaubriand’s “There was never a pilgrim who did not come back to his village with one less prejudice and one more idea”³³ – or is some deeper change evident? Or no change at all? The return aspect of pilgrimage, long neglected in favor of the outbound journey, is crucial for the coherence of the whole enterprise. The new social status conferred upon the Muslim *hajji* is not replicated in Christianity, but has a theological counterpart in the “sacred narration” of the pilgrimage, and especially in the way that narration is communicated and received.

A theological approach to pilgrimage combining qualitative method with awareness of the ambiguities, conflicting discourses and existential questions inherent in the

²⁸ Studies in “sacred space” are burgeoning; for recent contributions cf. Jean Holm, ed., *Sacred Place* (London: Pinter 1994); David L. Carmichael et al, eds., *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places* (London & NY: Routledge 1994); Philip F. Sheldrake, “The Sacredness of Place”, *Studies in Spirituality* 6 (1996) 258ff; Benjamin Z. Kedar and R.J. Zwi Werblowski, eds., *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land* (London & Jerusalem: Macmillan 1998).

²⁹ “Pilgrims... emit an image of ordinariness... But such overt ordinariness is concerned, above all, with commemorating and contextualizing the extraordinary, and in doing so the apparent ordinariness of the participants is shattered, transcended or refined.” (Reader and Walters, *Pilgrimage* 236)

³⁰ “What we need to consider ... is whether the experiences and thoughts of pilgrims, even when they eschew any cares for what their fellows think, might not point to a subtler form of *communitas* located more on the individual level than on the group and community levels with which analysts of pilgrimage have concerned themselves.” (Reader and Walters, *Pilgrimage* 242)

³¹ Cf. Chris Rojek and John Urry, “Transformations of Travel and Theory”, in C. Rojek and J. Urry (eds.), *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory* (London: Routledge 1997) for synopsis of sense-role, especially the hegemony of sight, in determining encounters (gaze=desire; touch=contamination, etc.).

³² Cf. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler*, 217ff. – “The Spermatic Journey”. For a feminist perspective, cf. Jokinen and Veijola, “The Disoriented Tourist”, in *Touring Cultures* 23ff.

³³ Cf. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI (New York: McGraw Hill 1967)s.v. “Pilgrimages”, 372.

process, has been slow to assert itself in the face of more analytical methodologies, but it could not be suppressed for long wherever MacCannell and Turner were being read. The juxtaposition of the cultural courage of the alienated postmodern tourist with the antistructural vision of a pilgrim liminar has highlighted the role of the individual pilgrim and his or her narrative. Barbara Aziz was among the first anthropologists to point out that the tools of objective analysis may not be the best for uncovering the treasures hidden in the pilgrim's personal story.³⁴ Like many people working in the field, she found in her interviews with pilgrims evidence for "an intense personal encounter" not consonant with the Turners' focus on group dynamic and 'communitas'.³⁵ Rather than seeing a collective self-understanding in pilgrimage society, Aziz points to the "secret, private quality of pilgrims' personal experience", a quality associated with becoming a hero/heroine – a theme adopted from mythology and here applied to the search for "heightened feeling of individuation and of unique personal identity" through the pilgrimage ordeal/experience.

The private quality of a pilgrim's experience does not, however, mean that pilgrims are reticent about telling their tales.³⁶ The fact that the personal stories seem so inaccessible to researchers stems rather from their inability to listen in the right way:

Pilgrims know what they are doing. People on pilgrimage can articulate their aspirations, their choices, feeling and assessments of the experience, and thereby assist us in recording and interpreting it. The onus is on us to develop better analytical tools and writing styles to convey the essence of those experiences.³⁷

The theological enterprise of listening to contemporary pilgrims' tales is an example of Eliade's meaningful and creative hermeneutics. It demands not only familiarity with the history of pilgrimage and its themes, but a willingness to become "witnesses to the unrepresentable"³⁸ and to embrace the inevitable transformations of general religious themes by the individual pilgrims' "urgent desire" for prayer and gaze, "in here" and "out there", shrines and shops, sacred and profane.

³⁴ Barbara Nimri Aziz, "Personal Dimensions of the Sacred Journey: What Pilgrims Say", *Religious Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (June 1987) 247-261. A later example of an anthropological challenge to the analytical model is Colin Turnbull's "Anthropology as Pilgrimage, Anthropologist as Pilgrim", in *Sacred Journeys* 257.

³⁵ Aziz, "Personal Dimensions", 252: "Although pilgrims tend to travel in groups, these might be better considered as assemblies than as mergings... Pilgrims do not invariably form a homogenous mass of single-minded celebrants."

³⁶ "Pilgrims often talk of their experiences with imagination and confidence, keeping themselves in the role of the hero or heroine of an adventure with infinite possibilities. Their need for confirmation or approval from others is lessened because of the nature of their pilgrimage as a private journey, not just a social event. What further evidence do we require that the sacred journey, as the sages say, may be realized either in the real world or in the geography of the mind?" – "Personal Dimensions" 259.

³⁷ Aziz, "Personal Dimensions" 260

³⁸ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979); trans.: G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester University Press 1984) 82.

2. INTERVIEWING METHODOLOGY

The primary methodological question at this juncture is how to clearly hear and meaningfully record the first-person story-experiences of contemporary pilgrims, and how to evaluate the resultant narratives theologically. As the required research takes us into the field of original data-gathering rather than simply reflecting on existing (historical) accounts, it is necessary in the first instance to consider the available methodologies from the discipline best equipped for empirical experiential study – i.e. sociology.

The applicability of “qualitative” rather than “quantitative” method in gathering the data for this study now requires some clarification. Qualitative research methods draw data from “acute insights” rather than from number-crunching. Such methods, based on close observations without statistical tests, have “produced some of the best work in sociology,”³⁹ and their application to theological research seems logical. The general tenor of the contrast between quantitative and qualitative approaches is summed up by Schwartz and Jacobs:

Quantitative sociologists... produce data by counting and ‘measuring’ things... Qualitative sociologists on the other hand, report observations in the natural language at large... Qualitative methods... are best at gaining access to the life-world of other individuals in a short time...⁴⁰

“Life-world” is the phrase chosen by Schwartz and Jacobs to indicate the “emic” nature of the subject of the sociological research. “Life-world” means, not “the objective world of facts”, but the world as lived and perceived, through “motives, meanings, emotions... daily actions and behavior.”⁴¹ Inherent in “life-world” is the understanding that the world of experience is not neatly definable by academic observation of what is “relevant” or “correct” (the view of “positivist sociology”). Rather, the qualitative researcher “gets messy”, involves the subject in the study process, and learns about “what is going on” in terms of the perceptions and expressions of the subjects themselves – *from within* (“symbolic interactionist sociology”).⁴²

From the perspective of sociological theory, the process of qualitative method is traced from Emile Durkheim’s focus on “social facts”,⁴³ through Max Weber’s “*Verstehen*”⁴⁴ to George Herbert Mead’s theory of individual selves and social actions as mutually interdependent.⁴⁵ The process can be summarized in “grounded

³⁹ Randall Collins, “Statistics Versus Words,” in: R. Collins (ed.), *Sociological Theory* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass 1984) 340.

⁴⁰ Howard Schwartz and Jerry Jacobs, *Qualitative Sociology: A Method to the Madness* (New York: The Free Press / Macmillan Publishing Co. 1979) 4-5.

⁴¹ Schwartz and Jacobs 5.

⁴² Schwartz and Jacobs 6-7.

⁴³ I.e., exterior influences like economic and religious systems, rather than “states of individual consciousness”; cf. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press 1967) 10 and 110.

⁴⁴ I.e. “observation and interpretation of... subjective states of mind” through “interaction, participation and ‘member’s knowledge’”(Cf. Schwartz and Jacobs, 20).

⁴⁵ Schwartz and Jacobs 23-24.

theory”: an “unstructured” interviewing approach based on “getting to know the stranger” and “participant observation”.⁴⁶

A sustained application of qualitative method in examining a contemporary religious phenomenon is found in Jenkins’ ethnographic record of an annual religious/social procession – the Kingswood Whit Walk in East Bristol.⁴⁷ While an account of English pilgrims in distant lands is in many ways different from the radically local context of an English country parish, the parallels are striking, and Jenkins’ methodology is instructive. Writing as a social anthropologist, he rejects the sociology of religion approach (where “religion” is understood as pertaining to matters of belief in God and church attendance), in favor of an ethnographic method that describes rather than defines. Jenkins advocates a “mutually interpretive” social investigation that focuses on questions of motivation, value and polity, i.e. “the conditions of possibility of being someone in particular, doing something worthwhile, and belonging to some collectivity that counts.”⁴⁸

Jenkins adopts an anthropological stance in reference to a religious event, understanding religion contextually, as “the expression of a human aspiration to flourish, or... the desire to be human in a particular form.”⁴⁹ He cites prevailing sociological approaches to contemporary religion in Britain. These he sees as unsatisfactory, since they all share a (“pre-Durkheimian”) grasp of religion as primarily positing the existence of the supernatural, all emphasize the “decline of the supernatural and the fulfillment of the self”,⁵⁰ and all imply that religious life is “cast... profoundly in the past historical tense... possessing a history but no future.”⁵¹ By contrast, Jenkins regards religion in England today as “amongst the most total forms of ways of making sense of and in the world, where the ‘habits of coping with reality’ which are conveyed are of as great significance as any ‘truth claims’.”⁵²

Methodologically, then, Jenkins advocates an observant and “absorbent” research approach, “paying attention to the orderings made by the objects of our interests, rather than beginning from our own orderings.”⁵³ A chief characteristic of this desired attention is “the metaphor of sight”, since the “gaze” of the anthropologist (or, for that matter, the theologian) imposes its own ordering and understanding of what is seen. Rather than insisting on the priority of statistics (evidence of numerical

⁴⁶ Schwartz and Jacobs 26-27. “Grounded Theory” is somewhat disingenuously presented as a minimalist approach, just more organized than simply “hanging around” and writing down everything you see. In fact, the structure is fairly complex, and includes (1) observation of data, (2) coding and sorting into categories, (3) sampling, comparing and clarifying the emerging picture, (4) keeping analytic memos which take note of logical connections among coded categories, and finally, (5) integrated analysis. My pilgrimage research interviews generally were conducted along these lines.

⁴⁷ Timothy Jenkins, *Religion in English Everyday Life: An Ethnographic Approach* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books 1999).

⁴⁸ Jenkins 9.

⁴⁹ Jenkins 13.

⁵⁰ Jenkins 26-28.

⁵¹ Jenkins 15.

⁵² Jenkins 25.

⁵³ Jenkins 5.

decline in religious observance, etc.⁵⁴), Jenkins listens for the “indigenous voices” of real people, practicing their religious and social convictions (and their ‘modes of coping’) in the “complex ‘middle distance’ in which human lives are lived.” It is in this ‘middle distance’ – rather than the ‘near’ or ‘far’ of statistical accounts - that the people of Kingswood act out their “symbolic economy” of faith, a local and particular economy of space, continuity and legitimacy, in which believers and unbelievers, respectable and feckless, participants and observers, all play important roles. The net result, an annual religious and social event involving the whole Kingswood community, is a “forceful act of self-definition” and a “moment of public accounting, both with respect to the outside gaze and with respect to the infinite calculations of internal differences.”⁵⁵

Evidently, the religious circumstances and responses studied by Jenkins have much in common with pilgrimage, although the social frame of reference in the latter shifts from the local to the foreign, and space, continuity and legitimacy will be differently perceived. Removed from the familiar context of the all-important family territory, English pilgrims in Jerusalem are to some extent spiritually “on their own”, and may respond to challenges and ambiguities with less concern for respectability than is emblematic of the parish context. The local particularity of the historical time and circumstances of the parish are replaced during pilgrimage by the local particularities of Middle Eastern society; the pilgrim is an outsider by definition. In spite of these contrasts in subject matter, valuable qualitative guidelines are found in Jenkins’ principle of seeking out respondents who “lay claim to ‘vital symbols’”⁵⁶ pertaining to their religious experience (rather than looking for the elusive ‘typical’ respondent), and his mandate for the researcher’s task as a mapping of the ‘middle distance’ of irreducible individual religious experience. A Jerusalem pilgrimage, like a parish procession, is what Jenkins calls a “product of the interactions of desire”,⁵⁷ and as such is open to the process of mutual interpretation - an interrogation of both the participant and the observer.

In researching the accounts of contemporary pilgrims, the theoretical ideals of qualitative sociology have been only partially helpful in establishing an approach to a theologically motivated interview process. For example, the aspiration toward a completely unstructured approach “without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry”⁵⁸ was simply not possible or desirable in the case of interviewing pilgrims about their specific journeys. A clear but minimal framework was provided to each interviewee in the form of five questions (sometimes less), but once each question was asked, the resultant reflections were not to be rigidly “redirected” to what is relevant to that question. The interview transcripts show numerous occasions when a question (e.g. “Why did you undertake your journey to Jerusalem at this particular time?”) evokes an apparently unrelated (but richly relevant) response.

⁵⁴ Jenkins (8) is suspicious of “accounts of religion [in England]... that subscribe too readily to a perspective of passivity, modernisation, transition and loss”.

⁵⁵ Jenkins 8.

⁵⁶ Jenkins 34.

⁵⁷ Jenkins 11.

⁵⁸ Fantana and Frey, “Interviewing: the Art of Science”, in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*; Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications 1998) 56ff.

Schwartz and Jacobs' "grounded theory" affirms the value of prior observation of and participation in the "subject's life world". In this respect my own background as guide and facilitator to many pilgrim individuals and groups can be seen as an interviewing asset (a link to the "ethnographic context"⁵⁹ of the pilgrims interviewed) rather than a liability that might damage "objectivity". Certainly, the understanding of the interview process, not as a "testing" for proper responses, but as a form of listening which is "non-threatening, understanding and empathetic"⁶⁰ is fundamental to the interviewing strategy adopted here.

As it turns out, the methodology of symbolic interaction is particularly relevant to the subject matter of Holy Land pilgrimage and pilgrims' experiences. Just as the pilgrim is a "listener" and an "observer" during the pilgrimage process, constantly re-composing the sites/texts presented (made present/made as gift) to the "pilgrim gaze", so the researcher in symbolic interaction with the pilgrim is in a constant process of translating encounter (the pilgrim's encounter, and the researcher's encounter) into reflection and meaning.⁶¹

A positivist approach, on the other hand, might strive to eliminate all "involvement" of the interviewer with the interviewee, and present "detachment" as the researching norm, with the mortal sin of the whole process being a complete loss of objective orientation – i.e. "going native". Positivist methods are, of course, notoriously poor for studying human religious experience, because this is just the sort of phenomenon an "objective" observer might well ignore or deny, or even be inclined to deride. How, then, are we to study religious groups or religious individuals in the throes of their most intimate religious experience (their "life-world") with anything like an open mind, without adopting the stance of "believers" who possess what is called "member's knowledge"?⁶² Who is to determine whether we are in fact "members" in the sense necessary to gain access to that "life-world" for the purposes of research? Our research culture has dichotomized our affective and cognitive processes to the extent that it appears difficult to maintain both "empathy" and "scientific intent"; yet this is exactly what symbolic interaction requires, and this is the methodological dilemma of this thesis.

One proposed solution is the "symbolic realism" of Robert Bellah's "epistemological orientation toward religious beliefs which asserts the existential reality of these beliefs without necessarily accepting their empirical reality."⁶³ Taken thus, out of the overall context of Bellah's social theory, and applied to the practical matter of interviewing pilgrims or any other participant in religious experience, this orientation is not sufficient for "empathy". Its premise ("I assert that some people believe in angels but I do not have to be one of them") is too obvious to be useful. In practice, if an interviewer insists on maintaining (for the sake of science) the stance of "symbolic realism", the interviewee will inevitably hear the following message:

⁵⁹ A term taken from Aaron V. Cicourel, *Cognitive Sociology*; cf. Schwartz and Jacobs, 42.

⁶⁰ Schwartz and Jacobs 40.

⁶¹ Jenkins (4) refers to all the functions of "gaze and distinction, self-concealment and self-presentation, construal and interpretation, and self-interested blindness and disinterested perception" as always present and potentially affecting both "subject" and observer.

⁶² "Member's knowledge" is associated with Max Weber's "*Verstehen*"; cf. Schwartz and Jacobs, 8.

⁶³ Robert Bellah, "Christianity and Symbolic Realism", in *Journal for the Study of Religion* 9 (Summer 1970) 89-96.

“Although I recognize that you believe your own story, it does not reflect any empirical reality which I myself can believe. Therefore, you are either deluded or lying, and your story can only be of clinical interest.” Such an interview cannot amount to anything, at least in qualitative terms.

A much more promising and pragmatic approach is suggested by Clandinin and Connelly, in the form of “narrative inquiry”.⁶⁴ This takes human experience itself as “the starting point and the key term for all social science inquiry.” While “technical rationalists” might hold that “experience” denotes something too vague and insufficiently analytical for study, narrative inquiry can in fact find a researchable middle ground between raw experience on one hand and the abstractions offered by formalism on the other. That middle ground, in this view, is storytelling. More precisely, a pilgrim’s experience (for example) is communicated and known in “story” form, while the inquiry of the researcher is known and communicated in “narrative” form. Both are stories; the two terms are used only for the sake of clarity of reference. In fact, “narrative is both the phenomenon and the method [for its study].”⁶⁵

Narrative inquiry presents several advantages as a mode for researching contemporary living pilgrimage materials. It recognizes the essentially “mythic” and therefore creative nature of the pilgrimage experience itself, as a story lived and then recounted:

Experience... is the stories people live. People live stories, and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them and create new ones.⁶⁶

A research based on this understanding liberates the participant from the artificial necessity of “objectivity” or “getting it right”; thus the participant is free to tell the story in the way most meaningfully felt, and therefore most meaningfully heard. At the same time, the researcher too is freed from the constraints of formalism while retaining clear “critical dimensions” within which to code, sample, integrate and analyze: i.e. the dimensions of narrative theory.⁶⁷ Further, the researcher is, equally with the “subject”, an active participant in the narrative inquiry:

“In the study of experience it is the researcher’s intentionality that defines the starting and stopping points... we must acknowledge the centrality of the researchers’ own experience: their own tellings, livings, relivings and retellings.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, “Personal Experience Methods”, in: Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage 1998) 150ff.

⁶⁵ Clandinin and Connelly 155. This echoes Jenkins (10): “How to proceed... is intimately linked to the nature of what is to be investigated.”

⁶⁶ Clandinin and Connelly 155.

⁶⁷ An example given by Clandinin and Connelly (155), quoting D. Carr (*Time, Narrative and History*; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) is the reflection of “critical dimensions” of human experience (significance, value and intention) in the threefold structure of narrative time (past, present and future). For the purposes of this thesis, the “critical dimensions” will be those made present in narrative theology.

⁶⁸ Clandinin and Connelly 157 and 161.

Any qualitative study involving a number of different respondents must take into account relevant distinctions between idiosyncratic expressions of the same experience. Individuals favor particular phrases and verbal gestures in their storytelling, and these preferences are indicative of important aspects of the narrative. The language chosen by men often differs from that chosen by women, for example, and the older person uses a different idiom from the younger. Sensitivity to the nuances of the chosen idioms of pilgrims' stories must be reflected in the corresponding chosen language of the researcher's narrative.⁶⁹

In accordance with my understanding of personal experience method in narrative inquiry, I have chosen interview subjects from across a range of contemporary pilgrims with whose experience I have myself had some kind of actual contact. This was facilitated by my role as host and guide to many pilgrims and students in the context of my position on the staff of an educational institution and pilgrimage center in the Holy Land. The pilgrims thus encountered and interviewed were all Christians (more or less observant) from English-speaking countries (mostly from the U.K., but also from the U.S.A. and Australia), and mostly from the Anglican or Reformed (Protestant) traditions (but also some Catholics). The pilgrims interviewed were those whose "life-world" was most accessible to me for research. They are not representative of Christianity as a whole, and no effort is made therefore to conduct a "comparative" study of their responses. My interviews represent a small but critically significant aspect of contemporary Christian pilgrimage, and might serve as a model for parallel qualitative studies and theological evaluations of the specific concerns of Orthodox pilgrims from Russian, Greece and Eastern Europe, of Roman Catholic pilgrims from Italy or Latin American countries, etc.

Two groups of pilgrims were chosen for in-depth personal interviewing some time after their return home. The most comprehensive interviews were conducted with members of a pilgrimage from an Anglican diocese in the U.K.; this group went to the Holy Land in March 1999, for ten days. Of one hundred and twenty participants, I interviewed 17 individuals, with some of the interviews lasting around two hours; participants in these interviews form **Group I**. Interviewees were asked questions relating to the five categories of pilgrimage experience: (1) Motivation, (2) Journey, (3) Shrine, (4) Encounter, and (5) Return. While I tried to include some element of all five in each interview, in many cases the interviewee chose directions of reflection and storytelling that were preferable to a strict adherence to the questions. In these cases, I endeavored to follow the narrative rather than the inquiry, and only returned to the categories when the story line seemed to have "petered out".

A different group was from a ministerial training course in the north of England who came to the Holy Land in August 1997. Most participants were interviewed (using the same five question guideline) in a group format about one year after the pilgrimage, and some were interviewed by telephone in May 1998. There were altogether 26 participants in this group, i.e. **Group II**.

⁶⁹ Cf. Clare Ungerson, *Policy is Personal: Sex, Gender, and Informal Care* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications 1987) 85ff. Ungerson's study uncovers the (surprising?) prevalence of "love" language in men carers and "duty" language in women carers.

In the context of my teaching in Jerusalem, I have had the opportunity to hear the expectations and reflections of many pilgrims during their time in the Holy Land. I recorded some of these in the form of field notes collected over a considerable period; they are referred to in the body of the thesis, sometimes without specific attribution.

In addition, I have drawn on the same resource – i.e. participants in pilgrimages and study programs which I facilitated – for conducting a series of correspondence interviews via email with pilgrims who were in Jerusalem at various times between December 1999 and January 2001. A number of these - i.e. the 34 individuals in **Group III** – sent me their responses (by email correspondence) to the following questions:

- (a) Do you think of your journey as a pilgrimage? Why or why not?
- (b) What motivated you to make this journey?
- (c) What encounters were meaningful during the journey?
- (d) Did you visit any shrines or holy places? Describe your response to these.
- (e) Did the journey raise any theological or religious questions?
- (f) What was it like to come home?
- (g) Did the journey change you and your attitudes? How?

These questions are based on the five categories of pilgrim experience outlined above. The addition of questions (e) and (g) was designed (in the absence of face-to-face conversation) to elicit more detail in the responses to questions about Shrine and Return.

Some participants in all three groups (**Groups I, II and III**) – and a few other individuals - spontaneously provided further resources in the form of written reflections, poems, journals, etc. These have been incorporated into the thesis wherever appropriate.

Inherent in the narrative inquiry is the question of interview ethics. While an “objective” researcher might imagine herself free of “involvement”, and only think of legal responsibilities (permission, release forms and the like), this illusion of personal detachment cannot be maintained into the mutual storytelling of personal experience interviews:

Personal experience methods have the potential to generate new shared stories for participants and researchers in relationships akin to friendships... We owe our care, our responsibility, to the research participants and how our research texts shape their lives. We all can find ourselves in the eventually constructed research texts... Anonymity and other ways of fictionalizing research texts are important ethical concerns...⁷⁰

With these guidelines in mind, I have obtained the assent of all participants in the interviewing process. I made clear to each person agreeing to be interviewed that I might use verbatim material from their interview, but that their name would be withheld and thus that they would never be directly cited in quotation.⁷¹ In some

⁷⁰ Clandinin and Connelly 169-170.

⁷¹ For the text of the forms and letters ensuring confidentiality, see the appendices.

cases, I followed up original interviews with further conversations, trying to be sensitive to personal developments in the lives of the participants, developments that might shed light on the effect that their pilgrimage had upon them and those close to them.

In sum, I have chosen to adopt not a technical/positivist but a personal/narrative inquiry method in this work. I myself, therefore, have been researched and interpreted in the process of conducting these interviews. The pilgrims whom I interviewed got to know me – through my storytelling - in the living context of my own pilgrimage. For their part, while some of those I interviewed remain strangers, some have become in some way my friends. In the process of conducting a series of interviews with pilgrims whose experiences spanned a “rich and sometimes seemingly endless range of possible events and stories”,⁷² I have endeavored to embrace the ambiguities as well as the convictions of my own role as researcher, to acknowledge the intrinsic sociality of the interview relationship,⁷³ and to honor the trust encoded in the narrative task – the “retelling of stories that allow for growth and change”.⁷⁴

(B) RESEARCH SUMMARIES

1. SUBJECT SAMPLE

The following is a statistical summary of the pilgrims interviewed, with their relevant and available biographical data. Each pilgrim who was interviewed, or who submitted unpublished narrative in writing, is referred to in the text of the thesis with a fictitious first name pseudonym, in order to retain the personal nature of the material and not to reduce pilgrims to numbers. These names are in some cases chosen by the participants themselves, in other cases assigned by me. They are intended to represent rather than to conceal. “Pat” and “Jennie”, “Dan” and “Trudy” are very real people, whose stories are still being lived and told. There is no doubt that they will recognize themselves in the interview excerpts, but I have abbreviated or adapted the narrative where necessary to keep salient identities confidential.

In addition to the pseudonym, to facilitate the cross-referencing of pilgrim quotes, I have also supplied a simple identification code for each subject. The code system places each pilgrim individual in the context of a pilgrim community – i.e., one of the three groups of pilgrims described above. Thus, the pilgrim “Pat” is also identified as (I.a) – she is first in the list of Group I (Diocesan Pilgrimage from Essex); the pilgrim “Pauline” (II.b) is second on the list of pilgrims in Group II (Ministerial Training Course); and so forth. A very small number of pilgrims who submitted written material or whose interviewing was conducted separately of any of the groups, will be referred to in the thesis with initials only.

⁷² Clandinin and Connelly 159.

⁷³ Clandinin and Connelly 156: “no sociality, no person, and vice versa.”

⁷⁴ Clandinin and Connelly 160.

Lists of the interviewed pilgrims, in their respective groups and with the available biographical details, follows in the pages below.

GROUP I
DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE FROM ESSEX, ENGLAND - MARCH, 1999.
 (17 individuals)

This group pilgrimage numbered 120 participants from various points in the diocese, accompanied by their pastors and the diocesan bishop. Interviews were conducted in July and August of 1999. Some pilgrims were interviewed more than once following their journey; some provided written reflections on pilgrimage cited in the thesis.

(I.a) "Pat"

Female, age 49. Pat is married and has three children aged 12, 18 and 21.

She is a teacher by profession.

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation given: "C of E" before the pilgrimage. After the pilgrimage, Pat has gone through a transition, and has gradually left her Church of England framework and started attending Society of Friends Meetings.

(I.b) "Becky"

Female, age 65. Becky is recently widowed; she has two grown children.

She is a retired headteacher (secondary school).

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "Anglican".

(I.c) "Martha"

Female, age 51. Martha is widowed, with has two children aged 24 and 26.

Housewife and secretary by profession.

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "Anglican".

(I.d) "Todd"

Male, age 81. Todd is married (no children indicated).

He is a retired civil servant.

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "C of E".

(I.e) "Roy"

Male, age 63. Married (to "Alicia", below); four children aged 27 to 37.

Roy is a retired local government officer (school inspector).

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "C of E".

(I.f) "Alicia"

Female, age 61. Alicia is married (to "Roy", above); four children aged 27 to 37.

No occupation listed.

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "Anglican".

(I.g) "Jennie"

Female, age 51. Jennie is single. Children – "none".

University Administrator at time of pilgrimage. Since then, Jennie has completed an M.A. degree in Human Rights at a local university.

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "Anglican – C of E."

(I.h) "Jim"

Male, age not given (late 60's). He is married (to "Linda", below); one son, aged 37.

James is an Anglican priest, non-stipendiary.

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: Anglican.

(I.i) "Linda"

Female, age 66. Married (to "James", above); one son, aged 37.

Occupation listed: "Retired".

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "C of E."

(I.j) "Dan"

Male, age 68. Married (to "Trudy", below); four children, aged 33 to 42.

Occupation: "Retired".

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "Church of England".

(I.k) "Trudy"

Female, age 65. Married (to "Dan", above); four children aged 33 to 42.

Occupation: "retired".

Date of pilgrimage: March 1999 diocesan pilgrimage from Essex.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 4 months

Affiliation: "Church of England".

No biographical details were provided for:

(I.l) "Michael"**(I.m)** "Cathy" (his wife)**(I.n)** "Wilma" - Friend of Michael and Cathy**(I.o)** "Jane" - Retired teacher.

(I.p) "Brent" – "Jane"'s husband.

(I.q) "Bonnie" – "Jane"'s friend

GROUP II
MINISTERIAL TRAINING COURSE PILGRIMAGE - AUGUST 1997
 (26 individuals)

This pilgrimage/study program went to the Holy Land in August 1997 under the auspices of an ecumenical ministerial training course in the Northeast of England. Some pilgrims were interviewed in a group context during a residential weekend in the summer of 1998. Some of these - and others who were not present at the residential weekend - were interviewed by telephone in May 1998. These individuals are indicated by the note [Tel.]. Written reflections by members of this pilgrimage were read at various sites in the Holy Land, and some are cited in the thesis.

(II.a) "Charles"

Male, age 60. Marital status not indicated; two children, aged 26 and 29.
 Occupation: He was a head-teacher at time of the pilgrimage, and after the pilgrimage became a non-stipendiary minister of the Church of England.
 Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997
 Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year
 Affiliation: C of E.

(II.b) [Tel.] "Pauline"

Female, age 48. Divorced. Children: not indicated.
 Occupation: Priest.
 Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997,
 Another pilgrimage in May 1999.
 Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year
 Affiliation: C of E.

(II.c) [Tel.] "Dorothy"

Female, age 43. Married; two children aged 13 and 16.
 Occupation: Priest.
 Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.
 Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year
 Affiliation: Anglican.

(II.d) [Tel.] "Monica"

Female, age 45. Married; two children aged 22 and 25.
 Occupation: "Clerk in Holy Orders"
 Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.
 Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year
 Affiliation: Church of England.

(II.e) “John”

Male, age 49. Married (to “Melissa”, below); three children, aged 17 to 23.

Occupation: “Safety Manager”

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: Methodist.

(II.f) “Melissa”

Female, age 51. Married (to “John”, above); three children, aged 17 – 23.

Occupation: “legal secretary”.

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: Methodist.

(II.g) “Ronald”

Male, age 53. Single; no children.

Occupation: Priest.

Date of Pilgrimage given: 1998

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: Church of England.

(II.h) “Gary”

Male, age 53. Married; two sons, aged 19 and 23.

Occupation: Work for USPE (Anglican Mission and Development Agency)

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: Anglican.

(II.i) “Rose”

Female, age 47. Single; no children indicated.

Occupation: “Minister of Religion”

Rose was a facilitator and pastor for the Ministerial Training Course Group in 1997

Other Pilgrimages: 1995 and 1998

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: URC

(II.j) [Tel.] “Pete”

Male, age 42. Married; three children, aged 11 to 17.

Occupation: “Clerk in Holy Orders”

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: Anglican

(II.k) [Tel.] “Anna”

Female, age 45. Married; three children aged 19 to 24.

Occupation: Priest.

Pilgrimage: July 1995

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 3 years

Affiliation: Church of England.

(II.l) [Tel.] "Harry"

Male, age 53. Married; two children aged 24 and 26.

Occupation: Clergy URC.

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: URC.

(II.m) "Will"

Male, age 53. Married (to "Maxine", below); one son aged 23.

Occupation: "technician".

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: "C of E"

(II.n) [Tel.] "Maxine"

Female, age 50. Married (to "Will", above); one son aged 23.

Occupation: "Non-stipendiary minister"

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997.

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: "C of E".

(II.o) [Tel.] "Karen"

Female, age 56. Married; four children aged 21 to 30.

Occupation "Clerk in Holy Orders".

Ministerial Training Course Pilgrimage – August 1997

Time between pilgrimage and interview: 1 year

Affiliation: Church of England.

No biographical details were provided for:

(II. p) "Frances"**(II.q)** "Rex"**(II.r)** [Tel.] "Janice"**(II.s)** [Tel.] "Paul"**(II.t)** [Tel.] "Stan"**(II.u)** [Tel.] "Helen" (Stan's daughter)**(II.v)** [Tel.] "Carol"**(II.w)** [Tel.] "Mark"**(II.x)** "Dot" (Written Reflection Only)**(II.y)** "Donald" (Written Reflection Only)**(II.z)** "Molly" (Written Reflection Only)

GROUP III
 Email Interview Respondants
 (34 individuals)

These pilgrims, from the United States and the UK, attended courses at St. George's College, Jerusalem between 1995 and 2001. They responded to an Evaluation Questionnaire sent to them via email in May 2001.

(III.a) "Tom"

Male, age 58. Married; two sons (26 and 32) and one grandson (3).
 Occupation: Retired Episcopal Parish Priest
 Pilgrimage date: September 2000
 Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 8 months
 Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)
 Active in church? "Having recently moved, church-hopping".

(III.b) "Albert"

Male, age 62. Married; three children aged 21 to 28.
 Occupation: Episcopal Priest.
 Pilgrimage date: November 2000
 Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 6 months
 Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)
 Active in church? "As parish priest."

(III.c) "George"

Male, age 57. Unmarried.
 Occupation: Catholic priest.
 Member of a religious order: Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.
 Pilgrimage: Sept. – Nov. 2000
 Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 6 months
 Affiliation: Roman Catholic
 Active in church? "Active in the local parish and work as hospital chaplain."

(III.d) "Jill"

Female, age 49. Divorced. Two children, aged 17 and 21.
 Occupation: Teacher, but soon to be a curate.
 Pilgrimage: August 2000
 Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 9 months
 Affiliation: Anglican.
 Active in church? "Training for the priesthood."

(III.e) "Sharon"

Female, age 53. Single. No children.
 Occupation: Administrative assistant.
 Pilgrimages: April 1984 and January 2001.
 Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 4 months
 Affiliation: Roman Catholic.
 Active in church? "Regular attendance, occasional retreat or community activity associated with church."

(III.f) "Tim"

Male, age 49. Married (to "Alice, below). Two daughters aged 24 and 27.

Occupation: Church of England Hospital Chaplain.

Pilgrimage: May 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 1 year

Affiliation: Church of England

Active in church? "Anglican clergyman and hospital chaplain."

(III.g) "Alice"

Female, age 49. Married (to "Tim" above). Two daughters.

Occupation: Senior Lecturer

Pilgrimage: May 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 1 year

Affiliation: Church of England.

Active in church? "Wife of hospital chaplain, member of local parish church."

(III.h) "James"

Male, age 55. Married; three children, aged 21 to 30.

Occupation: Episcopal Priest/Rector.

Pilgrimage: March 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 14 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "Very. Priest and pastor."

(III.i) "Paul"

Male, age 53. Married. Five children aged 18 to 26.

Occupation: President of Interfaith Housing Association.

Pilgrimages: December 1974 – January 1975; Sept 2000 – November 2000.

Time between last pilgrimage and questionnaire: 6 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "I'm a priest, I guess that means I'm active?"

(III.j) "Art"

Male, age 54. Married. Two children, aged 22 and 27.

Occupation: Director of Communications (writer/editor).

Pilgrimage: March 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 14 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "Eucharistic minister, Choir, recovering Senior Warden, Vestry, Alpha Leader, Adult Christian Ed. Leader, diocesan employee, newspaper editor, webmaster, communicator, evangelist."

(III.k) "Pete"

Male, age 49. Religious brother.

Member of religious order: Marist Brothers of the Schools

Pilgrimage: September-October 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 7 months

Affiliation: Roman Catholic

Active in church? "Active in religious congregation and school ministry."

(III.l) "Dennis"

Male, age 65. Married. Three children (aged 35-39); one grandchild aged 5.
Occupation: Retired.

Pilgrimage: January 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 16 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "Diocesan Council, COM, Clergy Wellness Commission, Recovery Commission."

(III.m) "Helen"

Female, age 32. Single. No children.

Occupation: Graphic Artist.

Pilgrimage: January 2001.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 4 months

Affiliation: Not indicated ["All Saints' Parishioner"]

Active in church? "All Saints' Parishioner"

(III.n) "Mary"

Female, age 62. Divorced. Two sons aged 28 and 32.

Occupation: Retired.

("Former occupation: navy wife, teacher, income-tax preparer, trustee")

Pilgrimage: 1998.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 2 years

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "I'm not telling."

(III.o) "Ben"

Male, age 62. Married. One child aged 23.

Occupation: Episcopal Priest.

Pilgrimage: January 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 16 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA).

Active in the church? "Cathedral Dean."

(III.p) "Ted"

Male, age 44. Married. Three children aged 6-14.

Occupation: Anglican Clergy.

Pilgrimage: September-November 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 6 months

Affiliation: C of E.

Active in church? "Vicar"

(III.q) "Mabel"

Female, age 66. Widowed. Three children, aged 33-40; 6 grandchildren.

Occupation: Retired technical teacher (maths and physics for adults).

Pilgrimage: February 1997 and September 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 8 months

Affiliation: "Church communicant member" before the pilgrimage

Affiliation after the pilgrimage: "parish councilor and leadership team member."

Active in church? "Baptism ministry."

(III.r) "Amy"

Female, age 55. Married. Four children (aged 21-32); 2 grandchildren aged 1 and 4.

Occupation: Receptionist / Information Specialist ("not my description")

Pilgrimage: March 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 14 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "Vestry member, church school teacher, flower guild member."

(III.s) "Ken"

Male, age 41. Married; two children aged 2 and 5 (another on the way).

Occupation: Episcopal Clergy.

Pilgrimage: May 1987 and September 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 9 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "Too active!"

(III.t) "Lucy"

Female, age 60. Single. No children.

Occupation: Episcopal Priest

Pilgrimage: October 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 7 months

Affiliation: Episcopal (USA)

Active in church? "Rector".

(III.u) "Carl"

Male, age 68. Widowed at time of pilgrimage, but since remarried.

4 children (aged 20-35); 3 grandchildren (aged 5-15).

Occupation: "Seeker".

Pilgrimage: September 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 8 months.

Affiliation: Before pilgrimage: "Maranatha Christian Church (non-denominational)"; after pilgrimage: "none after December 2000".

Active in church? "No."

(III.v) "Maggie"

Female, age 54. Single. No children.

Occupation: University Lecturer, and Clerk in Holy Orders (non-stipendiary).

Pilgrimage: August 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 9 months.

Affiliation: Church of England.

Active in church? "Yes, very active, as Assistant Curate" (a recent appointment).

(III.w) "Pamela"

Female, age 74. Widowed.

4 children (aged 48-52); 3 grandchildren (aged 14-25)

Pilgrimage: August 2000

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 9 months.

Affiliation: Before the pilgrimage: Episcopal; after: Interdenominational.

Active in church? "I am very active in my new church".

(III.x) "Kent"

Male, aged 62. Married. One daughter.

Occupation: Priest.

Pilgrimage: May 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: one year.

Affiliation: Episcopalian.

Active in church? "As a priest".

(III.y) "Norm"

Male, age 73.

Occupation: Roman Catholic Religious priest.

Member of a Religious Order: The Society of Jesus (Jesuits)

Pilgrimage: January 2001.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 3 months.

Affiliation: Roman Catholic

Active in church? "Yes. Director of Pastoral Homecare Program. Superior of local Religious Community".

(III.z) "Sue"

Female, age 62. Single. No children.

Member of a Christian Life Community.

Occupation: Retired Travel Consultant.

Pilgrimage: January 2001.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 4 months.

Affiliation: Roman Catholic

Active in church? "Yes. As Eucharistic Minister".

(III.aa) "Abe"

Male, age 57. Married. 2 children (aged 25,27).

Occupation: Clerk in Holy Orders.

Pilgrimage: February 2001.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 3 months.

Affiliation: Church of England

Active in church? "Yes. As Diocesan Director of Ordinands".

(III.bb) "Rick"

Male, age 44. Married. 2 children (aged 3, 15).

Occupation: Priest.

Pilgrimage: February 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 15 months.

Affiliation: Episcopal

Active in church? "Yes. Episcopal Priest".

(III.cc) "June"

Female, age 67. Widowed, one son.

Occupation: Voluntary Work with Blind.

Pilgrimage: Latest: February 1999.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 2 years.

Affiliation: Church of England.

Active in church? "Lay Reader, Anglican Church".

(III.dd) "Jess"

Female, age 58. Married, one daughter.

Occupation: Housewife.

Pilgrimage: January 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 16 months.

Affiliation: Episcopal.

Active in church? "Yes. As a Lay Eucharistic Visitor, a Daughter of the King, a member of the prayer chain, and with responsibility for scheduling the Prayers of the People each week."

(III.ee) "Lottie"

Female, age 80. Divorced.

5 children (aged 21-51); 4 grandchildren (aged 10-29).

Occupation: Retired Journalist and Teacher..

Pilgrimage: August 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 9 months.

Affiliation: Episcopal USA.

Active in church? "Lector, Lay preacher, Lecturer."

(III.ff) "Maur"

Female, age 67.

Member of a Roman Catholic Religious Order.

Pilgrimage: September 2000.

Time between pilgrimage and questionnaire: 8 months.

Affiliation: Roman Catholic.

Active in church? "Active parishioner."

No biographical details were provided for:

(III.gg) "Rita"**(III.hh) "Kurt"****2. FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS**

To facilitate the evaluations in the theological studies that follow, I will here summarize the relevant findings of the interviews, ordering the data according to the five categories of the pilgrimage process outlined above. At this stage, the summary will not include theological reflection or reference to the relevant literature; these evaluations will follow in subsequent chapters.

(a) MOTIVATION

Motivations found historically in early and medieval pilgrimages are reflected in varying degrees, sometimes by their absence, among contemporary pilgrims:

Relics The quest for relics, which was so central to medieval pilgrimage, is utterly absent from the intentions of the pilgrims interviewed. The pilgrims, who

were predominately from Protestant traditions, had negative associations with the word "relic" ("It doesn't do much for me"; "It's not a word I like very much"⁷⁵) and did not identify with the phenomenon at all.

Mission On the other hand, a sense of mission – understood as the desire to convert non-Christians to the true faith – is not entirely absent, although quite nuanced with a nominally tolerant vocabulary characteristic of pluralism:

I believed that to reach those people [i.e. Muslims in the Holy Land] you've got to try to understand them... Somehow we're going to have to reach everybody, and get them to believe in the Trinity... And the only way we can achieve it is by trying to understand them...⁷⁶

Healing and Miracles Today, the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land (in contrast to the pilgrimage to Lourdes, for example), elicits only rarely a stated desire for healing or other miraculous aid. In the interviews, the healing sought was a general spiritual well-being rather than associated with a specific ailment:

I wanted to be able to feel his physical presence in the Holy places, even to be able to reach out and touch him in the crowd, perhaps in the same way as the Woman who was cured by simply touching his garment, and to have the same level of faith as she did, in order to be wholly healed.⁷⁷

Penitence In contrast to the medieval practice of penance and absolution through pilgrimage, the words "repentance" and "conversion" are more applicable to the sentiments I heard among contemporary pilgrims. Pilgrims expect to be confronted and challenged by God. With their imaginations formed by scriptural references, they may draw upon a classic "conversion" image when describing the motivation of their journey:

I had been growing in my spirituality I suppose in a more focused way in the last ten years... And so a relationship with my God had already moved from something that happened once a week on Sunday to actually... every day... I had felt and still feel that the Lord is calling me to do something, I don't know what... So I was hoping for some clarification there... I guess, like a lot of pilgrims, part of me was expecting some Road to Damascus experience... And part of me dismissed that as being... silly.⁷⁸

However, a more nuanced contemporary understanding of "conversion" as "moral repentance and response" is certainly a salient aspect of the experience of the pilgrims interviewed, especially in regard to their encounters with oppression and poverty in the Holy Land. In the interview transcripts, the most common context for "conversion" language, representing repentance leading to a new attitude, is the

⁷⁵ Jane (I.o) associated the word with a childhood memory of hawkers in Portsmouth selling souvenirs: "Buy your Victory Rock, the same as Nelson ate!... the Victory Rock, which couldn't possibly have been there in Nelson's day... and he certainly didn't eat it, I'm absolutely sure!"

⁷⁶ Dan (I.j) – interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview B).

⁷⁷ Pat (I.a) – "Pilgrimage Reflections" (1).

⁷⁸ Michael (I.l) – interview.

encounter with the political and social contingencies of Israel and Palestine. These harsh realities force pilgrims to a sense that some “response” is required, and this response (or its absence) is understood as a measure of religious commitment.

Answering a question about “encounters”, Maggie⁷⁹ listed the following: worshipping with Palestinian Christians in Nazareth, negotiating with a shopkeeper in Bethlehem, hearing a Jewish woman speak of a “message of peace”, participating in a Palestinian Contemporary Way of the Cross, and meeting a refugee family. Considering the fact that her pilgrimage had also included all the conventionally required sites as well, Maggie notes the prominence of “contemporary” (as opposed to “historical”) encounters in her selection of “significant” memories, and goes on to write:

That feels right because they can't be separated. Jesus and the early Church also lived under occupation. Jesus lives today and continues to suffer with every act of injustice or cruelty. We have to make a response.⁸⁰

When Pat visits Bethlehem University, she is struck by difficulties the students have in attending classes because of being harrassed at the army checkpoints, and she seems to regard her ignorance of this reality as connected to an inadequate theology:

I mean it's horrific isn't it? And... I didn't know that. I didn't know any of that. I mean, you can call that ignorance, but I didn't. And so... so at some point I realized that in a sense I was looking for the wrong Christ. And I would like to go back and actually get to know these people...⁸¹

Reluctance Some of the more “modern” motivations expressed by the interviewed pilgrims have deep historical roots, or are modifications of traditional attitudes. The first aspect that emerges is the tension between a resistance to pilgrimage and a positive embracing of the practice. A recurring theme in the interviews is an initial reluctance to go on pilgrimage – a kind of “negative motivation”. The phenomenon of the reluctant pilgrim has historical and theological overtones that need to be explored. One pilgrim, for example, refers to herself as a

...person who didn't want to go, who couldn't see the point of making a pilgrimage to Israel. My thing was, if God isn't with us here, then he is nowhere.⁸²

Desire Of course many pilgrims overcome reluctance or are never bothered by it, and express a lively eagerness to make the journey:

Well, I've always wanted to go to Israel, from about thirteen years of age. And we thought it was out of our range... And then as the years went by we thought, Well, we're never going to get there... We just felt we were never

⁷⁹ Maggie (III.v): Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

⁸⁰ Maggie (III.v): Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

⁸¹ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

⁸² Monica (II.d) – interview (Cf. Appendix A, Interview D).

going to make it. And then the opportunity came for this particular pilgrimage.⁸³

Both reluctance and desire are sometimes felt when a married couple makes the pilgrimage together with different attitudes – one has a “positive *desiderium*” and the other a “negative *desiderium*”. The imbalance creates a dynamic of tension that may be resolved easily, or may linger through the journey and leave an emotional residue thereafter:

I always wanted to go to Israel; I always wanted to do that. My husband didn't want to do it. He felt it was too commercialized, it was wrong... I don't think it was wrong, I don't think it was too commercialized...⁸⁴

Curiosity This “light motivation”, to visit the “site/sight”⁸⁵ for its own sake, is not found all that often in pilgrim accounts, as those interviewed tended to take a more serious approach to their journey; still, it is not entirely absent:

I think for me it was curiosity. It was curiosity to find out about these places. And to find out about how they are now, in comparison to how they were in my mind... as you read about them... in the Bible, and as you see pictures of the. I'm not sure that I really had a goal... I am actually not sure that there was an ultimate goal... It's something that somehow strengthened me.⁸⁶

Promise or Necessity Some pilgrims have made a promise to undertake a pilgrimage. Because Christianity does not mandate pilgrimage as a necessary act of faith, opinions about “requiring” or even “recommending” the practice vary widely, although many pilgrims do ascribe an importance to pilgrimage that transcends the purely “optional”:

I think that it is something that as a Christian you need to try to do. I don't think it is something you need to do in the sense that you're not a Christian unless you do it. But because it is accessible. Because it does take some effort and you have to save up for it and make the commitment in time. Because [if] it is properly run, and if you do have the experiences that I had, you will find it tiring, emotional, at times very upsetting, deeply upsetting... But nevertheless I am so pleased to have done it... with a group of friends... I think we all know each other... better, I mean, we saw part of our characters exposed in that, in that light out there (and I don't just mean the sun) that we wouldn't perhaps have seen. And I see it... as a beginning.⁸⁷

Inner Peace For some pilgrims, the journey is an ideal context for recuperation and reflection after a difficult transition in life, such as retirement or bereavement:

⁸³ Trudy (I.k) – interview (Cf. Appendix A, Interview B).

⁸⁴ Martha (I.c) – interview.

⁸⁵ “Visit” is derived from the Latin *videre* (to see); “site” in the lexicon of tourism is the object of the “tourist gaze” – and is often called a “sight”. Cf. John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, Chapter 1.

⁸⁶ Cathy (I.m) – interview.

⁸⁷ Michael (I.l) – interview.

I had hoped to use the journey to the Holy Lands to be an opportunity to make a decision. What really happened was that I made my decision to retire in June and thought of cancelling my journey. Fortunately I was advised to proceed with the journey, realizing how much I really needed to deal with the new life I was intending. I had become attached to the image of Jonah, and I was finding all the ways to avoid change and pretend that life would be the same after retirement as before. I was spit out on the shores of Jerusalem to encounter the reality of my decision.⁸⁸

I was widowed... after 39 years of marriage. I took a trip in April to get away from everything. I went to Scotland, and had a very good time. But [then] I went to Jerusalem for a faith seeking journey... I decided to take the pilgrimage to find out if I can touch my inner spiritual self in a place away from home....⁸⁹

Biblical Understanding A very common motivation in many of the interviews is the desire to understand the Bible better. A 1992 pilgrimage of a group of Catholic priests was described by their chronicler as “a kind of journey through the Word of God, in the land where the Word was revealed and written.”⁹⁰ In a similar vein, pilgrims often cite “biblical” motivations before all others:

I wanted to see where the famous stories took place, and where Jesus walked and lived. I hoped it would make the Bible more vivid...⁹¹

[I had] a desire to learn more about the Bible in the context of the land.⁹²

Encountering Jesus Authentic Christian religious experience – specifically an experience of the living presence of Jesus Christ – is a primary motivation for pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in contemporary terms, as it was in the past:

I went to the Holy Land to look for Christ in context, hoping to find him in the very places where he sat, ate and prayed...⁹³

I think I just wanted to... to get to know this man Jesus a bit better, and perhaps things might fall into place better...⁹⁴

The differing contemporary Christologies of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and the Reforming Traditions provide a nuance to the search for Jesus through pilgrimage. In the interviews in this study, the Protestant pilgrims predominantly show a preference for experiences and insights that will lead them to Jesus as a real human person in a particular historical context:

⁸⁸ Tom (III.a) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

⁸⁹ Clinton (III.u) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

⁹⁰ “Basilian Fathers Biblical Program in Israel, July 1-26, 1992”; *Occasional Paper*, Number 14 (September 14, 1992).

⁹¹ Maggie (III.v) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

⁹² Ted (III.p) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

⁹³ Pat (I.a) – “Pilgrim Reflections” (unpublished paper, April 1999) 1.

⁹⁴ Wilma (I.n) – interview.



I wanted to be able to meet Jesus as a real person in the real place... to actually find this real person of Christ... in... the same geography, in the context where he lived and worked.⁹⁵

How these expectations of a significant encounter with Jesus Christ are actually realized in the process of pilgrimage will be a main focus of the theological evaluations of this study.

(b) JOURNEY

Ambiguities of Travel I found that in general the pilgrims I interviewed had not given much thought to the process of the journey itself, focusing more on their intentions and on their experiences upon arrival. This is to be expected, since actual travel time to the Holy Land is now relatively short. There is not much opportunity to consider the challenging aspects of human travel as a mixture of pain and pleasure, difficulty and achievement, necessary and voluntary. Pilgrims do comment on the physical differences between “ordinary” and “spiritual” journeys:

I wanted to walk on the streets of Jerusalem. I didn't necessarily want to be taken anywhere by coach, thank you very much... You know?... And I wanted to have time to reflect on what I had seen and on what the place meant...⁹⁶

In some cases, when encouraged to think about the dynamics of travel to the Holy Land, pilgrims will express a retrospective desire for a more significant physical journey, and remark that the “old-fashioned” ways were probably more conducive to the integration of pilgrimage experiences:

If you're one minute in London and five hours later you're in Tel Aviv in a totally different country, totally different culture, I mean, that is... I think [I prefer] the old ways of travelling years ago when you sort of adjusted... you know, you gradually [got] accustomed to things... and the people around you too, you got to know them...⁹⁷

Excitement and Danger There seems to be a close link between the excitement of undertaking a journey to an exotic destination, consciousness of the risks involved, and the suspicion or even fear of potentially hostile “strangers” encountered on the way. All of these emerge in the interview material in subtle ways, and provide links with the category of “Encounter”. A few examples will set the tone:

⁹⁵ Pat (I.a) – interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C).

⁹⁶ Pat (I.a) – interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C)

⁹⁷ Jim (I.h) – interview.

We went by plane to get there. And then when we got to Jerusalem we travelled by coach. But we did walk around a bit... Well, I was excited and sort of anticipation and things... I didn't know what to expect.⁹⁸

Walking in the Old City for me has been exhilarating, and yet at times, quite frightening. Maybe it has always been like that, even in the time of Christ. The sights, the sounds, the mix of peoples, the smells... the mix of religions and their practice all combine to form a complex and varied spiritual experience.⁹⁹

We went for a walk in the morning, and we... the hotel we were staying at was... just near... an Arab village. And we said to the people who were standing, the men who were congregating, Is it all right if we walk through here? And we went. And there was a little girl on the roof and she said, Shalom!... And I identified her immediately as Muslim, and I said, Salaam!¹⁰⁰

(c) SHRINE

Arrivals Expressions of delight at reaching the Holy Land and Jerusalem are genuine links with the ancient tradition of blessing associated with attaining the Promised Land:

Within minutes we were flying over the Arabian Sea. I could see nothing except cloud. After breakfast on board I sunk into a deep sleep. By the time I woke up we were flying over a desert, a strange scene I had never seen in the past... We flew over and along the Red Sea. It was a very beautiful scene. Though I was seeing the Red Sea for the first time... I felt the scene was familiar to me. Then [a passenger] showed me Eilat and the Dead Sea. In the air I felt like coming home.¹⁰¹

We arrived in Jerusalem quite late in the evening and as we came around the corner... I don't know where I was, but I thought, Are we there yet?... And Jerusalem was sitting on a hill... I mean, I did know, but you don't... you forget things... and the lights and just the feel of it I thought was wonderful as we come round there and saw Jerusalem sitting on a hill...¹⁰²

Reactions Descriptions of shrines marked by churches and chapels in the Holy Land range from the dismissive to the reverent. These descriptions are good gauges of the ambiguous attitude of these pilgrims to the value of the time-honored traditional visible setting of the "pilgrim center". It is striking to find so much reserve and even irony expressed in descriptions of the traditional shrines, for the

⁹⁸ Martha (I.c) – interview.

⁹⁹ Kurt (III.cc) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁰⁰ Becky (I.b) – interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview A).

¹⁰¹ Rev. K. Somi, *A Trip to Jerusalem*, 4-5.

¹⁰² Martha (I.c) – interview.

sake of reaching which these same pilgrims have invested considerable time, money and effort. Some pilgrims frankly record a medley of reactions:

I was not especially interested in these – except from a cultural point of view. I tried to understand the people who made them.¹⁰³

I thought most of the churches just... left me cold. I didn't feel anything. I didn't get a "buzz" or anything. But I wasn't worried about it.¹⁰⁴

My response came in two extremes that left me with mixed emotions. One was a repulsion of a "Dollywood" atmosphere that accompanied the shrines. A detraction that seemed less than reverent. The other was "What an incredibly holy place this is! And how holy the shrines have been for countless generations of people."¹⁰⁵

Some of them yes, I really loved, they had a peaceful... aura about them... Some of the little chapels on the Via Dolorosa – and that was an experience I wasn't particularly looking forward to! But then others, for example, like the Church of the Nativity... with the awful star and oil lamps dripping all over the place... [Laughter]... and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre – Well!...¹⁰⁶

In fact, a visit to the Tomb of Christ in the Church of the Resurrection (known to most as the "Holy Sepulchre") might have a negative effect on one pilgrim, but evoke in another a positive appreciation:

Amidst the crowds and confusion, there were a few minutes actually inside the shrine built over the place where tradition had it that Jesus was buried. There, in that quiet still place, lit only by candles, Jesus met with me afresh. There, in that place that represents his greatest gift to us, I lit a candle to leave something of myself behind to share his darkness and pain...¹⁰⁷

For many pilgrims to the Holy Land, particular venues are especially "focal" for the (positive or negative) religious emotions. These include the Tomb(s) of Christ, the Dominus Flevit Chapel and Gethsemane - all in Jerusalem; the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of St. Gabriel and Annunciation Basilica in Nazareth. Almost universally positive reactions are recorded for the Sea of Galilee with its lake-shore shrines (especially Tabgha); and for any view or experience of the Desert (of Judea, Negev or Sinai):

Many of the sites we visited are traditional... though some, such as the Sea of Galilee, are exactly as they were at the time of Jesus.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ June (III.cc) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁰⁴ Jim (I.h) – interview.

¹⁰⁵ Rick (III.bb) - Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁰⁶ Pat (I.a) – interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C).

¹⁰⁷ Jennie (I.g): "Pilgrimage to the Holy Land" (unpublished paper).

¹⁰⁸ Jennie (I.g): "Pilgrimage to the Holy Land".

The Judaeian Desert sent chills up my spine, it was so desolate. I tried to imagine being there for forty days and nights, it was impossible.¹⁰⁹

A corollary of the discourse on “reaction” is the pilgrim’s prerogative of discovering, accepting, or even “assigning” alternative venues to function as the context for encounter with sacred place when traditional shrines are found unsatisfactory. Theological evaluation of the pilgrim’s experiences at these “subjectively authenticated” sacred places must take into account the interplay between what the pilgrim is told by “tradition”, on one hand, and the imperatives of the pilgrim’s heart, and the intrinsic authority of the “pilgrim gaze”, on the other.

(d) ENCOUNTER

Emotion What “moves” the pilgrim is an encounter. Meetings with “others” are subjective and personal pilgrimage experiences and are measured by emotion rather than common sense or logic:

When I touched that [olive] tree [in the Garden of Gethsemane]... It’s such a simple thing, but it reminded me when the... the girl touched the edges of his hem, and Jesus said, Who touched me? Well, I touched that tree and maybe God knows that I touched that tree... and maybe that tree saw my Lord. And that... perhaps brought me just a bit closer... I wanted to get closer to God. I know he knows me inside out and backwards and inwards. But I... I just wanted to get to know him a little better, and maybe that touch will just help me get closer, not to know better but [be] closer maybe... It was one of those sort of things where you get very choked up. And I... I didn’t want anybody to see me and if I had had a corner to go to I would have probably gone and wept.¹¹⁰

Tears and other affective signs often “signal” an emotional encounter. Interestingly, the shyness about crying with the group is voiced in similar terms by Martha. For her, the catalyst for tears was a visit to the village of Cana in Galilee, where Martha clearly felt deeply touched by memories of her recently deceased husband:

I got quite upset there. So it was very emotional... I think it was a personal thing for me... filled with my husband you know. I tried to be good... I tried... I tried not to cry too many times. [*Laughter*].¹¹¹

A surfeit of emotional stress and religious identification has been known to contribute to an aberration of pilgrimage known as “Jerusalem Syndrome” – a condition happily all but absent from the interview material (although a trace of it may be detected in one case to be described in detail below).

¹⁰⁹ Jess (III.dd) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹¹⁰ Wilma (I.n) – interview.

¹¹¹ Martha (I.c) - interview

The “Other” The subject or occasion of the encounter is not always on the itinerary, and can require some discernment to identify. The simplest category of “other” is the fellow-pilgrim, who might inspire very warm responses:

I just felt that, you know... we would all be friends together. You know, we would all enjoy this experience. And we did... And what was really nice as well, because I met people that I never met in my life before, and they were really, really lovely.¹¹²

Or, a member of the pilgrimage fellowship might be perceived in a different light, perhaps as needing pastoral care:

Well, there was the Dutch lady whose mother had died... and for her it was very traumatic and she needed... ministering to... And we actually did sit down with her, and one of the leaders of the group actually prayed with her. I mean, we were there...¹¹³

Much more significant are encounters with people outside the pilgrimage group. In the Holy Land, when the focus of an encounter is in this category, there is often confusion in the mind of the pilgrim about the identity of the persons involved. There is, for example, much mixture of religious and political terminology. “Jewish soldiers” (meaning Israeli soldiers, many of whom are Druze and Bedouin) is a good example. Sometimes the (Muslim) Dome of the Rock is called a “temple” or a “church”. Naturally enough, the visitor does not know much about local ethnic and religious groupings. For example, meetings with Christian Arabs are, for most pilgrims, not only serendipitous (rather than scheduled), but something of a revelation:

You know, they’re Christians and they’re Arabs... I didn’t really think about it before I went. I thought so Arabs is Arabs and Muslims is Muslims, Jews... you know, and things like this, and when I went there, to see the Christian Arabs... and they were wonderful people, you know... That was a surprise, yes, a meeting, a surprise for me.¹¹⁴

Encounters with guides Pilgrim groups to the Holy Land, like tours, are required by local law to engage the services of a locally trained and licensed guide. Because of the complex political conditions prevailing in Israel and the Occupied Territories, the status of the guiding community is today in flux; however, in principle a local Israeli tour agency may employ Palestinian guides (Christians or Muslims), and Palestinian agencies often employ Israelis (either Arabs or Jews).

For many members of the pilgrim group, the guide will be the only local person with whom they have any conversation at all; he (or – rarely – she) will “represent” all local Jews, or Christians, or Muslims. Pat, for example, knows that Christians constitute a tiny minority in the Holy Land, so for her, a Christian guide is symbolic of an authentic and struggling faith:

¹¹² Martha (I.c) – interview.

¹¹³ Jim (I.h) – interview.

¹¹⁴ Martha (I.c) - interview.

For him, his Christian faith was very real... it had to be worked at. Whereas I think in the West we tend to take so much for granted... I had heard that before, from Christians in Russia and places like that – where it is... a *real* struggle to be Christian.¹¹⁵

Muslim guides and Jewish guides, however, are seen more as sources of information about the country, and as voices for conflicting interpretations of the present situation:

The [guide] we had was Muslim. And the places that we went to, if they were particular Christian places, he did maintain this very objective umm... presentation about them. He would also... he also talked to us about his own people several times... The other thing was, he didn't appear to have a sense of humor. [*Laughter*]. That was all.¹¹⁶

Guides are not always remembered with appreciation. An elderly female pilgrim who had visited the Holy Land four times remembered an unpleasant encounter with a Palestinian guide during her first pilgrimage:

On this night we went to the King David Hotel, he said to me there was something he'd like to show me in the garden, it was very special... So [*Laughter*]... I was stupid at my age not to see right through that one... The next moment I was struggling in the bushes!¹¹⁷

In spite of his offensive behavior, Jane was able to say that this man was “a good guide, apart from that. He really knew Jerusalem... He really knew it.” On a subsequent pilgrimage, Jane's group had a Jewish guide, who, she remembers, “wasn't quite as good... He had a much more Jewish slant on everything... He highlighted so much the wonderful things the Jewish government was doing.”¹¹⁸

Pilgrims were asked what qualities they would look for if asked to hire a local guide in the Holy Land.

Becky (I.b): I would ask that they were... a person who had... some religious awe – but I wouldn't ask for a Christian... I actually consider that my Christianity has been illuminated and helped by the very devout Muslims that I have known... I would want somebody who was extremely well informed... [who] had good social skills, and who was fluent in English.

Wilma (I.n): Somebody who could empathize with us... Clearly someone who had knowledge... Someone who... had not just the knowledge but [the ability] to explain [it] to others.

¹¹⁵ Pat (I.a) - interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C).

¹¹⁶ Pat (I.a) - interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C).

¹¹⁷ Jane (I.o) – interview.

¹¹⁸ Jane (I.o) - interview.

Pat (I.a): Somebody who had an interest, obviously, in the holy sites... and somebody who had... some idea of the Christian faith.

Encounters with Muslims The Christian pilgrims I interviewed lacked extensive knowledge of Islam, and as a rule they may never have met a Muslim before their arrival in Jerusalem. They therefore brought with them only attitudes (positive or negative) already formed by their culture or education. One pilgrim, for example, might acknowledge a tenuous link between a Muslim shrine and the scriptures of Christianity, while denying any intrinsic “beauty” to Islam’s symbols:

Everybody said, You must go in [to the Dome of the Rock], it’s such a beautiful building. And I didn’t find it beautiful. Umm... I did go underneath [into] the cave... where Abraham took Isaac... and of course that means something, because it is part of the Old Testament...¹¹⁹

By contrast, another pilgrim has a positive encounter with Islam in the discovery that Muslim spaces of prayer are more beautiful, or more reflective and “spiritual” than expected, and sometimes compare favorably with Christian shrines. A radical theological reflection on this is offered by Pat:

I totally agree with the universality of God. And that it doesn’t actually matter in a sense what religion you are, God covers... for me God covers all. The Upper Room I was very taken with... And there it is, and it’s a Muslim mosque... And there it is, you know? And I thought that was just wonderful!¹²⁰

Some pilgrims, however, judge encounters in terms of norms dictated by a theology of exclusive truth. Muslims in particular are given very little unbiased respect, and are sometimes relegated to paganism:

And then we were going on to the Rock, the Dome of the Rock... And we went up there, and I didn’t want to go into the Muslim place, so I sat on the steps outside with my back to it and I was just praying... I just don’t think that Christians should go into a place where... another god is worshiped.¹²¹

This latter attitude will be considered more closely below, as it is emblematic of a rigid theological stance which can have a deep emotional effect on an individual pilgrim and an entire group.

Encounters with Jews Indications are that the pilgrims interviewed were often struggling with an ambiguous response to Judaism and to the Jewish people they encountered. An awareness of the history of persecution of Jews in Christian Europe, and of the Holocaust in particular, gives many pilgrims a predisposition to approach Jewish shrines with respect and even identification:

¹¹⁹ Dan (I.j) – interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview B).

¹²⁰ Pat (I.a) – interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C).

¹²¹ Trudy (I.k) – interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview B).

We went to the Wailing Wall, and I'm not a Jew, yet I felt the need to put a note in the Wall, and I did that. There was only a few of us did that, of our party.¹²²

There is another aspect of encounter with Judaism which emerges regularly in Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and that is symbolized by Yad Vashem, the Jerusalem Holocaust Memorial. A visit to Yad Vashem is almost invariably an experience of deep grief, soul-searching and a sense of guilt for Christians.

I hadn't been to Yad Vashem, and I found that fairly emotionally draining... I have in fact spent part of my life working with Jewish people. I knew and loved one in particular who was the sole survivor of her family. My husband's father was Jewish... I looked in the hall where they have the flame and the names of the concentration camps and I looked at the ones where people I knew... the members of the family I know had died... And I wanted to walk around that by myself and... remember that there must be unknown members of my children's family... that died there... You always like to think that if it had happened here you would have been the person that hid the Jews and helped them but of course most of us would not, and I think it asks you to examine yourself...¹²³

It is largely due to the awareness of the Holocaust and of the responsibility of "Christian societies" for not preventing it, that Christians visiting in Israel and Palestine very often have a positive expectation of Judaism. This is not always supported by their meetings with Jews in the "Jewish State", especially if modern Israelis don't "measure up" to the expected "Holocaust victim" pattern:

We found ourselves sitting at a table with two Israeli coach drivers – not ours! And they said to us, We don't want to talk politics, so we talked football [*Laughter*]... They were quite categorical, you know... No politics. I thought that was a pity.¹²⁴

Encounters with people of other faiths occasion some discomfort as well as introspection for pilgrims. Interview transcripts reflect an embarrassment about exhibiting attitudes toward Jews which might not be "proper". However, the perceived impact of the encounter cannot be totally kept "under wraps":

[Arabs] were friendly and interesting, very kind and... just good to talk to... I found them more friendly than the Jewish people... You know... That's only the people I met, I mean I shouldn't categorize, you know... a race...¹²⁵

Radical Encounters There is little doubt that the political and social realities in Israel/Palestine provide some of the most striking and unconventional features of today's Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The sheer unfamiliarity, bordering on shock, of being confronted with armed soldiers, people living under

¹²² Trudy (I.k) – interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview B).

¹²³ Becky (I.b) - interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview A).

¹²⁴ Becky (I.b) - interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview A).

¹²⁵ Martha (I.c) - interview.

occupation, representatives of the establishments, and peace and justice proponents of various kinds – echoes through almost all the interviews and accounts:

It was a journey into both the past and the present, with the political situation never far away. The land and the peoples are just as divided today as they were in the time of Jesus. We passed through roadblocks surrounding Jerusalem, cutting it off from the Palestinian controlled area, and ventured very close to the borders with Lebanon and Syria in the north. We saw young Israeli soldiers, both men and women, mostly off-duty or awaiting transport by the roadside, always carrying weapons.¹²⁶

For some, the contingencies of politics “interfere” with the flow of the pilgrimage:

I didn’t expect the political dimension. I expected a spiritual journey... I expected history. I expected to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. I didn’t expect to come face to face with Israeli and Palestinian tension, intolerance, inequality, diminishing of human rights..¹²⁷

The golden dome of the Temple on the Rock, the wonderful Moslem temple, dominates the scene, but this was a place we missed because the Jewish soldiers at the checkpoint slowed the queue so that we could not be admitted in time. This brought home to us the uneasy relations between all the religious groups, especially as minutes before we had been enjoying the sight of Jewish families at the Western Wall celebrating their sons’ Bar-Mitzvahs.¹²⁸

Not uncommonly, comments indicate a widespread ignorance of “what is really going on” in the Holy Land, until pilgrims see it with their own eyes:

We went to Bethlehem University... The fact that some of these students... were held at roadblocks for, you know, two or three hours, and by that time they had missed their lectures... They were kept at the roadblocks deliberately, and because they missed the curfews they were thrown into prison. You know? I mean, it’s horrific, isn’t it? And... I didn’t know about that. I didn’t know any of that. I mean, you can call that ignorance, but I didn’t.¹²⁹

To a great extent, it seems to be the impingement of political reality upon the “ideal” itinerary that awakens the pilgrim to the undercurrent of conflict. At this point some pilgrims try to ignore the political in order to focus on the personal and “spiritual”, but this seems to be a rare response. Most of those interviewed expressed a wish to be further informed and even to engage in some action to improve the situation.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Jennie (I.g) : “Pilgrimage to the Holy Land” (unpublished paper).

¹²⁷ Michael (I.I) – interview.

¹²⁸ Alicia (I.f): “My Pilgrimage” (written account printed in her church bulletin).

¹²⁹ Pat (I.a) - interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C).

¹³⁰ My findings here are corroborated by the observations of an administrator of a pilgrimage and study center in Jerusalem (St. George’s College). The Rev. Canon John Peterson, for 12 years dean of the College, writes that “many students [at the College] have no developed interest in or commitment to the politics of this land, yet they develop that interest to varying degrees while they are here...”

Some pilgrims experience frustration at their inability, in the short time given them, to absorb, understand and adequately respond to the nuances of the political scene. In some cases, this is evident in the terminology they use. A visit to a clinic in (Palestinian) Bethlehem is described:

...an energetic Palestinian lady was counseling Arab families who had been displaced in the various conflicts in war-torn Israel. Her own children were terrified of going on the bus – buses were bomb targets! Bethlehem taught us so much about what life is like in Israel”.¹³¹

It is easy for pilgrims (educated only by what they have read in the press) to confuse Palestinian with Israeli territory (Bethlehem is not in Israel but in the West Bank), and to be unsure about exactly who are the protagonists and antagonists in the conflict. Many, however, do have a strong subliminal awareness that to say “Israel” or “Palestine” is not sufficient to represent the entire Holy Land. They veer away from political tags, in an effort to be “correct” and not fall into a contemporary pitfall. In the course of her interview, Martha seems unsure what is the “correct” way to refer to the Holy Land, so she says: “That’s how I felt about Israel... You know... Jerusa-... well, Jerusalem.”

Astute pilgrims are quickly able to distinguish the voices of both sides of an out-of-balance political and social equation; the pilgrim’s effort to maintain compassionate neutrality is palpable:

I think ... you shouldn’t always judge until you perhaps see... I mean, I can’t judge now, because I don’t know it well enough, I don’t think anyone is in a position to judge... I think it was enlightening to speak to all these different people.¹³²

I’m not a historian but I’m interested in current affairs... I’ve always been interested in Israel as a... crossroads of East and West... And I think that is what interested me more than anything... A chance to visit the Palestinian psychiatric clinic and to hear just the undertones... the way they are talking about their work and the pressures they are under... And then going into the home of the Jewish woman on one of the settlements, and hearing her sort of very confident and almost [a] lack of understanding of – I mean I am not sure it was true, but you know – she gave the impression, Well this is our place, you know... This land was bought in the nineteen-thirties, we haven’t robbed any Palestinian of their land...¹³³

[Some of these] for the first time meet Christ in the suffering of the Palestinian people and... return home either wanting to assist in some way from there or to return to be of help to these people...” (Private correspondence, 1992).

¹³¹ Alicia (I.f): “My Pilgrimage” (written account).

¹³² Martha (I.c) - interview.

¹³³ Jim (I.h) – interview.

I was very disturbed by the number of settlements that have been built around Jerusalem by the Jewish people, but you know... we didn't see much of the Palestinian quarter, did we?¹³⁴

She was a Palestinian... She had lived in America for a long time, and wasn't actually accepted back... Still was working on a visa... twelve years. You know, still had no citizenship, from either side, Palestinian or Israeli...¹³⁵

I found meeting with the Palestinian students... very significant. I felt... very angry. I felt... sorry for them. I know... it was early on and we hadn't heard anything else, perhaps, from both sides...¹³⁶

The impact of these encounters and reflections will have wide theological ramifications, especially if the political insights hinted at here are brought to a further level of radicalization by individual pilgrims through a commitment to social or political action or a form of "going native", in which the pilgrim transcends the pilgrimage itinerary in sometimes disturbing ways. In the next chapter, we will see that the measure of theological coherence and relevance in such radical encounters is determined by observing the delicate balance between healthy spirituality and incipient psychosis.

Encountering Christ in the "Other"

A pilgrim experiencing a semi-psychotic episode (e.g. like Jerusalem syndrome) might have a vision of Christ at a particular shrine. Pilgrims with faith-exclusive claims might see the "other" (a fellow pilgrim or a stranger) as either rejected (judged) or received (converted) by Christ. In such a "judgement", Christ might be represented, as it were, by the pilgrim/disciple – giving the latter a "dramatic" authoritative status, if only in their own eyes. These phenomena are all illustrated to some extent in the interview material.

In stark contrast, however, is the radical theological step of *recognizing Christ himself in the other*, and relating to that other, accepting that other, without judgement, *as the pilgrim believes Christ does*:

At some point I realized that I was looking for the wrong Christ. And that I would like to go back and get to know these people [met along the way], and talk to them... I was given the grace in order to find glimpses of Christ in the Holy Land. Such grace was only given after I had realized that I would not be able to find him in the Holy Land of the Gospels, unless... I could find him in the Holy Land of today, in its conflicts, in its people...¹³⁷

The climax of religious encounter seems to come for these pilgrims at a point of intersection between their quest for Christ and their *acceptance* of the culturally and religious "other" in the context of the tense and incongruous contemporary situation in Israel/Palestine. This is expressed in poetic form by Pat:

¹³⁴ Linda (I.i) - interview.

¹³⁵ Jim (I.h) - interview.

¹³⁶ Cathy (I.m) - interview.

¹³⁷ Pat (I.a): "Pilgrimage Reflections" (1)

I found [Christ] in the Palestinian street seller
of 'holy' artifacts,
Who kindly offered me coffee
At Tabgha's holy gate

I found him in the Jewish nurse,
Who helped a mate of mine

I found him in the struggling students
Of Bethlehem's University,
As they told us of the daily conflict
between Muslim, Christian and Jew.

I found him gazing upon
A thousand candle children
In the dark,
At Yad Vashem¹³⁸

Earlier, in interview, Pat had already expressed the theological necessity of encountering Christ in present contingency, not only in past story. She uses the terms "Christ of the Gospels" and "Christ of today" to indicate the organic link she feels between present and past:

I don't think you can find Christ... the Christ of yesterday, the Christ of the Gospels... until you can see the Christ of today... And you can't do that on a pilgrimage unless you have the opportunity to meet with the people who live there, you know?¹³⁹

(e) RETURN

Telling the Story Pilgrims are eager to tell their tale,¹⁴⁰ sometimes more so than others are to hear:

I wanted to tell everybody about it. The family were all... Oh... They were all interested, but I think interested perhaps on a more superficial level, of, you know... of was the sun shining, what was it like swimming in the Dead Sea... I think they probably were a little surprised how spiritually it affected me... It's taken a long time though for me to put a lot of things in place, and I actually 'download' a lot of things, experiences, it's all so intense... So it took a long time, and it's only now really that things are beginning to make more sense and be more real...¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Pat (I.a) – unpublished poem.

¹³⁹ Pat (I.a) - interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview C).

¹⁴⁰ The evidence of the interviews supports Aziz ("Personal Dimensions" 259 - "Pilgrims often talk of their experiences with imagination and confidence") against Coleman and Elsner (*Pilgrimage: Past and Present* 237 - "Pilgrims tend to be rather inarticulate about their pilgrimages and motivations").

¹⁴¹ Cathy (I.m) – interview.

This same pilgrim had also volunteered to collect the written reflections of her group, and in the process found that pilgrims who sent early responses tended to emphasize what they had seen and done, “and also how tired they were”, while reflections received later “are much more of a spiritual nature, when they’ve actually had time... to put things in context.”

One pilgrim explicitly described how he found in his home community a genuine readiness to listen and absorb the story of his pilgrimage, and this gave him a sense of joyful and kerygmatic purpose, clearly a defining aspect of his homecoming:

How on earth can I communicate what I have experienced deep down within me to people back home who have no experience of travel abroad, let alone to the Holy Land? I found that not only was it possible, to tell the right spiritual things, no snapshots, just “This is how I felt, this is what I saw...” Not only was it possible, but people were almost desperate. There was a real yearning to hear, understand, get to grips with the kinds of things I felt I was trying to tell them. So I had some very positive experiences.¹⁴²

Putting the journey in a continuing context is sometimes facilitated by the “souvenirs” and mementos pilgrims bring back with them. Such postmodern relics are not always found in the market. For Jane, a theological continuity was established between her home context and a significant shrine (the Chapel of St. Peter’s Primacy at Tabgha) by means of an ordinary pebble:

It all happened two thousand years ago, and yet there is that continuing thread that never breaks, that links it to now... A sense of presence I suppose is what it is... The first time I went [to the Holy Land] I picked up a stone out of the Sea of Galilee... it was on the shore at Tabgha... And someone had said to me that you always get some sort of special message when you go to the Holy Land, you see. And I can’t say that I got a special message... I came back here. I lived in this flat when I was a widow, and I went out on the shore one sunny morning... and I picked up a stone there, and the sun was shining on the ordinary seashore. And... I got that link feeling. This is another pebble on another beach at another time. But it’s... In other words, the spirit of Jesus is with us there, it’s with us here, it’s with us where ever we go. And it’s very clear to me: that’s my message from the Holy Land.¹⁴³

Responding Theologically
of her pilgrimage, Janice said:

When asked about the most significant aspect

Coming home. Why? Coming home from anything is trying to get my head around what it means. Out of the ordinary into the extraordinary, [and then] relating that to the very real pilgrim life here at home.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Stan (II.t) - interview (Cf. Appendix A – Interview D).

¹⁴³ Jane (I.o) - interview.

¹⁴⁴ Janice (II.r) – interview.

As we have already seen,¹⁴⁵ pilgrims generally feel there was a significant theological difference between a tour and a pilgrimage, although the actual distinction often emerges for them only in retrospect:

Being together... all having one aim, if I can say it like that. You, know, that we was all together and... for a reason. Not to just see the historical places.¹⁴⁶

Actually going to that place, and making it a special pilgrimage, when you are already a Christian, it's something very special. I think it would be a holiday and a tour for someone who wasn't a Christian... And they would probably feel slightly aggravated by all the situations there. [*Laughter*]. But to go as a Christian... You get such a different feeling about yourself and about your own faith, and your own beliefs...¹⁴⁷

A Roman Catholic pilgrim summed up the theological impact of his journey in terms of a broadening of significant relationships:

Theologically, I was aware of a deepening of my appreciation for the giftedness we all shared in our relationship with God and one another and the understanding that true religion is not just an affiliation to one community or another, but rather a relationship with a loving God who came to save all people...¹⁴⁸

Bringing the Bible Home Historically, a chief focus especially of Protestant pilgrimage has historically been the search for “proofs and confirmations of the Bible,” in an age of growing scientific skepticism. The conviction that the Bible is true was often purported to be achieved in pilgrimage, not through logical argumentation, but through a “persuasive resonance” experienced in the juxtaposition of the Land and the Book.

While the tenor of the postmodern world has obviated demands for “proofs” of biblical veracity, the resonance of appreciation for the clarifying effects of a journey to the biblical lands is still very audible in pilgrim narratives:

I've been able to bring things back... Like the Bible! It's a picture book for me, and someone said to me only recently, You've made the Bible not only come alive for yourself, but you've made the Bible come alive for me by the descriptions... and that is the main thing for me that I am able to share with the people back home. Although I try to be evangelical, I find it difficult... And yet I've been able to do just that in a quiet way, you know, to bring it alive for other people...¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Cf. above, “Motivation” and “Journey”.

¹⁴⁶ Martha (I.c) - interview.

¹⁴⁷ Cathy (I.m) – interview.

¹⁴⁸ Norm (III.y) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁴⁹ Trudy (I.k) - interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview B)

It makes the Bible more human to me. Does that make sense to you?... It brings it to life. It was a story perhaps before, but now it's really happening... And it makes Jesus more human as well... as a person that you can relate to more.¹⁵⁰

I preach a lot. It's part of my job. But more than that, it's part of me. When I am preparing a sermon, being able to visualize... Just visualizing around Jerusalem. So many times in Scripture it says: "Going up to Jerusalem". I hadn't realized really that it was really right up there!¹⁵¹

Seeing Jesus in a New Way The most salient theological challenge expressed in Protestant pilgrim reflections from the past was certainly the tension between the "ideal" Christ of the four canonical Gospels (especially John), on one hand, and the "real and human" Jesus evidenced in the geographical "resonances" of Palestine. According to this view, pilgrims undergo a maturing process (mediated by sacred geography) whereby they turn from an abstract ecclesiastically determined Christ to a flesh-and-blood Jesus truly experienced in faith:

They had known, or had hardly known, a remote figure of ritual, and now perceived the humanity at last. They felt they could begin where the apostles began – come to a man because he was such a man, and then slowly find conviction that more was in him than man.¹⁵²

Significant divergences from these traditional parameters of theological discourse about the Christ of faith emerge in the interview material. Developments in New Testament scholarship in recent decades have made "Jesus of history" studies accessible through articles and popular books to lay Christians everywhere. In general, therefore, the pilgrims interviewed did *not* return home with a whole new vision of Jesus, or with their religious faith in him transformed in any significant doctrinal way. This observation is especially striking in view of pilgrims' widely held hopes (noted above: "Motivation") to "meet Jesus as if for the first time". In its simplest terms, this expectation does not seem to have been widely met. An instructive exception that proves the rule was the elderly retired teacher whose perception of Jesus was indeed changed during her pilgrimage. This change was effected, not only by her encounter with the Land of the Gospels (as in the "Fifth Gospel" tradition), but also (significantly) by her subsequent reading of "Historical Quest" authors like Marcus Borg. In this case, the pilgrim's "new vision" of Jesus was derived, I believe, primarily from her reading, and was projected back onto her pilgrimage. In any event, all this served to enhance her commitment to her life as a church-going Christian:

The journey definitely changed me... I think Jesus became a different and much more real person to me, not a magical sweetie who moved about effortlessly until his death, not just the angry Jesus who put up with no nonsense or desecrations, not the miracle worker though the miracles are key, but a charming, witty, funny, charismatic, congenial, fun-loving and

¹⁵⁰ Martha (I.c) - interview.

¹⁵¹ Gary (II.h) - interview.

¹⁵² Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*; quoted in *Patterns of the Sacred*, 31.

generally loving man. The church for me is still what it has always been, but my relationship with the daily readings of the lectionary, my daily support from God, is somehow merrier, lighter, more intimate. I need to keep thinking about this as it is truly a transformation, and of course I am endlessly grateful.¹⁵³

In contrast to Lottie's experience, when asked whether the journey raised any theological questions, pilgrims for the most part said they did not think so:

Not in terms of the fundamentals of my faith. All the issues of the "Quest for the historical Jesus" I have already been exposed to and dealt with in Episcopal Seminary...¹⁵⁴

It didn't raise any contentious theological issues... There were a lot of things said which I hadn't understood, didn't know, which helped... I can't think there were theological issues...¹⁵⁵

No, I don't think it did, really... I think it sharpened and clarified things for me, too... But I don't actually think it raised questions. It was too absorbing and too... total. Perhaps if I went again to these holy places...¹⁵⁶

I didn't sort of suddenly have one moving experience. I think... one or two people did, but, no, I didn't. But then, as I say, I didn't go there thinking... something's suddenly going to change... It's a learning curve, if you like, for me... I tend to drink that sort of thing up, and... add to my knowledge... I think that everybody's different. I'm not one to sort of have a big revelation, you know...¹⁵⁷

Radical Process and Pilgrim Conscience There were a number of pilgrims, however, who experienced a marked change in their attitudes to the *practice* (as opposed to the *doctrines*) of their faith during and after the pilgrimage. For example, simple but profound enhancement of an existing liturgical rite is "brought home" by one pilgrim into the context of her vocation as a religious educator at Easter time:

I give each of my students a candle from a huge bundle I bought in the Via Dolorosa and took in to the tomb of the Holy Sepulchre and lit from the "holy fire", telling them, as we pass the fire, the story of the Easter fire as it takes place there at each Easter vigil. My students have found this very moving and it gives them a sense of connection to this holy place.¹⁵⁸

Deeper aspects of a radical and transforming theological process are easily found in the interview material. These were the most sensitive area of research, and required

¹⁵³ Lottie (III. ee) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁵⁴ Rick (III. bb) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁵⁵ Michael (I. l) – interview.

¹⁵⁶ Cathy (I. m) – interview.

¹⁵⁷ Martha (I. c) - interview.

¹⁵⁸ Rita (III. gg) - Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

a correspondingly cautious approach to the interview process. For Maggie, for example, the theological questions raised brought into focus issues of interfaith encounter and the quest for justice, both of which she relates to her personal understanding of who Jesus was (and is):

We were being faced with questions and challenges all the time... I am still working on the question of whether Jesus saw his mission in terms of the Jewish people only... I had not realized before what it might mean to Jesus to grow up steeped completely in the Jewish culture... The other question is the inevitable contemporary one – in the present Israeli/Palestinian conflict, where is God?¹⁵⁹

A very similar insight is voiced by the pilgrim who recognized that the darker aspects of the general situation of conflict he witnessed can be in some way redeemed on the level of compassionate human encounter:

Questions such as – Where is God in all this? as I observed the oppression and intimidation of the people... the paradoxes such as how religious toleration in the Holy Land is both so impossible to achieve and at the same time such an example to the rest of the world... - at an everyday ordinary level, when one human rubs alongside another...¹⁶⁰

Pilgrimage can engender an awakening in the pilgrim of some hitherto unrecognized aspect of Christian vocation. Rose, a pilgrim who is also a pastor, found that her pilgrimage evoked “a terrible sense of responsibility” for others:

These people, and this place, and I cannot do anything!... I felt like I was carrying everyone inside me. The strangest feeling... In terms of pilgrimage, I learned a lot about... my capacity to carry people inside me.¹⁶¹

A pilgrim who wrote frankly that his journey had not raised any questions “in terms of the fundamentals of my faith”, nevertheless went on to indicate a deeply challenging “theological dilemma”:

How do I, as a Christian and an American, respond to the injustices inflicted by Israel on the Palestinian people?¹⁶²

Encounters – especially radical encounters – are powerful incentives to the development of the “pilgrim conscience”. Home from Jerusalem, reflecting on such a dramatic “chance encounter”, one pilgrim (John) recounts his brush with danger:

I crossed the Old City and [went] out... through the Damascus Gate. I could hear shouting... I could see people looking in one direction. I followed their gaze and walked with the crowd. Boys were throwing stones... The noise was incessant. Sirens. Horns. The explosive concussion of gunfire. I had

¹⁵⁹ Maggie (III.v) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁶⁰ Abe (III.aa) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁶¹ Rose (II.i) - interview. (Cf. Appendix A – Interview D).

¹⁶² Rick (III.bb) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

walked into a disturbance... The stone came. Blood poured over me. I turned, confused, embarrassed. Hands held me...¹⁶³

John goes on to tell how Palestinians he met at the hospital apologized and explained:

“We are sorry. This is not your conflict. It was a blind stone. It was not aimed at you deliberately...” There was reconciliation in their words. Later I met a Palestinian mother. She had three sons... She explained that stonethrowing is a sign of despair and frustration. Each time her lads went out she expected one of them to be maimed... “You must live here to understand”.

Having noted this counterpoint of confrontation and compassion, John now translates the ambiguity of history into terms of Christian discipleship. He first quotes Marcus Borg’s words: “Christ says: ... Follow me into the historical crisis of your time and as a person of Spirit discover your discipleship,”¹⁶⁴ then goes on to apply this to his own experience:

As Israel celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, for others it was a day of grieving... For me it was a chastening experience. I had been compelled by the crowd, the noise... That was my historical setting at the time. I had tried to be a spectator... Stones flung inviting a response hit someone who thought he could just watch. It was a time to learn that if you want to experience reconciliation you can’t stay on the sidelines and watch...¹⁶⁵

Tempered by memory, such harsh encounters can be evaluated in terms of the Christian’s vocation to act with compassion and tolerance as part of the living of the Gospel “into the historical crisis”. As a different pilgrim put it,

I became more conscious of “Faith doing Justice”. I must together with others pray-doing Peace and Justice. I became very aware of human rights violations and want to do my part... to create a better world.¹⁶⁶

In the opinion of another pilgrim,¹⁶⁷ anger becomes wisdom through reflection, and has an abiding spiritual effect that goes far beyond inspiration to social awareness. The awakening of the pilgrim conscience can only be fully appreciated and practiced in the context of return to one’s home and to one’s inner self:

While I got angry about what was happening there... when I got back home... I could see the same echoes and shadows of intolerance everywhere... A pilgrimage is not something that happens just in the Holy Land – it’s a life journey. And the passion and the power and the pain of the

¹⁶³ John Rackley, “I got stoned in Jerusalem” (unpublished paper; 1998).

¹⁶⁴ Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (New York: HarperCollins 1987).

¹⁶⁵ Rackley, “I got stoned in Jerusalem”.

¹⁶⁶ Sue (III.z) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹⁶⁷ Already quoted above – Michael (I.I) – interview.

Lord is relevant everywhere. But... there's the same intolerance where I work...And I see it in myself. I see it in myself.

CHAPTER THREE: UNDERSTANDING THE WAY

The previous chapter presented qualitative summaries of the *verbatim* data collected during the interview process, reflecting a range of pilgrims' responses to questions arising from the five categories established for pilgrimage experience. In the present chapter, we will set the pilgrims' words in a broader cognitive context. Our goal here is to reach the most comprehensive understanding possible of the ambiguities and integrative processes of these pilgrims' sacred journeys. This chapter, then, will give consideration to the interplay between historical, sociological and anthropological observations of the pilgrim experience, in preparation for a theological evaluation.

(A) MOTIVATION

The earliest extensive Christian pilgrimage narrative is that of Egeria in the fourth century. Referring to the primary reason for her journey, she uses the term *desiderium* ("holy longing"¹) - a yearning constantly being fulfilled and yet never entirely satisfied:

Next day I crossed the sea... giving thanks to Christ our God for seeing fit, through no deserving of mine, to grant me the desire (*desiderium*) to go on this journey, and the strength to visit everything I wanted, and now to return again...²

Historically speaking, as noted by Sumption and others, Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land was consistently more "spiritually" motivated than pilgrimage to other shrines. The widespread urge to collect relics and see miracles was to a degree replaced, in Jerusalem, by the desire to pray at the very places visited by Jesus. The perceived historical reality of God's redemption was evidenced, in the Holy Land, by the places themselves, rather than by the healings and miracles that characterized pilgrimage to non-biblical shrines. For Turner, Jerusalem is a "prototypical" pilgrim center - directly related to the life of the religion's founder. The yearning for unmediated encounter with the Christ of Scripture and faith has, then, always been the *leit-motif* of the Holy Land journey.

Morinis has pointed out that "the motives pilgrims give for their pilgrimage reveal the conscious model... within which the individual plans and executes actions... The anthropology of pilgrimage has given too little attention to the personal side... of which motives are one aspect."³ If ancient pilgrims went to Jerusalem to witness and to live out the sacred text (of Christ's life especially), what do today's pilgrims say about their motives, and how will these motives "model" their experiences?

¹ This is the term used by Egeria's eulogist, Valerius (Cf. Wilkinson, *Egeria*, 43). I am grateful to Prof. J. Robert Wright for the suggestion that Egeria's use of *desiderium* may be a literary echo of the words of Jesus at the Last Supper (*desiderio desideravi* - Lk. 22:15) - a clearly sacramental context.

² *It. Eg.* 23.8; Wilkinson.

³ Alan Morinis, "Introduction: The Territory of the Anthropology of Pilgrimage", in: *Sacred Journeys*, 19-20.

1. CONTEMPORARY MOTIVES AND HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

Examination of the interview material reveals expressions of motivation that are sometimes very strong, sometimes more casual, but always nuanced into various modes. Not surprisingly, the contemporary pilgrims interviewed made hardly any use of the medieval terms of Sumption's thesis (i.e. relics, mission, miracles, healing, and penitence). This does not, however, indicate that pilgrimage has lost its "passionate desire to translate the mysteries of the faith into realities".⁴ Rather, this translation now involves a different, more subtle and more ambiguous idiom.

(a) RELICS

The issue of relics is a good example. Eric Leed has described the quest for relics in ancient pilgrimage as related to the "search for the true and original beginnings of a sacred world", through the "reproduction of its sacred elements".⁵ Historically, there did exist a cult of relics in Jerusalem, although focused for the most part on "place-relics" – bits of rock and soil, little vials of water or blessed oil, etc. – rather than on bodily relics. Theologically, in medieval terms, this can be understood as reflecting the belief that while the body of Jesus is primarily "enshrined" in the Eucharistic sacrament, it is also in a sense "re-membered" in a particular geography. The soil, rock, wood and water of the Holy Land were understood to be sanctified by Jesus' physical and historical presence, and therefore they became for the medieval pilgrim holy by association with him.

The pilgrims interviewed in this study, mostly from Protestant traditions, did not (as we have seen above) related positively to the concept of "relics". These same pilgrims did, however, often bring back physical "souvenirs" of a religious nature. The meaning of these mementos varies with the context, and is generally *not* conceived in terms of *intrinsic* sanctity. One woman brought back from Jerusalem the following items: three skullcaps (yarmulkes) for her son and two grandsons who had been invited to a "Passover meal at their church" (apparently an interfaith initiative); a recipe book for her daughter; a Jerusalem cross; a picture book; bookmarks; and wooden Christmas tree ornaments. Her husband (who was ordained) had purchased a white liturgical stole that he said he was "thrilled with". He clearly regretted, however, not having been able to buy an olive-wood figure of some kind from Bethlehem – something "that's going to remind me always of my visit... I'd have liked a wooden figure... I wish I had a Good Shepherd... You know, I thought about it afterwards... A bit of an excuse to go again!"⁶

There is clearly a deeply felt *representative* significance to these "memorials" of the journey. An article of clothing (e.g. the skullcaps and the stole) may represent integration of the pilgrim's journey into the life of the worshipping community (not only Christian but also interfaith) at home.⁷ The same can be said of the popular "Jerusalem cross"; this is now so often obtained by pilgrims that it has become

⁴ Sumption 48.

⁵ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler* 146.

⁶ Jim (I.h) – interview.

⁷ The inclusion of the skullcaps in a Christian pilgrim's postmodern "reliquary" is an important indication of interfaith contexts unheard of in medieval pilgrimage.

almost the equivalent of the ancient tradition of the pendant-vial of holy oil.⁸ The most significant objects are often not purchased. One pilgrim described her deep sense of “continuity” with the spiritual aspect of her pilgrimage symbolized in a pebble picked up by the Sea of Galilee.⁹ It is not impossible to refer, then, to “postmodern relics” – physical items that have been endowed by the pilgrim with some representative spiritual significance, indicating continuity and/or memory.

A special genre of the “postmodern pilgrim relic” is the photograph. An album of photographs is often able to evoke the deepest remembered emotions, and sometimes a particular photograph may be designated as “evidence” of a spiritual encounter. While further specific study of the role of photography in pilgrimage will be needed to evaluate this aspect of the journey,¹⁰ it should be noted that the representative role of the camera (and the pilgrim’s sketch-book) may at times surpass in theological impact the oral or written verbal records of the pilgrimage.

(b) MISSION

Studies are now available examining the theological foundations and practices of “mission” in the historical and contemporary Church.¹¹ It is a salient aspect of these studies that the negative side of Christian mission enterprises in the past is being exposed and critiqued. One recent researcher spells this out in no uncertain terms:

The dark side of Christian mission is the history of force exerted to coerce peoples to adopt Christianity as their creed and religion. The history offers such blatant examples that the very notion of Christian mission is linked inextricably in the minds of many people today with the notion of forcing people to become Christian and a general impression of “pushiness”.¹²

The coercive concept of “mission” reached its classic and perhaps most invasive form in the Crusades. In bloody campaigns to “liberate” the Holy Land from Muslim rule, Christian knights and commoners bore the cross to Jerusalem. Their chroniclers are unabashed by the inhumanity of their behavior en route, not to mention their markedly un-Christian slaughter of Jews, Muslims and Oriental Christians in Jerusalem. These events have deeply affected with ambiguity our theological and sociological understanding of medieval pilgrimage. Today, it can be expected that pilgrims to the Holy Land who are informed about their own history will avoid mentioning the categories of “mission” and “crusade” in relation to their journey.

There is a sense, however, in which any western Christian coming intentionally to the Holy Land might be seen as prolonging the cultural invasion of the indigenous faiths and cultures. In fact, appointed missionaries and other representatives from the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions have all been resident in Palestine and Israel for decades, and their presence in Jerusalem especially has always been understood to signify the quite profound political commitments of the nations from

⁸ For examples of such pilgrim vials from the 6th century, cf. Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels* (appendix).

⁹ Jane (I.o) – interview.

¹⁰ A model for such research might be found in Carol Crawshaw and Juhn Urry, “Tourism and the Photographic Eye”, in: Rojek and Urry, *Touring Cultures* 176ff.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Titus Presler, *Horizons of Mission*, *The New Church’s Teaching Series* Vol 11 (Cambridge MA: Cowley Publications 2001).

¹² Presler, *Horizons of Mission* 76.

which they came. In the current atmosphere of conflict and suspicion between local communities with the emergence of Israeli and Palestinian nationalistic aspirations, western pilgrims are more than ever likely to be identified with the negative residue of missionary campaigns.

To the extent that pilgrims encounter and interact with members of other faiths (and indigenous Christians as well) in the Holy Land, the theological revision of Christian attitudes toward "mission" is very relevant to the development of a contemporary pilgrimage theology. In fact, one of the proposed contemporary ways of understanding "mission" in the American Episcopal Church is precisely as a "pilgrimage":

...Missionaries today see themselves as pilgrims, growing in their knowledge of God through the perspectives of the people to whom they are sent, learning as much as they share, receiving as much as they give. The humility of this orientation and the missionary's eagerness to learn from companions in another culture... nurtures deep and lasting relationships in mission. The cross-cultural encounter transforms as we discover Christ afresh in another people's appropriation of the gospel. Authentic mission pilgrims neither romanticize their contexts nor focus on what mission is doing for themselves. Instead, the pilgrim motif opens the door to true mutuality in mission...¹³

In general, the pilgrims I interviewed spoke in the "spirit of humility", and did not regard the conversion of others to Christianity as a motivation for their journey. While desire for the turning of non-Christians to the true faith is of course not completely absent from the heart of some contemporary pilgrims, it is nuanced by a certain ambiguity that distinguishes it rather sharply from its medieval crusader predecessor and the religious imperialism of former centuries.

The best example of this that I found was the interview with Dan and Trudy, portions of which will be quoted at length in a later context. Dan is rooted in the evangelical tradition and sees his journey to the Land of Christ in the light of his duty to "tell the story" of Jesus correctly:

From 1994 I spent most of my life talking to strangers about Jesus, and I was sure it was time that I went and saw the actual Holy Land... I hoped so many times to walk in the steps of Jesus...¹⁴

As Trudy tells the story, she and Dan became "real" Christians about ten years before the pilgrimage, and their pilgrimage was undertaken very much in a religious context ("We prayed into it to see whether God wanted us to go..."). For Trudy, the journey was deeply marred by an incident at the Dome of the Rock that she understood as a

¹³ "Companions in Transformation: The Episcopal Church's World Mission in a New Century" - Draft Mission Vision Statement being prepared by the Standing Commission on World Mission of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA), page 4. Courtesy of Titus Presler (Chair, Standing Commission on World Mission). This same draft statement (page 15), referring to short-term mission assignments of Episcopal missionaries abroad, proposes that "such missions are best understood and organized as pilgrimages: journeys of commitment and self-examination undertaken in a spirit of humility and marked by acts of service."

¹⁴ Dan (I.j) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

failure of her pilgrim companions to recognize and honor her theological rejection of Islam. Dan, on the other hand, while still insisting that Muslims should be persuaded to turn to Christ, suggested a more tolerant and modest *modus operandi*:

I believed that to reach those people you've got to try to understand them... Somehow we're going to have to reach everybody, and get them to believe in the Trinity... And the only way we can achieve it is by trying to understand them...¹⁵

(c) HEALING and MIRACLES

"Healing" - like "mission" - is ordinarily absent from the contemporary pilgrimage lexicon for the Holy Land, at least in reference to the miraculous healing of a specific ailment. "Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land have never gone in expectation of miraculous cures or benefits."¹⁶ In contrast to Catholic pilgrimage to Lourdes, for instance, in Jerusalem there is only rarely a stated quest for healing in the pilgrim's motivation, and (as we have indicated already) in the case of the pilgrims interviewed here, the healing sought was more generic and spiritual than specific and physical.

The encounter with the miraculous, however, can take many forms, and is not negligible by any means in pilgrim experience in the Holy Land. Miraculous events involving healing or spectacular perceived changes in the laws of nature (like one pilgrim's stormy ride on the Sea of Galilee, to be discussed below) are infrequent. Much more common in pilgrim narratives are moments of heightened awareness of divine presence, events that focus the inner gaze, and meetings that cause the pilgrim to stop and wonder, and sometimes to experience a profound vocation. It is certainly consonant with the pilgrim tradition that such "epiphanies" are often contextualized through particular "shrines" - and thus rendered concrete and memorable:

We visited many shrines. One that stands out for me was the Church of the Transfiguration. As a member of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis I was very comfortable here. I have for some time been considering entering a religious community and I felt drawn to this place. However, for the first time, and to date the only time, in my life I actually heard a voice which said to me 'You can't stay here. You must go out!'. This was a transforming moment for me. It served to confirm my calling to the priesthood, which I have always felt rather bizarre to say the least.¹⁷

(d) PENITENCE

The use of pilgrimage for penance and absolution was such an essential mode of medieval practice that some account of these must be given in contemporary terms. It may be argued that in the contemporary pilgrim's personal turning to God and "inner conversion" there are experiences closer to the primary New Testament use of the term *metanoia* than to subsequent concepts of conversion as evangelization of others. The anguish of the heart at the realization of our sinful nature is balanced in

¹⁵ Dan (I.j) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

¹⁶ Moshe Kalia and Eliezer Witztum, "Facing a Holy Space: Psychiatric Hospitalization of Tourists in Jerusalem"; in: *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land* (Kedar and Werblowsky, eds.; Macmillan: London and Jerusalem 1998) 320.

¹⁷ Jill (III.d) - Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

pilgrimage by “repentance” and a new commitment to grace and to living a better life. Bowman¹⁸ refers to these sentiments as classic markers of the Catholic tradition of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but they are evident in subtler form in Protestant pilgrimage as well.

In the interview with Michael there is emphasis on the personal nature of “response” as an examination of conscience. Michael introspectively refers to “seeing part of our characters exposed in that ... in that bright light out there – and I don’t just mean the sun.” As we noted above, he also feels that the intolerance he observed in the context of the pilgrimage is a reminder to him to examine his own life.¹⁹

The most striking example of the use of repentance language (“realization, remorse, response”) was the interview with Becky.²⁰ At several junctures, her memories of the pilgrimage took a turn toward intense self-examination. When describing the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, Becky remarked that “you always want to think that if it had happened here you would have been the person that hid the Jews and helped them, but of course most of us would not, and I think it asks you to examine yourself.” When the students at the Bethlehem University discussed their limited budget for student welfare, Becky found herself feeling compunction when comparing this with her vastly larger school budget in England: “And I thought, my school budget used to be getting on to three million pounds, and they were talking about five thousand pounds...” Beyond the sense of (undeserved?) financial privilege, there is another aspect of self-examination in Becky’s account. Later in the interview, she refers to her tendency to go on frequent spiritual retreats, something she had not questioned before her pilgrimage:

One person that I met on the pilgrimage goes to the Holy Land about every two years... And I... I wondered a bit if that wasn’t a “fix”. So... that’s one of the questions that I ask myself is... am I deluding myself... You know, I go on retreat... Is this my... is this the junkie’s “fix”, you know? And whether it’s a profounder degree of spirituality to be able to continue devoutly without this withdrawing...²¹

The most profound sense of repentance in Becky’s story emerged quite unexpectedly during discussion of the role in her experience of the local Palestinian guide. Becky had not mentioned the guide at all, and was prompted to say something about him:

He was a man who gave you the impression of a great sadness... Very courteous. Very well informed... A man in whom there was some great sadness but I didn’t actually find out what it was...²²

The interview continued, and Becky was asked if she knew anything at all about the guide’s background or religious affiliation:

¹⁸ Glenn Bowman, “Christian ideology and the image of a holy land”, in Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 98-121.

¹⁹ Michael (I.I) – interview.

²⁰ Becky (II.b) – interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

²¹ Becky (II.b) – interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

²² Becky (II.b) – interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

We never knew that... When you raised it, you know, I'm asking myself, Why was it that we didn't know that?... I think because we assigned him a secondary place... It's totally racist of us, isn't it? ... It almost seems to me that maybe without knowing, without thinking about it, we reduced the role of our guide... I'm appalled by what I've said to you!²³

There is unmistakable remorse in Becky's words describing what she regards as "racist" behavior of the group toward the guide. Whether or not the feeling is grounded in actual fact is not the issue here, but the impact of her realization. Becky's response here represents a "conversion" motif in contemporary pilgrimage, in which the "other" is seen as an invisible reproach to the complacency of our flawed and limited "pilgrim gaze".

Sociologically speaking, Cohen associates the term "conversion" with the existential mode of tourism, i.e. that mode closest to pilgrimage:

The centre of the 'existential' tourist... is an 'elective' centre, one which he chose and 'converted' to... His pilgrimage is not one from the mere periphery of a religious world toward its centre; it is a journey from chaos into another cosmos, from meaninglessness to authentic existence.²⁴

For Cohen, the essential aspect of this "conversion" is the "election" of a "center" that is "beyond the boundaries of the world of his daily existence." There is an "ideal" character to the "elective center" which must stand the test of "realization": i.e. does the ideal live up to the expectation? In this sense, Cohen's "existential tourist" is capable of "repentance" – as the "commensurability" of his or her experiences decreases to an unsatisfactory level:

This is a problem which existential tourists share with pilgrims. The centre, of course, symbolizes the ideal. Ideals are not fully realizable... Jerusalem may be the holy city, but ordinary human life in Jerusalem is far from holy. The pilgrim or the existential tourist 'ascends' spiritually to the ideal centre, but he necessarily arrives at the geographical one. How does he handle the discrepancy?²⁵

Among the pilgrims I interviewed, some of those who perceived "discrepancy" in their own behavior and the behavior of their group or cultural milieu, were able to handle it through "conversion" (or "response") – a sense of remorse and a corresponding commitment to improvement. Other pilgrims were not able to handle discrepancy without some form of denial or self-justification, sometimes with serious results.²⁶ In Cohen's terms, what I am calling here "conversion" is the response of the "realistic idealist" – i.e. an existential tourist who encounters discrepancy and is nonetheless "bereft of illusions" about the "faultlessness" of the elective center. A "starry-eyed idealist", on the other hand, like pilgrims who defend their own perception by blaming or demonizing the "other", will see only perfection in the elected center, and will live in self-delusion. In the case of pilgrimage to Jerusalem,

²³ Becky (II.b) – interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

²⁴ Cohen, "Phenomenology", 191.

²⁵ "Phenomenology", 191.

²⁶ Semi-psychotic episodes will be considered below.

the difference between these two strategies of response determines a radical difference in the theological impact of the experience.

Cohen's use of "conversion" for the radical election of a new center, forsaking all others, is not a sufficiently wide context to account for the expressions of pilgrim "repentance" I have just described. Rather, it appears that some pilgrims reach an experiential level of sensitivity that enables them not only to resist self-delusion, but also to engage in a search of their own hearts, self-examination in the light of new encounters en route. Cohen is right in naming "conversion" as one of the essential distinctions between pilgrim and tourist (or, in his terms, existential tourist and all other types), but inaccurate in implying that only someone who has "elected" a new life-center can have this experience.

In summary, the categories provided by Sumption for the historical understanding of medieval Christian pilgrimage (especially "relics", "mission" and "penitence") are only partially applicable to contemporary pilgrims from the English-speaking Protestant traditions. When modified by reference to sociological models, however, they can still be applied to postmodern pilgrim motivation with great effect.

2. RELUCTANT PILGRIMS

There is some ambiguity concerning the question of motivation in interviews with contemporary pilgrims. Not all approach their journey with clearly positive attitudes; for some, pilgrimage is an acquired taste, not a predisposition. Dan could note laconically that the Holy Land was "not the place I would say that I've always wanted to go to all my life", and his wife mentioned that they came to their desire for pilgrimage only after becoming (believing) Christians.²⁷

The tone for Becky's first visit to the Holy Land (which she remembers as a "holiday") was set when a tour leader told her "that a lot of people suffered from spiritual indigestion when they were there... and he warned us to be careful about that."²⁸ This implies that Becky approached that journey with a straightforward and positive attitude, but was warned not to be naïve about it, and to guard herself against possible disappointments.

There is a resistance to the idea of a "religious tour". One couple interviewed had given long thought to a journey to the Holy Land, but were reluctant because concerned about the disappointment (in terms of biblical imagery) this might entail. Finally, they responded to an advertisement for a diocesan pilgrimage precisely because it was *not* a tour, and because they trusted the organizers:

It wasn't actually advertised as a tour, you see, one had to understand what pilgrimage meant in that context... It looked good. It was the right timing, the right people involved as far as I could see... and you know it was something that deep down we always wanted to do.²⁹

²⁷ Dan (I.j) – interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

²⁸ Becky (I.b) – interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

²⁹ Jim (I.h) – interview.

This particular diocesan pilgrimage was “inaugurated” with a Commissioning Service presided over by the bishop, who was also accompanying the pilgrims. This service is remembered as a positive “threshold” over which the candidates made their first steps, as it were, and began to think of themselves as pilgrims:

This was about two or three days before we went... [The bishop] issued us our travel documents and so on and it was... actually very well done and really focused your mind... He spoke to each one personally...³⁰

These people became pilgrims in order to ensure that they did not become tourists, unaware of Leed’s ironic dictum, that “the most characteristic mark of the tourist is the wish to avoid tourists and the places they congregate.”³¹ As their own account testifies, their understanding of “pilgrimage” did not go much beyond “it looked good”, and “it felt right”; the journey had the sanction of the Church, and this was sufficient as motivation.

When asked to enunciate the difference between a tourist and pilgrim, another pilgrim in this group cited two signs: a “togetherness”, and a “common aim”:

We were all there for a reason. Not just to see the historical places. But we all had one reason in common... I felt we was all there for a reason. And everybody that I spoke to was there for a reason. My husband had died. [My friend] has got this handicapped son... Talking to people there was an undercurrent, there was another reason. I mean we all wanted to find God... We was all there with a reason as a group. So that’s what made it different.³²

There is a sense that precisely because a pilgrimage is “not a tour”, participants can assume that a “sacred intention” lies hidden (as “an undercurrent”) beneath the surface of the circumstances described. There is no real indication that this is discussed or agreed upon before the journey began; rather it seems to unfold in the course of conversations during the trip.

For other pilgrims, however, a certain negative attitude toward pilgrimage is dictated from the outset by their belief, in ways reminiscent of a modern equivalent of the “teaching of restraint” that we find in Christian theology since the fourth century.³³ Simply put, this is the conviction that (1) Christ is to be found wherever the Christian faith is practiced, and that (2) attachment to the Holy Land is largely a product of affective nostalgia.

One result of this contemporary “teaching of restraint” is an emphasis on the universal nature of the Christian experience (i.e. on the Christ of faith as taught by the church), and a feeling that essential understanding of the faith is not to be found in a particular place or time (i.e. in the Jesus of history). Pilgrimage to the Holy Land is dismissed as a reversion to an undesirable and childish historicism at best, or idolatry at worst.

³⁰ Linda (I.i) - interview.

³¹ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler* 287.

³² Martha (I.c) - interview.

³³ Gregory of Nyssa (*Letter on Pilgrimages* quoted above) *et al.*

In addition to these theological considerations, the hesitations of reluctant pilgrims can stem from a protective attachment to subjective biblical imagination. Some feel that they do not want to make the journey to the Holy Land precisely because the images of childhood (or even 'childlike') faith are so precious, and such a journey will inevitably tarnish them. Ironically, the theological reluctance of Christian universalism and the emotional reluctance of Christian nostalgia are often linked.

In a reflection on his own pilgrimage, Peter Kerr writes:

You have formed in your mind since a very young age firm pictures of what it is like – the Road to Jericho, Bethlehem of Judea, Beershebe, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Capurnaeum by the shores of Galilee, Emmaus 'a Sabbath day's walk from Jerusalem', the pool of Siloam. You feel you know them all and will recognise them like old friends from childhood, though part of you suspects that it may not be as you had imagined.³⁴

Kerr goes on to cite people who hear of his journey to Jerusalem and respond with sentiments like:

'Oh, I have never really had any desire to go'. When pressed further as to their reasons some would talk about commercialisation having spoilt 'it'. Others wouldn't offer a reason. I suspect that this latter group may not have felt that the actual historical evidence of Christianity was all that central to the Faith. What was and is important for them was the contemporary experience and being faithful to the Christian Way.³⁵

In his analysis of the "reluctant pilgrim" phenomenon, Kerr offers two "labels": *pietist/romantic* and *liberal*.

The pietist/romantic group are uneasy about having their scripturally-fed imaginary pictures of the NT challenged by the present reality of Israel and Jerusalem, particularly by what they call its 'commercialism' and perhaps, to a lesser extent, present-day politics... The liberal group... want to sit lightly to the historicity of the New Testament – perhaps still suffering from residual Bultmanism. They feel that the Holy Land... is of only tangential importance to the Christian project and its integrity...³⁶

Kerr's "reluctant pilgrim" model is helpful in evaluating the "negative *desiderium*" of pilgrims who express prior hesitation about the journey, and/or subsequent disappointment at its outcome. One pilgrim interviewed put it this way:

My brother and sister-in-law went to Israel ten years ago and came back bitterly disappointed... You know, it had knocked all their sort of childhood memories of Bible stories... had all been sort of totally and utterly destroyed. So I'm afraid then it [*i.e. pilgrimage*] got put to the bottom of the agenda.³⁷

³⁴ Peter Kerr, "The Reluctant Pilgrim? – Reflections on a visit to the Holy Land in June/July 1998"; *Milton Keynes & Malvern Papers* (July 1999) PK1-PK6.

³⁵ Kerr, "The Reluctant Pilgrim" PK4.

³⁶ "The Reluctant Pilgrim" PK5.

³⁷ Jim (I.h) – interview.

This same individual did not see himself as a “pilgrim” at the outset of the journey, apparently because he associated the whole enterprise with potential disappointment. Even when he eventually decided to join a diocesan pilgrimage, his motivation was clouded by a certain apprehension: “I just hoped I wouldn’t be disillusioned... It had always put me off slightly over the years that I might be...”

A variation of the “reluctant pilgrim” pattern is to be found, for example, in a journey to Israel and Palestine undertaken in 1995 by a lay employee of an Anglican diocese in Western England, whose role in the diocese includes development of programs in social responsibility. In a conversation some three years later, this traveller said:

I certainly did not think of my journey as a pilgrimage. What was I looking for? I was looking for faith in the context of life... I thought more in terms of “pioneer” than “pilgrim”. What do I associate with “pilgrim”? Devoutness... something very clear-sighted, with narrowly defined goals. Knowing exactly what I want and where to get it... My journey was questing and questioning. A human journey must have artistic and environmental and historical components. A religious journey alone is incomplete to me.³⁸

Even pilgrims who set out with no reservations may discover disappointment along the way, often at a particular shrine:

The day we went to the Garden of Gethsemane. I took one look at it and burst into tears. Because it was not what I expected. I didn’t expect a formal garden. You know? I expected it to be just an open space – a big open space – with olive trees, where we would sit and perhaps pray around a tree. And you can’t do that!³⁹

Pat’s intense disappointment at encountering a high formal wall around the informal biblical Gethsemane of her imagination is an example of Kerr’s “pious/romantic” syndrome. The same sentiment reappears throughout Pat’s interview:

I absolutely hated it... I have never ever been on any kind of organized trip like that in my life... Dashing from place to place. Back on the coach... It was literally: ‘Today is Monday so it is Bethlehem... and it’s this and it’s that and the other’...⁴⁰

The Holy Land that Pat was looking for was imagined as somehow more authentic than the one she actually encountered. However, rather than adopting permanently the dismissive attitudes of the “reluctant pilgrim”, it is characteristic of Pat’s experience that she felt constantly challenged to transform her disappointment into positive spiritual growth.

³⁸ Private conversation with M. (August 7, 1998).

³⁹ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

⁴⁰ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

3. SOME CONTEMPORARY EXPECTATIONS

“Reluctant pilgrims” aside, there is no doubt that the majority of those interviewed had high expectations of their journey. There is indication that pilgrims are often acutely aware of the inescapable link between expectations and disappointments, and express their initial desire to go to the Holy Land unburdened by this “baggage”:

I think if you expect too much sometimes that doesn't always happen for you... I went with quite an open mind. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. I would like to go back. I think because I left my mind open I think I enjoyed things perhaps more than somebody that didn't...⁴¹

Sometimes, they blame their disappointment in not finding the “real Holy Land” not on their guides or even on the realities of the land itself – and certainly not on God – but on their own human frailty in clinging to images and expectations that were not realistic:

As I write these reflections I find myself in mental anguish, grieving for the fact that we did not have a chance to walk in the fields among the limestone terraces, or to pray with Christ in the Garden... I find myself feeling somewhat cheated and let down by God but it's not his fault that my expectations were unnecessarily high or that I went on this Pilgrimage with far too much baggage! I did not find Christ in any of the ways I wanted on the pilgrimage and since returning, have realised that such expectations are almost arrogant in the extreme.⁴²

Expectations, however, form the essential raw material of every journey, and no traveller is entirely free of anticipation. MacCannell's vigorous critique of Boorstin's “passive tourist” thesis entails the realization that tourists expect – however subconsciously – to transcend themselves and thus to participate in the lives of others. The tourist may remain “mystified as to his [*sic*] own motives... He thinks he is going out for his own enjoyment,” whereas in fact tourism is a “complex and arduous search for an Absolute Other”.⁴³ The same can be said of pilgrimage.

The diversity of contemporary expectations among Christian pilgrims may reflect the complex uses of pilgrimage in history, as a “method of suspending everyday life, gaining eternal glory, linking together Christendom as a territorial reality, and winning individual grace.”⁴⁴ In the words of the pilgrims themselves, their hopes range similarly from the mundane to the sublime:

The inner journey finds the outer journey

To walk where Jesus of Nazareth walked... It's not just a historical quest but a personal quest, a spiritual quest.

I want ten years of sermons!

⁴¹ Martha (I.c) - interview.

⁴² Pat (I.a): “Pilgrimage Reflections” (1) April 1999.

⁴³ MacCannell, *The Tourist* 178 and 5.

⁴⁴ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler* 148

I am looking forward to putting the Bible together.

I have a thirst for newness.

To reach an understanding of the "Birth Land" [of the faith].

To reach a deeper understanding of various faiths in this land.

To make history come alive.

To achieve perspective on "the forming of the nation of Israel."

To reach an understanding of the three faiths: Christianity Judaism and Islam.

To take another small step forward [in the life of faith].

I am in search of the truth of the geography of the Holy Land.

To experience by seeing, smelling, etc. To make an inner journey.

Believing is seeing! To see and experience the land of Christ.

Jesus walked this earth; he was a man [here].

I am an archaeologist and it has been my desire since high school to visit [this land].

To have a deeper feeling and faith.

I want to know Israel. I expect to be surprised.

This is a zone of power, a center of the world.

To see the land and the world of Jesus.

The landscape of faith holds mystery because of Jerusalem: the city by which all cities understand themselves. To meet the current people of faith.

This is a lifetime dream. I am a sponge [ready to absorb].

I can't be disappointed. My whole adult life has been leading to this journey.

I love facts. But I am also taken by things which are not just facts.

To enrich my journey through life.

I am searching and waiting for a sacred spark.⁴⁵

4. DESIRE AND STRUGGLE IN PREPARING A PILGRIMAGE

In sharp contrast to those who begin with reluctance, many pilgrims to the Holy Land have a strong positive motivation to make the voyage, but – for a variety of reasons –

⁴⁵ Expectations voiced by various pilgrims on their arrival in Jerusalem, March 1999 - February 2001.

they are under the impression that this is an impossible dream. It is not as unusual as one might think for a pilgrim to describe a miraculous intervention that makes the pilgrimage possible after a long period of waiting and/or prayer:

And we asked God, if he really wanted us to go, would he help us find the funding. And we left it in his hands... And we prayed [for] this for about three months... And, suddenly, on Dan's birthday... an envelope fell on the mat... I took it up to him, just with the other mail. And all of a sudden he got up real quickly, and I thought, Something is wrong with him and I ran upstairs... [Laughter]. And he said, Look at this. And then he burst into tears... It was a check for some redundancy money which just covered [the cost of the pilgrimage]. And he said, God's answering our prayers, and it's a birthday present from the Lord...⁴⁶

Such dramatic and personal narratives can be termed "pilgrim legends". I use this term "legends" not in the popular sense (i.e. fiction), but in the sense proposed by narrative theory, i.e., as "prose narratives... regarded as true by the narrator and his [sic] audience, but set in a period considerably less remote [than myth]."⁴⁷ Such stories, rich in emotive and descriptive detail, are characteristic of miracle accounts in relation to pilgrimage, as is seen in narratives of "wonder" encounters in sacred place. It should be mentioned here that the same divine generosity which Dan and Trudy experienced at the outset of their journey was shared, in their view, with their fellow pilgrims. Another couple, who had prayed together with them for guidance, also received financial help: "God gave them the money as well!"

Generosity is a common source of wonder in the pilgrim's experience of overcoming financial hurdles. Individuals from less prosperous areas naturally have the most acute experience of discrepancy between the desire to make pilgrimage and the means to realize this desire. The pilgrim narrative of Rev. K. Somi, a 55-year old Baptist minister from Nagaland, is a classic and unselfconscious "pilgrim legend" illustrating the power of faith and persistence, and deserves to be quoted exactly as written:

Since I joined Christian service 25 years ago I had been praying for a chance to see Jerusalem. Whenever I heard people telling their Jerusalem experiences my heart beats increased with deep longings...

... I sent out letters to eleven intimate friends and relatives requesting them to help me either by gift or loan... In the first week of April one mid-night I knelt on my bed and prayed about the fund. God spoke to me very clearly. "Somi, you have helped someone unknown to you some time ago. Now someone whom you do not know will help you." It was startling and encouraging... After hearing God's answer I shared the revelation with friends and also announced to my Church. Within a short time I started receiving gifts from 21 friends and two Churches and one woman Society.

⁴⁶ Trudy (I.k) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

⁴⁷ William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives", in Alan Dundes, ed., *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) 9.

Yet the amount I received was short... So I borrowed from four friends. Thus the financial arrangement was completed.⁴⁸

5. A CONTEMPORARY RANGE OF PILGRIM MOTIVES

Reluctance, expectation, desire and struggle are all contemporary elements of the process by which a pilgrim's motivation is gradually formulated. The pilgrims interviewed in this study expressed a broad range of motivations, from light to serious; these can be categorized as follows:

(a) *CURIOSITY*

The subtle power of curiosity to "somehow strengthen" the traveler is an ancient theme in pilgrimage theology. From Moses, who says, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt,"⁴⁹ to Cohen's "experiential tourist,"⁵⁰ to Cousineau's "curious soul who walks beyond known boundaries, crosses fields, touching the earth with a destination in mind..."⁵¹ – all the paradigms of curiosity indicate that God wishes to be sought even more than we may wish to seek God. Hence the playful quality of curiosity was already redeemed by Chaucer from its former sinful status⁵² to become the catalyst for a necessary "instability" in the pilgrimage process:

Chaucer has the Host propose a contest of tales, a game... as a distraction from piety... the contest of tales which ensues, always shifting from earnest to game, full of rancor and sweetness, will test the viability of each pilgrim's sense of fellowship.⁵³

(b) *PROMISE*

It has already been pointed out that Christian pilgrimage is not an obligation of faith in the way Muslim pilgrimage is. However, a voluntary obligation is reflected in the "promise" one pilgrim cited as the motivation for her pilgrimage:

It was a promise really... A promise to God, that I would actually try to find out more about him, and about my faith. I came back to church about three years ago, and I was confirmed about two years ago... And I said, the first thing I am going to do is to concentrate on finding out about this man Jesus.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Revd. K. Somi, *A Trip to Jerusalem* (Dimapur, Nagaland: Western Printing Press 1996) 2-3.

⁴⁹ Exodus 3:3.

⁵⁰ Erik Cohen, "Traditions in the Qualitative Sociology of Tourism"; *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Pergamon Press, 1988) 36.

⁵¹ Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* 13.

⁵² Cf. Christian K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage* 129: "Bishop Thomas Brighton saw... that all virtuous men would eventually be taken out of the noisy pilgrimage of this life into the serenity of heaven, 'de peregrinatione ad quietacionem.' It is in this world, however, that pilgrimage and curiosity exist, and it is here that men must endure the one and avoid the other." For a contemporary view of the "deeper failing" of curiosity in psychological terms, cf. James Hillman, *Insearch: Psychology and Religion* (Dallas TX: Spring Publications 1967) 23-25.

⁵³ Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage* 88.

⁵⁴ Wilma (I.n) - interview.

Theologically speaking, the incarnational aspect of this promise is striking. To find out more about God leads naturally to a physical journey to find out about Jesus as a man who lived in history. "To be there with him" might sum up the kind of "knowledge" that is sought here:

When I went along the Jericho road where... the Samaritan story is set... I felt it. It was there! You know, you could easily be mugged! ... It was there, you know... and it actually... brought it home to me.⁵⁵

"Promise" indicates an element of obligation which may seem more related to medieval modes than to Christian pilgrimage today. However, one pilgrim refers to this as "to fulfill a long standing promise to myself"⁵⁶, indicating that the pilgrimage can be the realization of a discipline of yearning not imposed from without. This is particularly interesting in light of the anthropological discussion of the tension between Turner's categories of obligation and optation in rites of passage and in pilgrimage. Pilgrims struggle with this, giving voice to a deep impulse, perhaps necessity:

I think you've always perhaps got it in you that you want to do this anyway... it was for me, it was always there.⁵⁷

(c) TO FIND INNER PEACE

As we have indicated, pilgrimage is sometimes undertaken to mark transitions in life. A powerful form of transition is experienced after bereavement, and the loss of a loved one is often in the background of a pilgrim's decision to make the journey. This can be understood in light of the radical changes in personal life that the grieving process entails, and the corresponding appropriateness of pilgrimage as a context for navigating those changes successfully:

Images of death, and its memorialisation, draw people out of their ordinary routines into acts of religious nature... Pilgrimage involves restoring the incomplete and painful ruptures of the past, healing the wounds of bereavement... Grief-centred pilgrimages have their share of pain and suffering.⁵⁸

Although intense physical hardship is for the most part absent from the type of pilgrimage chronicled here, emotional hardship is not. A number of those interviewed experienced the pilgrimage as in some way related to bereavement and/or renewal of faith after a time of trial.

Dan and Trudy's pilgrimage was made possible, as we have seen, by what they saw as divine providence; their delight was enhanced by the fact that they had not been on vacation for ten years, actually - "since our parents died". The loss of the parents is part of the narrative "legend" - it is "formulaic", not merely informative (they did not specify when or how they died - and presumably all four of their parents did not

⁵⁵ Wilma (I.n) - interview.

⁵⁶ Becky (I.b) - interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

⁵⁷ Martha (I.c) - interview.

⁵⁸ Ian Reader and Tony Walter, eds., *Pilgrimage and Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan Press 1993) 222, 225.

die in the same year). The situation as they describe it points to one possible “pattern” for tracing a loss-associated motivation for Christian pilgrimage:

1. Loss/bereavement/grieving (“We hadn’t been on holiday, for about ten years since our parents died”);
2. Conversion or deepening of faith (“It’s only now about ten years since we’ve really become Christians”);
3. Intense longing for a journey into the divine (Christ’s) story of meaningful life and death (“My whole desire, my one desire, was to be where Jesus was born, to see where he died for me, where my sins were forgiven”);
4. Obstacles (“God wanted us to go, but we weren’t able to raise the money”);
5. Supernatural intervention and new beginning (“From that day on [when the unexpected money arrived], we knew that God was... you know, great things were going to happen to us”).

Another pilgrim who made the journey after bereavement is Martha. When asked about the motivation for her pilgrimage, she said:

Two reasons. One was because my husband passed away, in the year before, in July. And the other reason was, I really wanted to go... to see the places where Jesus walked.⁵⁹

When it became clear that her bereavement was the primary motive, Martha was asked to say more:

I hadn’t attended church regularly before my husband died, because he didn’t really believe... Well, he believed but he didn’t want to go to church regularly and I didn’t go myself... And, when Pete died... I decided that I would do something that I always wanted to do... so I went back to church. I used to go when I was young... And then I wanted to be confirmed, and that’s what happened then. And then Father [*pastor’s name*] said that they were going to Jerusalem and would I like to come with them, and I said: Oh, very much, I would, yes!

Martha’s husband (Pete) had not only kept away from church during their married life; he had also been opposed to Martha’s desire to make a pilgrimage. She remembers him saying that “it was too commercialized, it was wrong”. Martha had a strong inclination to pilgrimage, to which her husband’s disapproval was a painful obstacle. Martha’s spiritual journey toward fulfillment after her bereavement is only hinted at in the most delicate way in her actual words, as one would expect. The emotional depth of her experience (which has elements of the “formula” cited above) becomes evident only when she reaches Cana in Galilee (see below, “Shrine”).

Martha tells of two more pilgrims who may be following the “trial and renewal” pattern. One is a friend who has a blind and mentally handicapped son:

⁵⁹ Martha (I.c) - interview.

She used to attend church regularly before this happened, and she can't... she sort of fell away a bit really from God. And... she wanted to come with me. And I was really pleased that she did want to come.

Another man she spoke with en route (she had not known him previously) was also at a turning point:

We just got talking and I did tell him about Pete [i.e. Pete's death and her bereavement], and... he said that... his daughter had died suddenly at the age of twenty-six, and... that he was going back for his son's wedding (he's just got another child, a son) – the following Saturday... As we spoke we found that everybody had some reason why they were there. I just felt that way anyway.⁶⁰

A still closer insight into the spiritual relationship between bereavement and pilgrimage motivation is offered by Becky. Losing her husband precipitated an upheaval in her personal life and affected her faith:

I had to find how to function as one when for so long I had been one of two... And I suppose I... I wasn't angry with my husband, at having died, umm... but I was... I suppose I was a bit resentful at the way that life wasn't quite the way I had expected it to be... and there were times when I was extremely emotional and there were times when I felt totally numb... I sometimes felt acutely alone... And I never felt at any time angry with God that this had happened to me, but I quite often felt that he was quite a long way off...⁶¹

Becky remembers having planned to make a journey to the Holy Land with her husband; when he died she sought a suitable support group in pilgrimage. At the same time, she recognized the invitation to pilgrimage as something within the scope of her ability, emotionally as well as practically. For Becky, the journey would serve to restore her confidence in her own ability to cope with painful loss and even to go on to a new level of spiritual creativity.

When my life sort of disintegrated around me, I thought, Well, all those things we'd planned to do we wouldn't... there wouldn't be the opportunity... Then I saw that there was this diocesan pilgrimage... and I thought: That I can do! I can actually go on my own to that because it will be within a community of people with like persuasion... Not necessarily that I would find a soul-mate or anything like that, but that I could go...⁶²

It is significant that in the course of the interview with Becky, her description of her personal situation swung radically from very bleak to remarkably hopeful. In the early part of the interview she says: "I felt I was in the valley of dry bones, and sometimes I felt drained and sometimes I felt I was substituting activity for living." She brings with her to the Holy Land a deep sense of apprehension explicitly connected to her loss:

⁶⁰ Martha (I.c) - interview.

⁶¹ Becky (I.b) - interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

⁶² Becky (I.b) - interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

“I thought, I am not the person now that I was when I went [*on an earlier occasion with her husband*]. Because the person who went last time went as part of a united family... and now, a significant member of it is missing...”⁶³

As the interview progresses, however, Becky’s description of herself reflects increased personal and theological confidence. One contributing aspect seems to be, as expected, the prayerful support of the pilgrim group and the pastors. The daily worship during the pilgrimage was, for Becky “like being inside a strong tower, to remind you what you’re there for, and that you are secure... It was very down to earth and appropriate, and I think we felt bound together by the worship.” In addition, a theological realization of “where God is” and of her own active role in the Christian community has developed upon her return, as we will see below.

Becky and Martha are characteristic of a significant field of motivation. In conscious or unconscious association with a grieving or loss experience, pilgrims like them describe their journey as a quest for spiritual restoration, confidence, wholeness, serenity, peace, or even a renewed sense of identity.

I was going to see if I could find myself. ... I had been married for nearly thirty years, and I had known my husband for over forty. And... at his funeral the bishop said we were an example of dependence, interdependence and independence... And finding... I found it really hard to know who was me... And I thought: I am going there... to see, I suppose, if I can... find out who I am now... and what sort of peace I can find in myself...⁶⁴

You know, I was trying to find inner peace... that was part of my goal. I was going with a lot of other people, and we would all find peace together...⁶⁵

(d) TO UNLOCK THE SCRIPTURES

The first named Christian pilgrim to the Holy Land – Melito of Sardis – was a biblical scholar whose primary interest was in validating the scriptural canon. Origen of Alexandria turned to sacred geography for inspiration in his allegorical exegesis. Jerome exemplified the desire of the pilgrim to “gaze more clearly upon Holy Scripture” by looking upon the land where those Scriptures were formed.⁶⁶ Even Egeria, whose journey was motivated by a less scholarly *desiderium*, was always aware of the “appropriate” harmony between holy place and holy text.⁶⁷ Christians have always made the Jerusalem journey with their Bibles in hand, seeking to understand it better.

A more personal manner of finding biblical meaning in pilgrimage involves linking private experience with a previously inaccessible text. Karen (II.o), who at the age of fifty-six undertook her pilgrimage with a group in training for ministry, subsequently submitted a paper evaluating her journey in this way. Describing an

⁶³ Becky (I.b) - interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

⁶⁴ Becky (I.b) - interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

⁶⁵ Martha (I.c) - interview.

⁶⁶ Cf. E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Late Roman Empire: AD 312-460* (Oxford: Clarendon 1982) 3, 92-94.

⁶⁷ “*Apta diei et loco*” is Egeria’s term – cf. *It. Eg.* 47.5.

incident in which the group was making its way up a steep slope in the rough terrain of the Negev Desert, Karen wrote of her intense physical and emotional discomfort:

My heart sank. I had used up all my energy keeping up with the group; moreover, I knew that my lack of balance and sight disorientation meant that going downhill would be far more taxing [than the ascent]... I did not know how I would do it... I did it by asking for help... by accepting the support of Stan, a fellow student who was sensitive to the state I was in... He was there at every turn... offering his arm...

One New Testament concept that I have found hard to comprehend has been illuminated by this experience. Paul says [2 Cor 12:10] "For it is when I am weak that I am strong." I had never been able to make much sense of this, but acknowledging my weakness and allowing myself to be part of the group and to receive help... meant that not only was I made strong in my weakness, but the whole group was strengthened because it was not let down by the weak link. Honesty... and humility... led to strength for myself and for the group.⁶⁸

Pilgrimage is a form of *anamnesis*, or sacred "re-remembering", rooted in biblical tradition and flowering in personal experience. Scripture will always be interwoven with prayer and with personal intimations of faith, but it will always remain the raw material of Christian pilgrimage.

(e) TO ENCOUNTER JESUS

For some pilgrims, the biblical focus is firmly centered in the Gospels, and the quest for a meeting with "the real person of Jesus" is expressed in terms of the metaphor of sight – the desire to "see Christ as he really is":

I wanted to be able to meet Jesus as a real person in the real place... I had great problems in visualizing Christ when I enter into any kind of imaginative prayer. Because the picture that I got – I didn't like! Because there was this Victorian guy all dressed in white straight out of a Victorian painting, you know... And I didn't want my Christ to be like that, thank you very much! I wanted this guy with a sort of Middle Eastern color skin...⁶⁹

For the pilgrim, the "seeing" of Christ and the "understanding" of one's own Christian vocation are in a sense synonymous. This desire to "see" Christ is imaginative in a deep and legitimate sense; it is not useless fantasy but the full exercise of the human creative faculties:

I wanted to be able to see him as he would have been seen by the people of his day, by his friends, his followers, his family, those on the fringes of his social group, and I wanted to see him in the same way that his enemies would have done.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Karen (II.o): "Looking Forward to Ministry" (Unpublished paper, May 1998).

⁶⁹ Pat (I.a)- interview (Appendix A, Interview C); for "sight" and "gaze" and the metaphor of vision, see below.

⁷⁰ Pat (I.a): "Pilgrimage Reflections" (1)

To see Jesus "as his enemies would have done" is an interesting (not to say unusual) aspect of the imaginative journey of pilgrimage. It indicates a kind of emotional transcendence, involving not only the expected feelings of admiration and love, but a reconstruction of the negative aspects of the biblical narrative. This pilgrim is ready to experience Christ as a threat, perhaps, or the object of frustration and anger. Primarily, however, the goal of the imagination in Christian pilgrimage is to identify with Christ:

I wanted to be able to pray with him in the garden of Gethsemane, to actually feel his agony, his tears, to walk with him to Golgotha...⁷¹

The motivation of pilgrimage here is the beloved Christ himself, in the sense that the pilgrim wants to participate fully in Christ's experience. It is not Gethsemane or Golgotha that will constitute the shrine, but the saving suffering of Jesus in those places. To stand in the place is only the beginning of identification. The next step is empathy, even intimacy:

I just felt that I needed to have an intimate one-to-one relationship with [Jesus]. And I had it here [*gesture toward heart*], but I needed to be where he had actually been, where he had walked, where he had actually rode across the sea... I needed to be so close to him, in intimacy, that I needed to be where he had been.⁷²

The search for the presence of Christ is directly linked with the quest for the Jesus of history. Here the "patterns" of pilgrimage in different Christian traditions can vary widely, with Protestant pilgrims in general putting more emphasis on the Jesus of history, Catholic and Orthodox pilgrims on the Christ of faith. As the Hummels point out, "the Holy Land was... for some a way not only to get behind the Jesus of the Church but also to get behind the Jesus of the Bible to the historical Jesus and confront him personally."⁷³ These sentiments are well represented in the pilgrim interviews:

It makes Jesus more human as well... As a person that you can relate to more... There are all these different people, with different cultures and different religions all living together... and they don't know each other. That's what I find... sad, you know. And I am sure Jesus must have done as well.⁷⁴

This is the land where Jesus lived and taught. The walk down the Mount of Olives today may be very different from the walk that Jesus so often took, but it is still the Mount of Olives and simply being there gives a new meaning... to Jesus himself.⁷⁵

Recent discoveries in local archeology, and the related new directions in New Testament studies, have an impact on pilgrims' perceptions of Jesus quite

⁷¹ Pat (I.a): "Pilgrimage Reflections" (1).

⁷² Trudy (I.k) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

⁷³ Ruth and Thomas Hummel, *Patterns of the Sacred* (London: Scorpion Cavendish 1995), 32.

⁷⁴ Martha (I.c) - interview.

⁷⁵ Jennie (I.g): "Pilgrimage to the Holy Land" (unpublished paper).

independently of any familiar "holy site." An American priest describes his impressions of a first-century wooden fishing boat excavated on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in 1986, and then adds:

History is important. Tangible facts count. They are not everything, but they count. Visit the "Jesus Boat" and you will know what I mean. You will get breathless, or have palpitations, or suddenly sob. You won't be able to help yourself. For you will be seeing Him in a fresh, true way, up close.⁷⁶

Perhaps the most striking example of seeking Christ in archeology is Sepphoris, a Galilean city just a few miles from Nazareth but never mentioned in the New Testament. Pilgrims who visit the excavations at Sepphoris are often challenged to think of Jesus in a light quite different from the pious images they grew up with:

Did Joseph return from Egypt... to work on the rebuilding of this city... when Jesus would have been in His infancy?... Since the majority of work in this city was of stone, was Joseph a carpenter or was he more of an artisan or craftsman working with all kinds of materials and did he pass this on to his very unique Son?⁷⁷

In the (written) narrative just quoted, penned by an American Episcopal pilgrim, the use of upper case nouns and pronouns (indicating reverence for the divinity of Christ) is significant. This reverence is coupled in the narrative with an emphasis on the role that actual shrines play, reminding us that "in His humanity as in ours, certain events would have had to happen and these they [i.e. the shrines] honor, because they signify that this was truly the Jesus of history who lived and walked among us."⁷⁸ Here, the Jesus of history is evoked in the shadow of the Christ of faith.

(B) JOURNEY

[This] has not been just a trip, it has been a search for identity... I set out on this journey like a baby bird hatching from its egg; ever since I have been walking in freedom. Every man should get to know himself and experience life in all its forms. I could have gone on sleeping soundly in my bed, and found work in my town... but I decided to sleep with the poor, because one must suffer to become a man...

The narrator here is not a Christian pilgrim, but a thirty-three year old Muslim who, after the 1967 war, left his home in Egypt to walk to Europe, where he now lives, homeless, in Milan.⁷⁹ The strenuous but rewarding dynamic of "breaking forth" from the familiar into the unknown is a function of every conscious and meaningful journey, pilgrimage included.

⁷⁶ The Very Rev. Paul F.M. Zahl, "The 'Jesus Boat'", *The Anglican Digest*, Vol. 43, No. 5; p. 16.

⁷⁷ The Rev. Kent Litchfield, "A Land That is Holy?: A Reflection of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land" (privately distributed paper, May 2000) 6.

⁷⁸ Litchfield, "A Land that is Holy?" 7.

⁷⁹ Cf. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 196-197.

Journey is, first of all, physical movement through space to place (see below, "Shrine") – a universal human experience linked with maturity, growth and independence. In terms of infant development, physical movement signals "the end of the hatching process; that is to say, *psychological birth*."⁸⁰ For adults, however, bound as they are into social canons of dependence upon the familiar, a journey is a fearful endeavor, for (as Goethe has it) "in every parting is a latent germ of madness." The resistance and apprehension associated with "powerful and soulful travel" have been compared to "fear of poetry" – i.e. fear of subjective feeling and total response.⁸¹ For Christian spirituality, in which a "new birth" through a baptism of the spirit is a foundational and desirable event, pilgrimage can be an occasion for the reconciliation of individual psychological birth with society's demand for conformity and stability, and societal fear of the subjective.

1. AMBIGUITIES IN JOURNEY DYNAMICS

Eric Leed's sociological summary of the journey tradition revolves around the theme of journey as "self-referencing", i.e. as engaging the traveler in a dynamic and mutual reflection on the process of the creation and transformation of collective and individual identities.⁸² In Leed's terms, a pilgrimage formalizes the tension between the pain of travel (Old English *travail*) and the joyful liberation from all that is old and prejudiced.⁸³

In general travel theory, journey is understood as "structured" into stages – "departure, passage and arrival", or "separation, transition and return" – a pattern already determined by the "rite of passage" model of van Gennep, adapted by the Turners for pilgrimage.⁸⁴ These three phases of the journey are understood by Leed in the following way:

In discussing the structure of a journey... - departure, passage and arrival – I have tried to suggest that the force exercised by mobility in human history is composed of different species of events... Departures evoke the earliest separations of childhood; passage, those experiences of early flight and physical freedom; arrivals, the magic of a return to beginnings and an achievement of coherence with others.⁸⁵

At the "center" of journey is arrival, which has connotations that go beyond geography. Arrival (the "intent" of movement) is not self-contained but relational. It entails a communication between self and other, a "receptivity", an "entering in", and

⁸⁰ Margaret Mahler, et al., *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant* (NY: Basic Books 1975).

⁸¹ Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* 84.

⁸² Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler* 20.

⁸³ *The Mind of the Traveler* 6.

⁸⁴ Separation, Transition, Re-integration (see above, Chapter 1). Cf. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1972), Mircea Eliade, *The Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (New York: Harper Torchbooks 1965), Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage", in: *Betwixt and Between*, Louise Mahdi, Stephen Foster and Meredith Little, eds. (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court 1987), and the summary in Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* 82.

⁸⁵ *The Mind of the Traveler* 129.

an “exchange” – all of which terms evoke sexual imagery, memory and association. No point/moment of arrival is neutral/neuter.

The erotics of arrival are predicated on certain realities in the history of travel: the sessility of women; the mobility of men; the uncertainty... of the relations formed between them... the uncertainty about what is being “offered”, what gained, and what lost...⁸⁶

A challenging perspective on the “engendering” of pilgrimage is offered by the sociologists Eeva Jokinen and Soile Veijola.⁸⁷ The pith of their argument is that all narratives (literature, reportage, research) concerning both tourism and pilgrimage have concealed and significant aspects of gender. This is especially true of pilgrimage because all “discourse about movement in external (geographical) space and constructions of internal (psychological) space have been closely linked from the very beginnings of Christian tradition.”⁸⁸

Citing the example of early women pilgrims to Jerusalem⁸⁹ (especially Melania the Elder, but we might add Mary of Egypt and Paula) who gained a “virile” status through their journey, Jokinen and Veijola remark on the established tradition that regards travel (and pilgrimage by extension) as primarily a “male” activity. Accordingly, females are relegated either to the role of “honorary (but unsexed) male”, or, alternatively, of wayfarer’s prostitute:

Women were perhaps the first travellers to become aware of an irony now familiar in the discourse of modern tourism: The traveller presses longingly toward a pure and holy (‘unworldy’) site which holds out the promise of personal transformation, knowing all the while that the purity and promise of the space is corrupted by contact with travellers like herself.⁹⁰

One should not expect overt recognition of the gender issues raised here in the personal experience story of any pilgrim – especially a woman pilgrim. The salient point of Jokinen and Veijola is that the entire communication of the journey experience is formulated in terms taken from the masculine psyche and its agenda, which is bolstered by mobility and anonymity; to expose this agenda is close to impossible and is rarely attempted. Theory is already compromised:

Just as the practices and ideologies of actual travel operate to exclude or pathologize women, so the use of that vocabulary as metaphor necessarily produces androcentric tendencies in theory.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler*, 113.

⁸⁷ Eeva Jokinen and Soile Veijola, “The Disoriented Tourist”, in: Chris Rojek and John Urry, eds., *Touring Cultures* (London: Routledge 1997).

⁸⁸ “The Disoriented Tourist”, 40.

⁸⁹ Especially Melania the Elder, but we would add Mary of Egypt and Paula, among others. For a good summary of this issue, cf. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press 1988).

⁹⁰ “The Disoriented Tourist” 40.

⁹¹ “The Disoriented Tourist” 43; quoting J. Wolff, “On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism”, *Cultural Studies* 17: 224-39.

While the issues of gender in travel are more obvious in the cases of the flaneur, the stroller, the vagabond and the tourist, they are of no less importance when considering pilgrim narrative. One simply cannot assume that conversations with “postmodern pilgrims” will be immune from the general postmodern “strategy moved by the horror of being bound and fixed”⁹² – a horror which may also drive reactions in terms of gender agendas in “setting boundaries” and “crossing boundaries” in pilgrimage. At this point, concerning the pilgrims interviewed, it must simply be observed that, interestingly, those who put special emphasis on extra-curricular (“boundary-crossing”) experiences (e.g. Pat and Becky, but also Jane and Trudy) were women, not men. During the interview with Jane and her husband Brent, Jane says:

If you were going to ask me what were the disadvantages of going on an organized pilgrimage... You can't go to those odd little places... Everything is so arranged that to break off – you can't do it! ... [At sites], there's too much: We must move on! Somebody else is coming!... And you don't get the sort of scope that [you get] if you're on your own...⁹³

It is significant that Brent here quite brusquely interjected his opinion:

But not everybody can do what you did!... Many people who go on pilgrimages... would have been completely lost if they were doing something quite different!⁹⁴

It is not within the scope of this study to conduct a comparison of the social and religious roles of these same women in their home communities, but such a comparison would be enlightening.⁹⁵

The “gendered” aspect of arrival is attenuated greatly if the point of arrival is in fact not the shrine, but the home. Edith Turner's 1987 summary overview of pilgrimage⁹⁶ understands the last phase of the van Gennep paradigm as referring to the “homecoming” rather than to the arrival at the shrine. Rites of passage are intended to prepare the initiand for a new role in the society of origin, and not for an indefinite state of liminality in a shrine or other place outside of ordinary society. It seems therefore, that the Turners differ from Leed in this essential respect. It is not the arrival at the shrine, and the ecstatic union with the divine presence there, that marks the culmination of the pilgrimage process, but rather the long and arduous, sometimes anti-climactic and markedly ordinary return to the parochial home environment, and the subsequent struggle to integrate the experience of sacred space with secular time over the course of a lifetime.

⁹² “The Disoriented Tourist” 32; quoting Z. Bauman, “Fran pilgrim till turist”, *Moderna Tider* (September 1994) 20-34.

⁹³ Jane (I.o) – interview.

⁹⁴ Brent (I.p) – interview.

⁹⁵ An important observation about women in the social structure of an English Christian community is made by Jenkins (*Religion in English Everyday Life*, 127, 159ff and 206). In the community under study, women (especially mothers) represent the “stable” aspect of family life and are therefore symbols of the respectability and restraint that characterize local society.

⁹⁶ Edith Turner, in: *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol 11 (NY: Macmillan 1987)328.

Again, unlike the social enhancement expected in the “reaggregation” of the initiate in a rite of passage, the pilgrim’s homecoming marks a stage of his or her “venture into religious experience rather than a transition to higher status”⁹⁷ In Islam some social status is granted the pilgrim who completes the *hajj*, and this recognition is a visible sign of the value of the journey. For Christians, however, the actual effect of the “venture into religious experience” will be worked out, sometimes slowly, through a relationship between the pilgrim (who has experienced life-changing things) and the members of a corporate home community (who have been continuing life and faith without significant change). The tension in this situation is unavoidable, but can be softened by the perception that the pilgrim is bringing gifts to the home community.⁹⁸

2. VOLUNTARY OR NECESSARY? : COMPETING DISCOURSES

The issue of gender in travel is only one of the ambiguities that underlie the entire narration of pilgrimage accounts. There is a recurring sense of discomfort, subtly expressed but certainly felt, in pilgrim interviews, around the subjects of the setting forth, the passage, the arrival and the return. Contemporary travel to the Holy Land usually entails the hardly noticed inconvenience of a few hours on an airplane and in transit; this does not at first seem a significant event in itself. Some pilgrims even express a mild regret that their journey was not more challenging.

The desire for a more significant physical journey represents something deeper. The quality of a pilgrimage experience is associated in the pilgrim’s mind with the serious issue of religious motivation. A pilgrim might express the desire to travel in an “authentic” way, as symbolic of the authenticity of the divine encounter envisioned:

I wanted to be able to meet Jesus as a real person in a real place. So I wanted to walk around an olive tree; I wanted to walk on the limestone terraces; I wanted to walk in the hills...⁹⁹

When asked if she would like to return to the Holy Land on a future pilgrimage, Pat indicates that she would “rough it” to a greater extent, minimize structure and aspire to a journey that is at once more “ordinary” and more “spiritual”. The transcript of Pat’s interview is very telling on this issue, and can be quoted here:

HRC: If you did go back [to the Holy Land], what would you want to be different?

Pat: I would take my tent, thank you! [*Laughter*]... I would want to do my own thing.

HRC: And if you had the chance, if you were free to do your own thing, what would it be?

⁹⁷ Edith Turner, *Encyclopedia of Religion* 330.

⁹⁸ It will be seen that these “pilgrim gifts” begin with candles, blessed oil, holy water and soil, vestments and other religious objects, but go on to include slide shows, evening talks, sermon ideas, and in some cases a serious discussion of the value of the ecclesiastical structure of the home parish.

⁹⁹ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

Pat: ... There would be more of a balance, there would be more of a spiritual balance, I think...

HRC: How would you make sure that balance was there?

Pat: I don't know... Obviously the spiritual side, I think, would come from... within me... But going to visit places... And I would want to... I would want actually to be a bit of a tourist. I am sure that [*a certain fellow pilgrim*] won't mind if I say this... she said to me, "Oh, I wish we could just do ordinary things for once!"

HRC: That's interesting, because you started by talking about a more spiritual experience... How would being a tourist enhance that?

Pat: When I was there... [something] made me totally rethink what spirituality means. And that, yes, spirituality is out there, in the people in the street, but it's not just this very contemplative thing that I thought it was...

The extraordinary yearning for the "ordinary journey" has a complex history in religious thought.¹⁰⁰ For Eliade, pilgrimage was an example of the Western world's "nostalgia for initiatory trials and scenarios... [revealing] modern man's longing for a total and definitive renewal."¹⁰¹ The Turners, however, insisted on the primary aspect of the pilgrim's journey as "voluntary liminality", not required ritual. In initial separation from daily life, then, the pilgrim is like a tourist. The "optative" and secular nature of the outgoing journey contributes to the erosion of the traditional confidence in the "sacred pilgrimage fellowship." The specifically religious rituals of initiation are replaced by the "ludic" aspects of social transition: play, leisure, entertainment, contractual relations, individualism. All this I take to be illustrated in Pat's "tourist/pilgrim" juxtaposition. She realizes intuitively that, paradoxically, less "spirituality" is – when it comes to pilgrimage - actually more.

Victor Turner wrote that pilgrimage is "infused with voluntariness though by no means independent of structural obligatoriness".¹⁰² Pat's longing for "ordinary spirituality" is an expression of the tension between the two, as well as an indication of the present locus of the "pilgrimage field" through which she makes her way to the "sacred center". For Turner, the "center" is the shrine, which influences the various (social, political and religious) "pilgrimage fields" circumscribed by elliptical journeys to and from the "center". The axiomatic position of the shrine/center, and the corresponding theme of pilgrimage as reinforcing religious and social agendas, are both now critiqued by "competing discourses", in which the meanings assigned to pilgrimage by ecclesiastical authorities may be challenged by more personal meanings provided by the pilgrims themselves.¹⁰³ Pat, and others like her, are engaged in just such a "competing discourse" on their journey.

¹⁰⁰ "Pilgrims... emit an image of ordinariness... But such overt ordinariness is concerned, above all, with commemorating and contextualizing the extraordinary..." (Ian Reader and Tony Walter (eds.), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*; London: Macmillan Press 1993, 236).

¹⁰¹ Eliade, *The Quest* 126.

¹⁰² Turner, "Center Out There" 204.

¹⁰³ Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 7: "The personification of the sacred centre is a movement to the limits of ecclesiastical control..."

3. EXCITEMENT AND DANGER

The journey itself may appear mundane, voluntary, easy and uneventful, but subtle nuances of personal color emerge when the pilgrim is invited to remember the details:

The Shepherds' Fields was exactly what I expected it to be. When we were driving along the road in the bus and saw the Bedouin with the tents and the sheep, I thought: We've gone back in time, it's a time warp!¹⁰⁴

Often, patient questioning will reveal less comfortable memories, sometimes of a potential peril, associated not so much with physical stress as with the "unfamiliar" nature of the surroundings, and the subliminal suspicion that the "hosts" among whom the pilgrim moves may in fact be "hostile". Pat understood that her conversations with a local person might be considered too daring:

I made other [encounters] for myself. In my morning walks... I met a chap who works at the hotel, and we would walk back together for the last few yards, and have a chat... And I think some of our leaders would have been absolutely totally horrified at this English person walking around...¹⁰⁵

Becky (as we have already noted) had a very similar experience in her meetings with Arab men and children in a village she explored on her own initiative. For both Becky and Pat, a (stereotypical or conventional) "hostile" context is transformed by their own (unconventional) experience into an enlightening and friendly encounter. In terms of travel theory, their testimony places pilgrimage closer to the voluntary journey of the age of chivalry – an "acceptance of the unknown as a positive value"¹⁰⁶ – than to the "necessary" journeys of ancient heroes like Gilgamesh and Odysseus, "imposed upon them by external command".¹⁰⁷ The implications, however, go deeper. The overall context of an English diocesan pilgrimage (led by male clergy and with a specific schedule to be adhered to) should not be forgotten. In fact, Becky and Pat here represent the image of the Western woman in the perilous East, and in their discoveries one may detect an element of scandalous initiative and escape from the "external command" of custom. Close attention to language and nuance in the interviews with female pilgrims uncovers glimpses of gender roles reversed and lines of propriety transgressed.¹⁰⁸

Even the contemporary and voluntary pilgrimage is, then, to some extent a fearful journey.¹⁰⁹ Rojek and Urry¹¹⁰ observe that in all travel there is a relationship

¹⁰⁴ Melissa (II.f) – interview (Appendix A, Interview D).

¹⁰⁵ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

¹⁰⁶ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler* 40.

¹⁰⁷ *The Mind of the Traveler* 12.

¹⁰⁸ These phenomena are well illustrated in travel literature; cf. Kinglake's description of Lady Hester Stanhope ("the queen of the desert, who dwelt in tents, and reigned over the wandering Arabs"), and of his liminal moment at the Jordan: "You thread your path through the crowds of Europe, and at last, on the banks of the Jordan, you joyfully know that you are upon the very frontier of all accustomed respectabilities." (Alexander Kinglake, *Eothen*; London: Macmillan and Co., 1932, 76 and 118).

¹⁰⁹ Albert Camus wrote: "What gives value to travel is fear... At that moment we are feverish but also porous, so that the slightest touch makes us quiver... There is no pleasure in travelling, and I look upon it as an occasion for spiritual testing." Quoted by Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler*, 1.

between the functions of the senses and the experience of danger. This relationship is constitutive (at least in part) of the “passion” for travel as an “acting out” of the transition between “Modernity 1” (an era of universal and consistent principles, the imposition of differentiation) and “Modernity 2” (i.e. postmodernity: antinomianism, irrational consequences, dissent and the breaking of boundaries). In tourism *per se*, the “other” is always potentially perilous, positioned in a “sight” – to be seen, not touched. It is important to note that the pilgrim is in this respect subject to the same “travel norms” as the tourist. In Rojek and Urry’s terms: “gaze” is to “touch” what “desire” is to “contamination”. Expressed in more theological terms, fear in pilgrimage derives from encounter with the “other” as beyond the boundary of the (spiritually) familiar. The pilgrim knows (consciously or unconsciously) the peril of such encounter. This peril can be associated with two extremes: either (1) transcendence of social/religious borders (with subsequent compassionate action and loss of “safe distance”), or (2) total prejudice and bigotry, with the “other” conceived as banal and unspiritual at best, unclean or even demonic at worst.

The existential fears associated with travel are generally buffered for most pilgrims by the experience of traveling in the company of a group. Of course, the group members start out as strangers to each other, and this causes a certain amount of anxiety. Becky reported of her first encounter with her fellow-pilgrims, that “when we met outside of [the train] station, we were very wary of each other... Eyeing each other [up and] down and thinking who was going...” Eventually the ice is broken and the excitement of discovering each other replaces wariness. Making the acquaintance of fellow travellers is socially pleasurable, and important in order to alleviate the fraught aspects of the journey. Of course, there is an initial advantage to traveling with people you already know:

We actually traveled with a lady from our church... We’re only three of us [on the pilgrimage] from our church, so we traveled with her. We know her fairly well... so that was nice.

It would seem that with a sufficiently unthreatening support group, a modern pilgrimage would lack any sense of real danger. Further reflection shows that for some, even a “safe” journey can be difficult. Pilgrims have different tolerance levels for stress, and the organized group cannot shield its members from unsettling impressions and unexpected encounters. Several pilgrims in a group diocesan pilgrimage of ten days described the experience as “almost too much”:

First of all I absolutely hated it. The first few days I really, really hated it. I have never been on any kind of organized trip like that in my life... Dashing from place to place... You know, it was literally: Today is Monday, so it’s Bethlehem... and it’s this and it’s that and the other... With very little time for any quiet reflection in between.¹¹¹

I know that perhaps for most people it’s a once in a lifetime experience to go to the Holy Land... Maybe it needed to be that intense... not everybody shared the same relevant feelings and experiences, and maybe it needed to be

¹¹⁰ Rojek and Urry, “Transformation and Travel Theory”, in *Touring Cultures*, 5-8.

¹¹¹ Pat (I.a) - interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

that way... On a fundamental basis it was probably too exhausting for a lot of people.¹¹²

I know on some occasions I was absolutely overwhelmed and didn't want to go from that step to the next. But I did, and... since I've been home... I can reflect on the experience.¹¹³

In recent years in particular, political tensions are perceived as acutely threatening:

We had an afternoon free in Jerusalem and [our fellow pilgrims] were too frightened... to do anything, you see... People are nervous. And, I suppose, the situation has gotten a good deal worse... When we took our young people there, they couldn't go out at night. We played Scrabble and that sort of thing in the [hotel] lounge...¹¹⁴

In general, pilgrims adopt responses to the hardships and stresses of their journey that correspond to one of two coping patterns: "transformational coping" or "regressive coping". Csikszentmihalyi classes transformational coping (along with courage, resilience and perseverance) as a "dissipative structure"¹¹⁵ of the mind - that is, an ability to transform adversity into a positive challenge. During the journey to a sacred center, there is ample opportunity to "capture chaos" and create a meaningful pilgrimage, but this will depend on a "transformational" approach.

Michael (who remembered his journey in a very positive light) summed it up when asked whether the pilgrimage had raised any religious questions or dilemmas:

I didn't go [on my pilgrimage] with some very hard edges to my faith... or indeed [with] any very set opinions about other Christians... so one was open to all of it and rejected very little of it.¹¹⁶

4. "SHAPE" OR "TRACE"?

Before setting out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a group of clergy and lay people from the Chelmsford area in England were asked what it is, in their opinion, that links the beginning of a journey with the end of the journey. Their responses were instructive in their diversity: "I and God"; "History"; "Companions"; "Survival"; "Return"; "Experience"; and "Change".¹¹⁷ These words summarize the prospective pilgrims' intuition that the precise relationship between the beginning and the end of the pilgrimage is determined by relationship dynamics rather than by topography. Piety directs the path. A very short road, for example, can take a very long time to traverse on one's knees. If pilgrims walk around a shrine (as Muslim pilgrims do at

¹¹² Cathy (I.m) - interview.

¹¹³ Wilma (I.n) - interview.

¹¹⁴ Brent (I.p) - interview.

¹¹⁵ A term coined by the chemist Ilya Prigogine; cf. Csikszentmihalyi (Elow 201): "Dissipative structures... capture chaos and shape it into a more complex order."

¹¹⁶ Michael (I.I) - interview.

¹¹⁷ Pre-pilgrimage meeting (June 27, 2000).

Mecca), their experience differs from that of a Christian pilgrim descending or ascending steep steps into the Tomb of Lazarus or up to the Chapel of Golgotha.

Each pilgrimage as a whole must have a particular “shape” determined by that particular pilgrim’s disposition. Turner posited that considerations of psychological and especially social process define the “shape” of a pilgrimage as roughly “elliptical”. The point of departure is *conceptually* and *processually* (although not necessarily topographically) joined to the point of arrival by two *distinct* vectors – one going out and one coming back. These two vectors of the journey cannot be imaged on the same line, hence the “elliptical shape” of pilgrimage. In *Image and Pilgrimage*, the Turners simply remark that the homeward path is distinguished by an “attitude [which] is now that of a tourist rather than a devotee.”¹¹⁸ In fact, a more structured social transformation is implied in the Turners’ ellipse. The outgoing path is characterized by transience and leveling, while the return path is marked by an increase in social merit, religious blessing, and cultural “unity”. Turner’s “shaped” journey depends first on his thesis that the pilgrim is part of a liminal social process resulting in a “metastructure” of “*communitas spirit* [which] presses always to universality and ever-greater unity.”¹¹⁹ Secondly, the coherence of the “shaped” journey derives from Turner’s insistence on a “pilgrim center” as an actual locality “out there”, where the pilgrim is transformed by traversing sacred liminality, to return home as a “symbol of totality”.¹²⁰

We have already reviewed above some difficulties with Turner’s thesis. Here, in reference to how pilgrims experience their journey, I must say that *pace* Turner’s observations,¹²¹ I have found no indications to support his view in interviews with contemporary pilgrims to Jerusalem from the reformed traditions. As will be indicated below, there is little tendency toward “universality” in pilgrims’ encounters with each other, even less “unity” symbolized in their experiences on the way, and no sense of “totality” in their perception of church or society upon their homecoming. In fact, quite different abstractions would apply, e.g.: “contesting discourses”, “individuation”, “fragmentation” and “plurality”.

An alternative paradigm for describing the journey, and one more consonant with actual pilgrim narratives, is James Preston’s “sacred trace”.¹²² The term, borrowed from nuclear physics, is apt: it describes movement on several planes at once, not confined to a point in space or time, but inferred from careful observation of a phenomenon always in flux – an “invisible reality made visible in the world”. Like subatomic energies, pilgrim processes can only be “traced” through visible media:

Tracing... should be achieved through the movement of a team of experts following the pilgrim flow at different levels. Tracing the flow is essential because pilgrimage is a circulation of people, ideas, symbols, experiences,

¹¹⁸ *Image and Pilgrimage*, 22-23.

¹¹⁹ Turner, “Center Out There”, 202.

¹²⁰ “Center Out There” 221.

¹²¹ “Center Out There” cites examples mostly from Mexico and the Catholic world, and also from Islam and Buddhism, but Turner clearly intends to apply his conclusions to Christian pilgrimage in general.

¹²² James J. Preston, “Spiritual Magnetism: An Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage”, in: Alan Morinis (ed.), *Sacred Journeys*, 40.

and cash. Pilgrimage extends humans beyond parochial horizons, as they move both vertically and horizontally into increasingly wider religiocultural spheres.

For Preston, the pilgrimage process is determined by “magnetism” in more than one dimension (geographical, historical, social, economic, psychological and religious) – *all at the same time*. The pilgrim’s “position” cannot be measured and mapped, but only inferred in a relative way. Each pilgrim discourse is in some way unique:

What an unholy place it is! Struggle and tension and division and separation and political discomfort. Wondering what’s around the corner... Road blocks, [security] searches going to the Wailing Wall. Would we get into Bethlehem? Would we not get into Bethlehem?... That was the overall impression that I got from being on pilgrimage. That we leave one divisive culture to enter another even more divisive and separate culture...¹²³

(C) SHRINE

1. AUTHENTIC OR INAUTHENTIC? : COMPETING DISCOURSES

(a) *A JOYFUL TOPOGRAPHY*

The seventeenth century Buddhist pilgrim, Matsuo Basho, reaching the famous stone of Tobu Castle, wrote a passage testifying to the immense joy associated with arrival at a shrine:

This monument was made a thousand years ago and is a very real and vivid link with the past. Seeing it is one of the things that has made my trip worthwhile and one of the happiest moments of my life. Forgetting all the trials of the journey, I wept for sheer joy.¹²⁴

For Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, sanctity of place, and the “geography of the [sacred] imagination” begin with the land itself. A group of people in training for ordination were asked, during a preparatory conference, to name the land to which they were intending to make their pilgrimage. “Holy Land, Israel, Palestine, Judea, Galilee, Middle East, Land of the Bible, Promised Land, West Bank, Sion (or Zion), Omphalos (the Navel of the World), El-Quds, Jerusalem, Occupied West Bank” – were a few of the names they gave.¹²⁵ Before the journey, then, sacred and secular terms are mixed. The process of pilgrimage will include a sorting out of these and other “signifiers”, and establishing patterns of relative importance among them – i.e. “mapping the sacred space”.

In the case of the type of Christian pilgrimage we are addressing, the “sacred topography” of the Holy Land itself – modern Israel and Palestine - is the first shrine context to be encountered, even when this encounter is not consciously acknowledged. Joy is a frequent emotion at such a moment. The approaches to

¹²³ Rex (II.q) – interview (Appendix A, Interview D).

¹²⁴ Matsuo Basho, *A Narrow Road to Far Places* (quoted in Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*, 175).

¹²⁵ North East Oecumenical Course (NEOC) - Preparatory Weekend for Pilgrimage.

Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee and Jerusalem are particularly rich with a “joyful topography of arrival”. The private emotional life of the individual is not, however, the only field where sacred place is encountered. Traditionally, for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, geography is intimately linked with text, and the surprises of topography enliven the reading of the Bible:

The Garden of Gethsemane, as you come back into Jerusalem, and you sort of visualize it to be sort of five miles away... and it is actually just on the next hill... You know, I... found everything very close. And then I think... if you think about it logically it's going to be close, because, you know, people didn't travel far did they?¹²⁶

There is an intimate relationship, then, between the Holy Land and the Holy Book. Pilgrims recognize the geography they encounter as “texted” – i.e. as an integral part of the sacred narrative which has brought them there in the first place -

...the landscape as not just a backdrop for the stories, but as a participant or actor in the dramas.¹²⁷

(b) TRADITION VS. REALITY

When confronted with specific shrines in the form of churches or other designated “holy sites”, the pilgrim first singles out for comment the places where the presence of the sacred “other” (usually but not always Jesus) was most strongly felt:

The days at Dominus Flevit, at Caiaphas' house, at Mensa Christi (Tabgha), and around the [Sea of] Galilee area, at Capernaum, at the Mount of Beatitudes... you really felt that you were walking in Jesus' footsteps.¹²⁸

Similarly, a dramatic view of the Old City of Jerusalem from the top of the Mount of Olives is remembered in terms of Jesus' presence:

We went to the Mount of Olives hotel, that first night... It was very late, and [organizer and pastor] said, Would you like to look over Jerusalem? And... I was just overwhelmed with his [*i.e.* Jesus'] presence. To such an extent I felt like I could reach out and touch everything, because he was there. I felt he was there.¹²⁹

Positive and negative responses to the self-same venue seem to relate primarily to the pilgrim perception of *authenticity* and its indications. Pilgrims I interviewed were not prepared to assume that a traditional shrine (authentic for others in the past) is also authentic for them now, unless a personal validation is observed through the pilgrim's own experience. In general, shrines are felt to be “authentic” and “real” if the presence of Jesus (or some faith-perceived person or event) is felt there:

¹²⁶ Martha (I.c) - interview.

¹²⁷ Rita (III.gg) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹²⁸ Dan (I.j) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

¹²⁹ Trudy (I.k) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

Walking up the steps at Caiaphas' house... to turn around and look up, and [think] that these are the steps that Jesus walked up!... Yes, I found that, you know, very, very moving... almost in tears.¹³⁰

That sense of closeness was when we went to... Caiaphas' house, and... there were those steps which were part of, I reckon, part of the original path he [*i.e.* Jesus] would have gone to... when he went through the valley... And I just had to walk right down into the valley and walk up the steps... And I think, A sandal went there, a sandal went there, and a sandal went there. My Lord walked here.¹³¹

Not all shrines are experienced as authentic, but layers of inauthenticity can be removed, just as the accretions of history can be peeled away, revealing the “very land” beneath. This process of discovery is a sensitive one, engaging the imagination of the pilgrim in a conscious and directed way:

Bethlehem was amazing and awe-inspiring, ancient... yet intimate rather than vast, and with such a treasury of history and devotion. This sense of the certainty that “this is the place” – at Bethlehem, at the house of the Last Supper, in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher – was hugely moving, and I found a place in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where you could put your hand through and feel the rock of Calvary. That left me so moved and penitent and unworthy and exalted all at once.¹³²

Of course many of the sites we visited were traditional, of spurious authenticity, though some, such as the Sea of Galilee, are exactly as they were at the time of Jesus. But even the numerous churches and shrines supposedly built on the place of Jesus' birth, or the annunciation, or Jesus' death, or the site by the seashore in Galilee where he commissioned Peter, are imbued with a sense of reality.¹³³

The operative terms in this account are “spurious”/“supposedly” – as opposed to “authenticity”/“reality”. The drift of the quest is clear. The desire of the pilgrim is toward the authentic, but there is a remarkable tolerance for the existence of the spurious, almost as if the layer of falsity protects and enshrines the truth. The emotion of surprise at finding a sense of the real and historical Jesus amid the overlay of “Western” religious imports is an essential element of the pilgrim's experience:

None of the sites can definitely be identified as ‘the real place’. Many are marked by modern churches – often extremely beautiful but in a Western style that would have no place in Biblical times. All are thronging with groups such as ours – holding services, reading from the Bible and singing – each group patiently waiting for others to finish. How is it that in spite of so

¹³⁰ Dan (I.j) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

¹³¹ Michael (I.I) - interview.

¹³² Maggie (III.v) - Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

¹³³ Jennie (I.g): “Pilgrimage to the Holy Land”.

much worship in Western Protestant style I came away feeling that here the man called Jesus had really lived?¹³⁴

A shrine is not “authentic” in any *a priori* manner. Rather, the conviction of reality is a product of the “pilgrim gaze” at that place, and depends very much on the “in-place”/“out-of-place” disposition of the pilgrim. In Becky’s interview, there is an unusually clear glimpse of the gradual process of realization/authentication over a period of time and spanning more than one visit to the Holy Land. As we have already noted the importance of processual analysis in Turner’s work on pilgrimage, and the attendant focus on collective and external rather than individual and personal experience in the Turnerian system, Becky’s narrative has direct bearing on our theological discovery of where the “pilgrim center” is to be sought in actual pilgrim experience. The following excerpts from Becky’s interview illustrate the point:

I wouldn’t want to discount the value of going to the holy sites. What I found was that different ones meant different things to me. The last time I had been in Bethlehem... I hated the Church of the Nativity. We went to see a play in the Shepherds’ Fields, which had a degree of authenticity... It was derelict, and it was scrubland, you know, it felt right... You know, it was so interesting an experience... Now, the Shepherds’ Fields this time [*i.e. her most recent pilgrimage*] didn’t mean anything to me at all. The Church of the Nativity, which I remembered as being crowded and un-welcoming and awful [*Laughter*], overwhelmed me this time... I drank in, I suppose, the sort of... the lamp light... [*Organizer*] told us about it being the oldest church... something very profound about that.¹³⁵

Clearly, for Becky, a sacred place can be at the same time “derelict” and “right”, “awful” and “profound”. The interplay between “true” and “false” in the shrine enhances rather than detracts from the effect of the sacred at that place. “Ambiguity, contradiction and confusion again remind us of the question, ‘What makes this land holy?’”¹³⁶ A pilgrim’s experience might be first the desire to “get in touch” with the authentic, as something/someplace close to the person of Jesus, and then the disappointment at learning that the literal sense of “authentic” is not sufficient. In Becky’s case, this happened at a section of ancient pavement near the traditional Way of the Cross:

Last time we went to Pilate’s Pavement and at that time they told me it was the authentic pavement, and I desperately wanted to take off my shoes so I could put my bare feet where Christ’s had been. But I was too embarrassed... And I always promised myself that the next time I went, I would take my shoes off, whatever, and put my feet there... But of course, [*on the most recent pilgrimage*], when we are going up the Via Dolorosa, and [*organizer*] tells us that this [*i.e. this same pavement*] is now dated to 170 AD, so it’s not the pavement... I thought, It really doesn’t matter... Because as a mature Christian I ought to recognize that everywhere I put my feet is where his feet have been...¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Alicia (I.f): “My Pilgrimage”.

¹³⁵ Becky (I.b) – interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

¹³⁶ Litchfield, “A Land that is Holy?” 6.

¹³⁷ Becky (I.b) – interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

Turner wrote that “the pilgrim becomes himself [*sic*] a total symbol; indeed, a symbol of totality.” Eliade, on the other hand, emphasized the particular and mysterious “center of [the pilgrim’s] being”. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the empirical data provided by this pilgrim record support Eliade’s “Center in Here” against Turner’s “Center Out There”. It must also be said, however, that there seems to be little evidence of the “center” being sought in anything like Eliade’s “zone of absolute reality”. Consistently, the mapping of the “sacred center” answers to the coordinates of “self” and “other”. Both totality and particularity are subsumed in the experience of realization/understanding. The pilgrim realizes that “Here, where I (in particular) now walk, in this very place Christ (always and everywhere) walks too.”

(c) A GRAVE AMBIVALENCE

For most pilgrims, the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus are incorporated into the pilgrimage in the form of a devotional walk along the “Way of Sorrows” (Via Dolorosa) culminating with a visit to the Tomb of Christ in the Holy Sepulchre Church in the heart of Jerusalem’s Old City. Protestant pilgrims, especially wary of superstitious connotations at these (largely Orthodox and Catholic) shrines, find that these experiences are fraught with all kinds of ambiguities:

I was very apprehensive even before I went about doing the Via Dolorosa. [*The Way of the Cross*] is one of my favorite services. I have written and done a service in church for adults, and I’ve written one for little children... And everybody said [*of the Via Dolorosa*], Oh, it’s absolutely awful, it’s busy, it’s awful. So I actually spoke to [*the pilgrimage organizer*] the night before, and said, But, you know, are we going to have time to stop [*i.e. to reflect along the Via Dolorosa*]? And he made time. And we did stop.¹³⁸

For this pilgrim, the meditative observance of the Via Dolorosa (a prayerful “pilgrimage within a pilgrimage”) occasioned reflection on a possible liturgical reform of the Way of the Cross practice in general, in order to bring it more into line with the biblical text.¹³⁹ This is an interesting corroboration of the unique place Jerusalem plays as a pilgrimage shrine highly linked with the text of scripture.

Once inside the (mostly medieval) Church of the Holy Sepulchre, pilgrim and tourist unite in their urge to find occasions for scandal in the hulking pile of stone surrounding the Tomb of Christ:

I didn’t like the Church... at all. Of all the places we went to... There were so many people and so many groups and so many guides, all... saying things at the same time... It was so busy and ornate and... it didn’t do anything for me at all!¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

¹³⁹ “If you think about the Stations of the Cross, there are only about three or four of them that are Scripture related... If it’s a symbolic journey that has to do with the Passion, what I would like to do is go back further... to the Anointing [in Bethany]... the resurrection of Lazarus... the Dominus Flevit... and make it somehow more biblical, more real...” – Pat (I.a) interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

¹⁴⁰ Linda (I.i) - interview.

Places that maybe I should have felt... I didn't... The Holy Sepulchre I found... very gaudy, almost commercialized... The priest who stood at the door, he charged you... I forget, what was it? Twenty shekels or something for a candle, which he put on the altar and he lit it, and as you walked out the other end he blew it out and put it under the counter, and so on... That sort of thing made me think that perhaps it wasn't as Jesus wanted it... It made me wonder if it really was the place.¹⁴¹

However, an entirely different view is sometimes expressed in an appreciation of the fact that six different Christian denominations have found a *modus vivendi* in one highly contested spot, a feat unequalled in any other Christian shrine:

Even in the Tomb of the... in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre... there didn't seem to be any great tension... There may be below the surface, you know. This is our patch, this is yours, and so on... But I didn't detect, and I found that quite comforting actually...¹⁴²

A sort of irony marks many descriptions of this venerable Church; in one case a comparison with a more pleasing site (the Bahai Shrine in Haifa) remains (intentionally?) ambiguous:

While the Church is an ugly mess, the [Bahai] shrine is truly beautiful... One of the founders of the Bahai faith is buried there, but Jesus is not buried in Jerusalem – he is risen. The [Bahai] gardens are symbolic of... Heaven. Christianity is immersed in the messiness of the present.¹⁴³

When the impression from the Church of the Resurrection is clearly negative, this often reflects an existing attitude toward the state of Christianity in general:

Mainly in the Holy Sepulchre you have the seven different churches. And of course the Ethiopian and the Syrian churches weren't working together. As a result, the Syrian part of the church was falling away, eliminated ... And that would make me cry, thinking that even in the most holy of holiest places, the church can't work together, so what hope is there for the church outside of Jerusalem?¹⁴⁴

Objectively speaking, the status quo in the Church of the Resurrection (as it is universally called in the East) cannot be described in such simplistic terms. The ecumenical challenges actually addressed successfully by the local communities would cripple most Anglican or Catholic parishes in the West. The perceived "scandal" of the Tomb of Christ is a classic example of a "perception" forced upon pilgrims by opinionated hearsay, and apparently supported by the complex architecture at the site. The facts here are in a jumble, but the "pilgrim gaze" is focused on the conviction that the "Church" needs reform. It is not only the visible shrine that strikes the pilgrim as being "not as Jesus wanted it." In narratives of this

¹⁴¹ Dan (I.j) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

¹⁴² Jim (I.h) - interview.

¹⁴³ George (III.c) - Email response to May 2001 questionnaire.

¹⁴⁴ Dan (I.j) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

type, the place becomes a metaphor or even a parable concerning the spiritual state of Christian faith in a much broader arena.

2. ALTERNATIVE SHRINES: PILGRIM GAZE PREROGATIVES

(a) AESTHETIC AND AUTHENTIC

Pilgrims may be aware that "Gordon's Calvary" (the Garden Tomb, outside Damascus Gate) is not a likely historical candidate for the tomb of Jesus, but they can still appreciate the setting for its devotional value:

We went to the Garden Tomb and I think everyone enjoyed the setting and the experience, and I could understand how it could fit people's, umm... But the worship we had there was not the less intense or meaningful even though I personally didn't believe that that was where Jesus was buried. But that didn't matter... What was more important was that it was a collective experience...¹⁴⁵

The quest for a "better" Tomb of Christ, one less disturbing and chaotic than the Church of the Resurrection, is a relatively modern exercise of an aesthetic option in pilgrimage. For the most part, I believe, pilgrims who seek out the Garden Tomb do so for aesthetical rather than theological reasons. Said one pilgrim: "The Holy Sepulchre I found... was very, very gaudy... I found more affinity with the Garden Tomb".

A stronger impetus for the designating of alternative shrines surfaces when the "pilgrim gaze" perceives deeper meanings than are discernible in the stock shrines on the itinerary. The merely "aesthetic alternative" may become "authentic" in a real sense only through a process of pilgrim "identification".

In the interview material, a pattern of "aesthetic and authentic" alternatives emerges. The "map" of alternative shrines might include, in Jerusalem, the Dominus Flevit Chapel ("I was so close to Jesus there, I simply wept, the whole time... I just felt his tears"), and even the seldom-visited Syrian Church of St. Mark:

We went to one lovely little church, umm... it was Syrian, wasn't it? A tiny little place in the back streets... And [someone] took us... Was it up? Downstairs! We went downstairs! To an "Upper Room" [*Laughter*]. Yes. That was lovely. There were no priests or anyone there, but there was a little old lady who came and sort of opened the door for us... I thought it was lovely.¹⁴⁶

Outside of Jerusalem, alternative shrines include the Sea of Galilee (Lake Kinnereth), the Chapel of the Primacy at Tabgha (which is close to the lakeshore), Cana of Galilee (ironically, the site visited by pilgrims is almost certainly not the Cana of the Gospels), and the biblical deserts of Judea, Negev and Sinai. The Sea of Galilee and the biblical wilderness have in common a distance from large contemporary cities

¹⁴⁵ Michael (I.I) – interview.

¹⁴⁶ Linda (I.i) – interview.

and a sense of timeless natural beauty. This at first is what makes these shrines common candidates to become “alternatives” to some of the less appealing churches and other official venues.

But these same places also strike pilgrims as “certainly” having been visited by Jesus *exactly as they are*. Pilgrims seldom ask whether in fact the desert might have been more forested in antiquity (there is evidence that the Judean Desert had a much milder and wetter climate at one time), or whether Lake Kinnereth in Galilee might have looked different to Jesus’ contemporaries (there is evidence that the shoreline has shifted, and that there were in the first century many more fishing ports and villages around the lake). The perception of the “pilgrim gaze” is that both venues have remained *unchanged* since the time of Jesus and the disciples. This perception combines with aesthetic delight, to produce an almost unchallenged sense of “authentic” holiness in a perceived “real” (not just “traditional”) place that must therefore resonate with a “reality” in personal experience:

By the Sea of Galilee... My husband was a fisherman, I mean he worked in a bank, but... we were both fisher-people. And my husband died while we were fishing. [Pause]. So I found that kind of... emotional... He loved water... and we used to go fishing together and just be... sitting by the water’s edge.¹⁴⁷

Alternative shrines, then, can represent something deeper than natural beauty. At times they are metaphors for moral perception. A recurring theme in descriptions of “alternative shrines” is the quest for a place that represents more than “tradition” (i.e. ecclesiastical, historical or archeological significance). It is an *awakened feeling*, not custom, that indicates authenticity and true sanctity in such “holy places”:

I was surprised that I didn’t think it more significant that Abraham might have drawn water from this well... or that Christ might have walked down these first century steps. I was more interested in them as archeological sites indicating the way people of the first century might have lived, their culture and customs... Places that did however evoke other feelings tended to be ‘natural’ where human beings could not intrude too much e.g. the shores of Lake Galilee or [places] of anger and ‘com-passion’ (probably the word) w[h]ere contemporary horrors and troubles had been inflicted on so many people – Bar’am and Yad Vashem to name two holy places.¹⁴⁸

(b) STILLING THE STORM : A SHRINE-LEGEND

We now look at a few examples of “pilgrim gaze” and “mindscape” at work in pilgrim stories at various alternative shrines. Some scholars remark that miracles and apparitions are “intrinsic parts of saintlore and keys to the development of pilgrimage” in general, yet it is often noted that the Holy Land is not a prime venue

¹⁴⁷ Martha (I.c) - interview.

¹⁴⁸ Abe (III.aa) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire. The Arab Christian residents of Bar’am, in northern Galilee, were evicted from their homes by the Israeli forces in 1948 and have never been allowed to return, in spite of a Supreme Court decision in their favor. Yad Vashem (The Heroes and Martyrs Memorial Authority, in Jerusalem) is Israel’s Memorial to the Holocaust; exhibits there highlight the extinction of European Jewish communities.

for the miraculous. An exceptional pilgrim legend narrated in relation to the Sea of Galilee will serve to sharpen the role of "identification" (especially identifying with the Bible) as a prime component of the miraculous, wherever this is encountered.

Trudy says of her boat ride on the Sea of Galilee that it was "the most amazing time for me". Her description of her encounter with this "holy place" comes within minutes of the beginning of our interview. Of great significance is the counterpoint in this dramatic story between spiritual states of fearfulness and calm, human weakness and the confidence of divine intervention. The story as told by Trudy is an example of "personal legend". This "legend" is told as true in precisely the sense implied by William Bascom in his distinction between "myth" (prose narratives *considered, in the society in which they are told, to be truthful accounts* of what occurred in the remote past) and "legend" (prose narratives *regarded as true by the narrator and audience, but set in a time less remote*).¹⁴⁹ Trudy's narrative deserves a fairly full exposition in light of its importance in understanding the authenticity of pilgrimage experience:

I can't travel across the sea, and even going across to France, which is only a short trip, you know, and I'm sick... So when we knew we were going on a boat [*i.e. across the Sea of Galilee*], I thought, Well, I'll go back by land... Then I thought, Well I can't possibly do that because Jesus rowed across here, sailed across here, and I need to do it, you know... And so I prayed that God would give me strength to do it and I wouldn't be sick... Anyway, we got on the boat... and I just prayed for a little while on the boat. And [*pastor's name*] came up and said, Would you do the reading? And I said, Well, what do you want me to read? And I thought, How am I going to read? ... It's really windy, really windy! The boat is tossing from side to side! Yeah, and I hadn't a jacket... and... one of our friends gave me his big thick raincoat, because it was really blowing and the sea was really rough! And he said, You're going to read "Jesus Calms the Storm"! And I said, Well, I need that! [*Laughter*]. I really need that! ... And as I stood to read, [*pastor's name*] gave me the Bible, and I just placed it in my hands, and the sea stopped, it was immediately calm... And I just read the reading, and it was so amazing... I didn't really read it; Jesus spoke through me... And at the end of the reading, I went to sit down, and the boat started to really go again... and it had been completely still.

Trudy's husband immediately corroborated the account by pointing out that they had "before and after" photographs of the event – "One was all whitecaps and the other a deadly calm". Trudy offered to interrupt the interview to look for the photographs, because, as she said, "It's really strange. It is definitely, you know, a miracle."¹⁵⁰

This account demonstrates a conjunction of "sacred elements" – i.e. the "very lake" where Jesus rowed/sailed, the power of the "sacred word" in the biblical account of the stilling of the storm, the "sympathetic" waves and miraculous calm, the classic "frailty" of the witness, and the "evidence" offered in the form of photographs. All these mark this as a contemporary "sacred legend" of pilgrimage.

¹⁴⁹ William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives", in: Alan Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 1984) 9.

¹⁵⁰ Trudy (I.k) – interview.

We need to be careful not to attempt to judge the “veracity” of such a “pilgrim legend” on the basis of a positivist demand for “objectivity”. In fact, “the whole relationship between miracles, legends and pilgrims is one that requires further research.”¹⁵¹ Of course we must note that Trudy’s type of experience is conditioned by a characteristic artificially heightened emotional state, as we have seen above. At the same time, we remember that the process of “narrative inquiry” allows theological evaluation without necessarily requiring the subject to be consistent or “reasonable”.

(c) CANA OF GALILEE : RELIVING A RELATIONSHIP

When Martha visited Cana, the site associated with the wedding feast at which Jesus performed his first miracle (“sign” - cf. John 2) she was overwhelmed with emotion:

I got quite upset there. So it was very emotional. I think it was a personal thing for me... filled with my husband, you know... Quite upset there. Tried not to be. I tried to be good... I tried not to cry too many times. [Laughter]. Which I felt I could have done!

It is clear that Martha felt that to express her emotion openly would have bothered the group, so she attempted to restrain her tears. In fact, when asked to think more about her emotion, she said that the context of Cana and the wedding narrative in the Gospel reminded her strongly of her bereavement:

I felt... at peace with God. And also, it was memories for me with my husband... I mean, the wine with the wedding thing... was to do with my husband, you know, the wedding and us being married and together... so that sort of made me tearful...¹⁵²

An important aspect of her response to this particular shrine is the fact that Martha’s husband Pete (as we have already seen above) had been opposed to the idea of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land during his lifetime. Not only this, but Pete also “didn’t want to go to church regularly”. As we have seen, after Pete’s death (significantly - “while fishing”), Martha determined to start going to church, and even to be confirmed. Subsequently, she set out on the pilgrimage that eventually led her to Cana. While Martha gives us fewer clues to her inner state than Trudy, still it might be asked whether here she becomes aware of her loss, not simply of Pete, but of all they might have shared – had he been willing. Elements of suppressed anger and compunction are not to be ruled out when considering Martha’s resistance to displaying her tears. For her, Cana may well be a “sign”, not of the ideal marriage, but of an unfulfilled partnership.

(d) THE WILDERNESS: (UN)SHRINED SACRED PLACE

Although few pilgrims have thought about the desert and its role in pilgrimage before their arrival in the Holy Land, the wilderness is singled out for comment by a remarkable number in retrospect. The reasons for this lie in the dramatic beauty of the desert and the uncluttered simplicity of its landscape/mindscape (compared to

¹⁵¹ Reader and Walter, *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, 230.

¹⁵² Martha (I.c) - interview.

some of the more frequented shrines), but also in the desire of the pilgrim to break out of the itinerary "mold", to be alone with God, to get closer to the "real thing", and thus to identify in a profound way with Jesus in the Wilderness.

Ordinarily, Christian pilgrimage itineraries do not include more than a few hours in the Judean Desert; on occasion however, pilgrims reach the Negev or Sinai, and sometimes sleep under the stars. The impact is generally profound:

I remember a midnight walk in the desert... Milky Way overhead. Remembering Abraham and God saying to him: your descendants will be like the stars of the sky... When we got off the coach, looking up into the hills, thinking, Who could live there?... These things will stay with me for the rest of my life.¹⁵³

[The most significant thing for me was] being in the desert. Why? Because I had never been in a desert... It was an alien experience, and very powerful for that... I felt my smallness and vulnerability in the face of creation...¹⁵⁴

For Ronald, the time in the desert went beyond the limits of biblical context. His pilgrim legend takes on the language of a direct mystical encounter:

The time in the desert was whole and complete. It was deep, appealing to the senses, but even deeper... You engaged the experience in the darkness, engaging with the truth in an emotional, non-rational way... I am persuaded that the information that I gained is more valid, somehow, than rational experience. It had urgency, reality, meaning. It addressed Ultimate Being. In religious language: an encounter with God. In academic language: an engagement with reality... I have never had this happen before.¹⁵⁵

Further in this interview, Ronald responded to a question about what made this possible, by saying, "I did not seek it consciously. It happened... Profoundly reassuring... It was as if this experience was looking for me, engaging me." He was in training for ministry at the time of the pilgrimage, and went on to ordination. Shortly after the interviews, he wrote in a letter:

I am now a very busy parish priest, enjoying my early days of ordained ministry and all the time engaging with my Christian pilgrimage. Only this morning in my reading I happened on the idea that God gives us our freedom and then invites us to pilgrimage; pilgrimage in the wilderness; pilgrimage of vulnerability; pilgrimage of risk...¹⁵⁶

Anna prepared a reflection on the biblical story of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:9-20) for her pilgrimage to the Negev desert. In this reflection the theme of risk is brought

¹⁵³ Pete (III.k) - May 1998 telephone interview. In the later group interview, Pete reiterated the same sentiments: "Once I've experienced the whole pilgrimage I feel changed in some way... And I am sure that the place where that change took place was in the desert... I came out of the desert thinking: I've had an experience of God. A really profound experience."

¹⁵⁴ Dorothy (II.c) - May 1998 telephone interview.

¹⁵⁵ Ronald (II.g) - Private additional interview.

¹⁵⁶ Ronald (II.g) - Private correspondence, Feb. 26, 2000.

into focus for her pilgrimage companions in terms of reference to contemporary history in the region, openness to others, and community formation:

We come here with a thirst... to understand more of God and the people. We may be asking, "What on earth are we doing? What is God doing?" Our reading for this pilgrimage... shows us that many in this place will have asked the same questions as they fled their homeland, in some ways feeling driven out like Hagar, outcasts... But... God is with his people. He is with the people of the desert... those who don't see eye to eye. He is with our group, our uncertainties...¹⁵⁷

The biblical deserts comprise a very large part of the traditional Holy Land, and the scriptures they evoke are central to biblical faith. Wilderness terrain provides unlimited opportunity for transcending the boundaries of conventional pilgrim maps and embracing uncertainty and ambiguity, entering "in-place" contexts to wrestle the story of the faith of Jesus and Moses out of a silent and eloquent landscape. Recent studies on the art of desert pilgrimage¹⁵⁸ may point the way for postmodern pilgrims to destinations beyond the confines of shrines associated with "religious tourism".

(D) ENCOUNTER

An encounter is a constitutive meeting/event or perception/insight involving the "self" and the "other(s)". Because encounters can occur at any point along the route, they are not synonymous with "shrines". Pilgrims may expect encounters at "holy places", but often these expectations are disappointed, or (alternatively) fulfilled in an ambiguous or challenging way; in other words, encounters can be *(en)shrined* or *(un)shrined*. Encounters may be sublimated to the extent that the pilgrim is not fully aware of the existence of an actual "other", but receives impressions as if from an invisible source (as often happens in encounters with local guides, local hosts or people who render services that facilitate the pilgrim's journey).

An encounter engages the pilgrim within the discourse or mode of perception chosen by (or imposed upon) the pilgrim, and elicits responses ranging from unconscious reactions to conscious theological reflection.

1. EMOTIONAL IMPERATIVES

Tears and other affective signs "signal" an emotional encounter. We have quoted above from an interview with Wilma, who was moved to (concealed) tears by touching an olive tree, and with Martha, who clearly felt deeply touched by memories of her recently deceased husband at Cana in Galilee.

It should be noted that neither of these pilgrims thought that an open expression of their emotion was consonant with the "norms" of the pilgrimage group. In the

¹⁵⁷ Anna (II.k) – Unpublished written reflection.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. especially Belden Lane, The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality (Oxford University Press 1991).

experience of the pilgrims I interviewed, the deeply emotional was ordinarily kept separate from the shared communal aspects, no matter how friendly the latter might be. When fellow-pilgrims cross the boundary of the personal too frequently, the result can be retreat:

The only thing that challenged me was my emotions, perhaps... Just myself really. I was quite emotional, and I didn't want to cry... You know, I felt that sometimes people were waiting for me to do that... And when I did get emotional people said to me, Well, that's only to be expected. We were waiting for that... And I thought, You were?! [*Laughter*]. I didn't like that very much.¹⁵⁹

Paradoxically, in Martha's understanding, the distinction between tour and pilgrimage lies in a sharing of the very emotional content she obviously struggled so hard to keep to herself:

You know, we all had this common bond... of emotion and things where you wouldn't get that on an ordinary tour, would you? [*Laughter*]. You have to pay extra for that! [*Laughter*].

2. WHO IS THE "OTHER"?

Encounter is a function of what MacCannell calls the "social production" of a tour (or tourist attraction), involving a network or team of participants, one of whom is the tourist. In the case of pilgrimage, the pilgrim shares the "production" with other pilgrims (the pilgrim group), pastors and facilitators who accompany the group and represent the familiarity of orthodoxy ("our Church", "our faith", etc.), local guides who represent the unfamiliar culture of the Holy Land (Jewish, Muslim, Arab Christian, etc.), and other characters (taxi drivers, local people met by chance, etc.) who represent an alternative perception.

In relating to fellow-pilgrims, ambiguity is the rule. On the one hand, trying to strike up friendships with strangers within the pilgrim group is recognized as valuable, but on the other hand, the urge toward a democratic "communitas" is often half-hearted and not always successful:

We actually tried to make a point of sitting with different people for eating... simply to share these experiences, you know... And that was good... It was fine, relaxed and friendly... But we didn't get to know many people, sort of, very well... did we?¹⁶⁰

Unless the pilgrim travels alone (and this is relatively rare), she might at first define "pilgrimage" generically as an exclusively group activity. Martha, for example, imagines the possibility of returning to the same places alone (i.e. not as a "pilgrim" in the collective sense):

¹⁵⁹ Martha (I.c) - interview.

¹⁶⁰ Linda (I.i) - interview.

I think I would like to go back, perhaps not as a pilgrim but perhaps on my own and be able to spend more time in each spot...

For Martha, however, the nature of her pilgrimage – and its spiritual value – were seen as fundamentally collective rather than private or individual:

It's a group experience obviously you know, for a lot of the things you are doing... And even to be with God, you know, I think... it can be a group experience... I think if you haven't found yourself already and you are going on something like that, and you are trying to find yourself, I think you're in for a disappointment...¹⁶¹

Many of the pilgrims interviewed would heartily disagree with Martha on this. In fact, the interview material supports the impression that members of a group are primarily individualistic, and do not actively pursue collective experiences – although they may be responsive to such experiences supplied by the pastors and facilitators (group prayer, Bible reading, group meals, etc.). One pilgrim (Jim), in response to a question about group formation, dismissed the idea of any substantial connection having been made between fellow pilgrims. He mentioned having recently met one member of the group with whom he had been acquainted:

I wouldn't say that [the pilgrimage] has strengthened the friendship between us, you know, it was nice to see him again and we passed the time of day, but it wasn't...

Here his thought trailed off, as if to indicate that there had been nothing really significant to remember. In fact, Jim's clearest recollection of group dynamic on the pilgrimage was a kind of "rivalry" between the passengers on the different coaches in the pilgrim convoy:

What I was conscious of, in a sort of... contrary sense, there was... a sort of friendly rivalry between the coaches, and my guess is that if it had gone on for another week it would have been rather... it would have been less fun... You know, there was a sort of edge to the rivalry... It was just beginning to wear a bit thin, you know... It was just a sense that I had... people preserving their own space. I want my own religious space, surely!¹⁶²

There is a paradox evident in the pilgrim position between the self and the collective. MacCannell's "participation" and Turner's "communitas" resemble how pilgrimage "looks" to an anthropologist, but not how pilgrimage "feels" to many pilgrims. Although they may appreciate company, they "preserve their own space", and seem to remember in a special way only members of the group who were in trouble of some kind and needed particular attention, like a sick companion.

Meetings with people outside the pilgrim group are fraught with ambiguity. Very few pilgrims seem to have been adequately prepared to recognize the significance of Muslim or Jewish contexts, although some church pilgrimages are now including

¹⁶¹ Martha (I.c) - interview.

¹⁶² Jim (I.h) - interview.

interfaith preparation. Contacts with local Christians are generally less traumatic – but only rarely occur. Pilgrimage organizers who are concerned for the local Christians in the Holy Land try to encourage tour operators in the Palestinian sector to include meetings with Palestinian Christians in pilgrimage itineraries (“Meet the Living Stones”). Still, a recent statistical study of pilgrim attitudes toward Palestinians (especially Christian Palestinians) concludes that at the time of the survey (1997) most Christian pilgrims never meet their brothers and sisters in faith in the land of Jesus. As one pilgrim puts it:

[Pilgrimage] tends to be about looking at old stones and having a spirituality there... rather than seeing the terrific spiritual lessons that are born out of meeting the local Christians...¹⁶³

The issue is summed up by a leading writer on the Middle East:

Local Christians are caught in a degree of museumization. They are aware of tourists who come in great volume from the West to savour holy places but who are, for the most part, blithely disinterested in the people who indwell them.¹⁶⁴

3. ENCOUNTERS WITH GUIDES

Local guides engaged by pilgrim groups in the Holy Land are almost always Jewish Israelis, or Muslim or (in some cases) Christian Palestinians (or Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship). These latter, as we have noted, can represent a pilgrim perception of “real” Christianity, i.e. a faith that must struggle spiritually in adverse circumstances. However, the representative role of the guide can go deeper. A remarkable characteristic of the narratives from the group arriving in a large diocesan pilgrimage context is the “invisible guide” phenomenon. The presence of the guide (in these cases, a Palestinian) is often eclipsed completely by the expertise of the pastors and organizers who accompany the group from abroad. Pilgrims remember only very few aspects of the guide’s input:

HRC: Tell me about the guide who was assigned to your bus.

Linda: What, the Palestinian guide? I thought he was most amusing...

HRC: What was his name?

Linda: Oh... my goodness...

Jim: I clearly have forgotten.

HRC: What did you find so amusing about him?

Linda: Oh, just his whole personality and his attitude... I think... he would say... that “traditionally this is where so-and-so happened, [but] perhaps it may not have done, or – it could have done!” [*Laughter*].

Jim: He gave us any history that we needed. Very knowledgeable about it all. He was obviously very skeptical about some of it. [*Laughter*]. Which I thought was great! But I was... I didn’t know whether he was a Christian or not... I couldn’t work that out.

¹⁶³ Stephen Robert Sizer, *Visiting the Living Stones: Pilgrimages to the Un-Holy Land* (privately printed study, 1997) 47.

¹⁶⁴ Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (London: Mowbray 1992) 28.

The insubstantial presence of the guide has several possible explanations. One observation is that the guide is (for religious or cultural, or perhaps simply linguistic reasons) not speaking the same “spiritual idiom” as the group:

HRC: When he presented a Christian place to you, what was your sense of his knowledge of Christianity?

Linda: He knew quite a lot, didn't he?

HRC: Do you remember what he said as he introduced the Church in Bethlehem?

Jim: [*Pause*]. No. He described the doors up at the front, you know. But it seemed to be entirely factual... I didn't have a great sense of spiritual reality about it... it was much more like a historical, you know, antiquities tour...¹⁶⁵

In the course of a long interview with another pilgrim (Becky), no mention was made of the guide at all, until I prompted:

HRC: It's interesting that you have not mentioned your guide.

Becky: Oh! Dunno... Uh... he was in fact very, umm... I thought he was very restrained... about the number of shops he took us into... Now my experience [from former trips] was that [*Laughter*] you went from shop to shop!¹⁶⁶

Becky goes on to describe the dynamic between the guide (whose name, she now remembers, is Jamal) and one of the pilgrimage organizers and pastors:

There was a little bit of tension, if I'm honest... between [*organizer's name*] and Jamal, about who was going to give the information. Not aggressive, you understand, but the guide obviously felt, Well, I've got to tell them absolutely everything I know, but (*organizer's name*) would tell us certain things and then we'd get it again, the next time...

It is only on further reflection that Becky comes up with some more positive impressions of Jamal, but these are confined to his manners:

He was extremely helpful... he was extremely careful about helping us on and off the coach... very sensitive... very courteous... I had the impression that he was a man... in whom there was some great sadness but I didn't actually find out what that was...

During the interview, Becky gave some consideration to what she perceived as her (or rather the group's) “neglect” of Jamal. The development of her line of thinking is intriguing:

Becky: I hadn't thought about it, [but]... It might be that having a bishop and a senior priest on the coach umm... rather eclipsed him.

HRC: Did you ever find out whether Jamal was Muslim or Christian?

¹⁶⁵ Jim (I.h) and Linda (I.i) - interview.

¹⁶⁶ Becky (I.b) - interview (Appendix A, Interview A).

Becky: We never knew that... I'm asking myself, Why was it that we didn't know that?... I think perhaps we assigned him a secondary place. It's totally racist of us isn't it?... [Long pause]... It almost seems to me that maybe without knowing... we reduced the role of the guide... only used him as a provider of additional information... I'm appalled... I really am quite horrified... I'm genuinely horrified by what I am saying.

The intensity of Becky's chagrin arises from a complex of relationships of which she is only gradually becoming aware. The pilgrims intuitively regard their pastors and organizers, who are culturally similar to them and have accompanied them from their home country, as authorities in both information and spiritual insight. The guide is a "bonus" at best, or an inconvenience at worst; he certainly does not fill the role of teacher or mentor. Becky sees this as reprehensible, as if the group has a responsibility to give credence and attention to the man who represents his land and culture to those from outside. Becky uses the term "racist" to describe the (unconscious) exclusion of the guide; a more accurate word might be "chauvinist". The interview with Becky was the clearest indication of the potential of chauvinism in pilgrims' attitudes toward the local people of the Holy Land who are their guides and hosts, but it is also the strongest evidence of an effort of conscience to resist that chauvinism. In other words, the pilgrim is caught in a tension between deeply ingrained chauvinistic cultural attitudes and the desire to redeem them through compassion, attention and appreciation for the "other".

There is a striking contrast between these observations derived from pilgrim interviews, and the views held by "professional experts" – including guides themselves. The most comprehensive professional surveys of the role of guides emphasize their essential functions as leaders, pathfinders, "shepherds and marshalls", mediators, and especially interpreters (not only of information but also of social and political encounters).¹⁶⁷ The only glimpse of a negative role allowed in these surveys is the remote possibility of "fabrication" – i.e. a guide deliberately falsifying the facts. The stresses of "resistance" and "attraction" in the ambiguous relationship between guide and pilgrim – especially in the Holy Land - have not been given enough attention. While it would be incorrect to draw general conclusions from the limited scope of the present study, it can at least be said that we can learn much about the role of guides by consulting the pilgrims themselves, rather than by relying exclusively on scholarly articles written from the guides' point of view.

4. ENCOUNTER WITH "OTHER" AS MUSLIM

Shrines of non-Christian faiths are rarely contexts of significant encounters for Christian pilgrims; virtually the only exceptions are the Western Wall ("Wailing Wall") and the Haram e-Sharif (Dome of the Rock and El-Aqsa Mosque). If the pilgrim has an inclusive attitude toward other religions, these two places can elicit feelings of tolerance and gratitude for God's universal providence. On the other hand, a pilgrim convinced of the exclusive truth of Christianity may dismiss the shrine of another faith unless it can show some connection to the "true" faith.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Erik Cohen (ed.), *Tourist Guides: Pathfinders, Mediators and Animators*; *Annals of Tourism Research* (Volume 12, Number 1, 1985).

In an interesting (already quoted) section of the interview with Dan and Trudy¹⁶⁸, Dan is able to recognize some value to Jerusalem's central Muslim shrine ("it means something, because it is part of the Old Testament"), while his wife rejects it outright ("I just don't think Christians should go in..."). Unwittingly, Trudy is expressing a sentiment that is a product of the history of travel as conditioned by fear – not of physical danger but of cultural and moral peril. This fear is especially of the "pagan" – where "pagan" denotes "the most inclusive, unambiguous category of otherness".¹⁶⁹ The intensity of this negative encounter with Islam develops for Trudy into an intense form of "pilgrim legend" – a full-fledged privately constructed visionary experience. She encounters Jesus outside (not inside) the Muslim shrine, and interprets his silent presence there in accord with her own already established theological view. This encounter is so starkly portrayed that it deserves to be quoted at some length:

We went up [to the Dome of the Rock], and it was awkward, we were all walking towards it, and... [the pastor] was beside me, and he said, You'll love this, it is beautiful, it's absolutely stunningly beautiful. It's the most beautiful Muslim church ... I looked at him and said, We're not going into a Muslim temple, are we? And he said, Yes!... of course we are, they're lovely people! And I said, They don't believe in Je-[sus]... I could not believe I was walking with this man! I couldn't speak to him! And he said, It's okay, you'll love it, take your shoes off and... And I said, I could not take my shoes off in a Muslim... I was incensed actually. And I looked at everybody, Dan had gone, everybody had gone. They had looked at me and they had gone. And I felt totally alone and I sat on the wall... and I just prayed... And he came. Jesus came in front of me and he was with me. And I believed at that time that he was with me because they had all gone in...

Trudy's narrative has entered the realm of "pilgrim legend" (again, in Bascom's sense of prose narrative regarded as true by the narrator and – presumably - the audience). Like her personalized narrative of "Stilling the Storm" on the Sea of Galilee, Trudy's "encounter" with Jesus is related as undeniably true, and the form and tone of narration expects belief of the audience.

And suddenly I saw Jesus, I really saw him, he was there. And he had his hands out towards me and he was weeping. And I knew... you know.. I was with him. He was so close. I could have touched him... It wasn't imagination, he truly was there, no doubt...

However, unlike the case in "Stilling the Storm", Trudy's husband does not necessarily back up her story, or participate fully in her "sacred legend". In this case the expected "believing audience" is not only the interviewer, but also the man "closest to her" who is perceived as abandoning her in order to enter a pagan shrine. The negative impact of this encounter is exacerbated by Trudy's perception of the dynamic involved.

¹⁶⁸ Dan (I.j) and Trudy (I.k) – interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

¹⁶⁹ Michael Ryan (quoted in Leed, *Mind of the Traveler*, 174).

I couldn't talk to Dan, I believed that those that were closest to me were unclean, and I was absolutely sick, sick to my heart. I couldn't eat when we got back to the hotel, I couldn't bear to be... in their presence, and I just kept crying.

Trudy's rejection of encounter with Muslims in their place of prayer has escalated into a rejection of her own group. A crisis of considerable proportions has emerged, and is noted by the other pilgrims and the pastors who accompany them. Trudy is not speaking to anyone in the group, all of whom she regards as "unclean". The only exception is the youngest member of the group, a fifteen-year-old girl, the daughter of one of the pastors who is accompanying the pilgrims. When Trudy plans a meeting to discuss the issue with those she feels are in the wrong (i.e. primarily the leadership represented by the organizers and pastors), she explicitly exempts this young woman:

Young [*girl's name*], she's only fifteen, [*pastor*]'s daughter, whom I'm very close with... she's more like a grand-daughter than a... and a friend... And I thought, What are we going to do with [*girl's name*]? Because I don't want her involved in this. She had said to me... When they all came out of the Dome on the Rock, she came up to me, she said, Trudy, why didn't you go in? And I just said to her, I don't believe Jesus wanted me to, [*girl's name*], and that's why I didn't go in. And she put her arms around me, and said, Oh! - and kissed my cheek, and that was it.

The process of reconciliation between Trudy and her pilgrim group is a complex one, and is not really successful. In effect, her commitment to her "pilgrim legend" does not allow for a change of her theological vision. For her, Jesus is grieved by Christians visiting a Muslim shrine and affording respect to "idolaters" who do not recognize the Trinity. Essentially, Trudy's experience is one of an encounter (with Muslims) denied, a denial justified in terms of divine decree, and sublimated into another kind of (imagined) "encounter" – with Jesus:

I believe that God is unhappy and I believe that is why he wept, Jesus wept... He is the only God, and Jesus is part of him; they are Trinity. And he's not accepted by the Muslim faith, and I just felt it was wrong for me, personally... [to] be associated with somebody who didn't believe in [Jesus].¹⁷⁰

Trudy herself, however, understands her experience as biblical identification. Significantly, the terms of Trudy's theological displeasure are taken from biblical categories: "They worship another god"; "I was sick to my heart"; "You're unclean and I can't have you near me" (expressions common to both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament). It is clear that Trudy feels identified with Jesus through the pages of the biblical narrative. Just as, when she held the Holy Book on the stormy sea, the wind calmed, so now she is abandoned alone with Jesus, and is grieved with his grief. In view of the evocative prose allusions (especially the weeping of Jesus on the "Temple Mount") this episode could be called, in narrative terms, "Cleansing the Temple" (cf. Luke 19).

¹⁷⁰ Trudy (I.k) – interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

For three days, Trudy does not talk with anyone in the group. Even her husband is “unclean” and (although Trudy does not use this word) “unfaithful”. It is no surprise to find that she identifies only with her young female companion (the pastor’s daughter) who alone is innocent of sin. Trudy is troubled especially by her estrangement from her husband. In response to prayer, she reports that Jesus was saying to her, “Well, you’ve sort of made your point... You have to forgive and you have to repent of being unhappy with their presence.”

Accordingly, three days after the traumatic “Cleansing the Temple” equivalent, Trudy initiated a “Last Supper”, or perhaps a “Post-Resurrection Meal” scenario, an intended reconciliation not only with her husband but with representatives of the pilgrimage leadership, over a cup of coffee at her invitation. An “Upper Room” equivalent is provided for this, when the hotel management gives Dan and Trudy a surprisingly luxurious suite after they have waited a long time in the hotel lobby. Trudy refers to this as a “God-given opportunity”. The meeting is arranged, and a last impediment is removed when, although the pastor is present, his daughter is herself absent. “God was really good, because that night she was really tired, [*Laughter*], for some unknown reason she couldn’t stay up...”

The denouement of this “prose narrative” differs radically from “Stilling the Storm”. Although Trudy believes that Jesus has asked her to make her peace with her fellow pilgrims, she cannot absolve them. Her “apology” becomes the platform for a renewed accusation:

Look, I’m sorry for the way I’ve behaved, but I still believe that you are all wrong, all of you, that did that and I believe Jesus is not happy with it... Well, you can make your own decisions... but I do believe that you need to repent and to ask Jesus to forgive you... But unless you see it for yourself... there is nothing you can do.¹⁷¹

5. ENCOUNTER WITH “OTHER” AS JEWISH

Only a few minutes before her dramatic experience of theological outrage at the Dome of the Rock, Trudy had stood a few meters below at the Western Wall, the central shrine of Judaism. She reported no indication of any hesitation about participating in a non-Christian prayer custom (by inserting a note with a prayer written on it between the stones of the wall), and certainly no distancing from the Jewish shrine, although Judaism has no more place for the Trinity (and arguably less of a place for Jesus) than Islam. A superficial theological explanation for Trudy’s inconsistent behavior would point to her misunderstanding of Islam as a “pagan” religion, while she regards Judaism as a legitimate form of monotheism.

On a deeper level, however, it is very likely that Trudy here shares the perception of many Christian pilgrims that, since Judaism was the childhood faith of Jesus, it can be regarded as a context for meeting him in his own land, “among his own people”. In terms of the Christian pilgrim ethos, Judaism is “of the place”, while Islam is not.

¹⁷¹ Trudy (I.k) – interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

The ambiguities in the Christian pilgrim's mind concerning Judaism are enhanced, of course, by a historical premonition of responsibility for the Holocaust. We have already noted how pilgrims are deeply moved to self-examination on visiting Yad VaShem. More probing still is the insight of the pilgrim who reflects on the historical transition in Jewish experience from "people of faith" to "people of land", and the disturbing change in stereotype that this transition entails:

I also came back with a clearer understanding of the passion the Israeli felt for the land... But of course the Jewish People had no state until 1947... All they had was the Book... All they had was that... That also had to explain why there is this rigid and inward-looking... everything is a reaffirmation of the faith, the faith, the faith... the ritual - in a sense - replaced country. Now they have country and ritual. And you can understand how they, second by second, live in morbid fear of once again being a stateless people. And they are able to close their mind to the fact that in getting a state they have denied others a state.¹⁷²

Perceptions of individual Jews tend, in most of the interview material, to represent (consciously or unconsciously) attitudes toward a larger group - either Judaism in general or the Israeli Jewish society in particular. What is striking is the general absence of distinction between "Israeli" and "Jewish" drawn by the pilgrims themselves:

There was a very arrogant Jewish lady sitting in front of me, and I, and I... and she insisted on pushing her seat back as far as she could... And as she got off she was... having a conversation with someone that was clearly... [*about her opinion that*] this was her country and she only tolerated [*i.e. did not really accept*] tourists, non-sabras, you see... [*Laughter*]. And that was my first introduction to what I would call Israel. ... I just thought, Well, you would get that in any culture... [*this is*] actually how, you know, religious archetypes are sort of built up...¹⁷³

Clearly, the role of social and religious stereotypes and archetypes in the pilgrimage experience in Jerusalem is a crucial one, and needs further study.

6. RADICAL ENCOUNTERS

(a) *THE POLITICS OF PILGRIMAGE*

The relevance of politics to a spiritual journey dawns slowly on the pilgrim's perception. When asked to voice their expectations at the beginning of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, most people cite their desire to grow in personal faith (especially a sense of closeness to Jesus Christ) and a hope to deepen their understanding of the Bible. When interviewed about their journey after the event, however, a greater number of pilgrims refer to the political situation in Israel/Palestine and to their

¹⁷² Michael (I.I) - interview.

¹⁷³ Jim (I.h) - interview.

meetings with local people (Jews, Muslims, and especially local Christians), as having special significance.¹⁷⁴

In spite of the obvious discomfort of political encounter, most pilgrims who made any reference to it also cited it as a highlight or even a “grace” – certainly not something to be regretted:

I was given the grace in order to find glimpses of Christ in the Holy Land... I realized that I would not be able to find him in the Holy Land of the Gospels, unless... I could find him in the Holy Land of today...¹⁷⁵

What I certainly didn't have as a goal, but I am eternally grateful for, is... the conflict that one was forced to come face to face with. And – a blinding flash of the obvious – that it hasn't changed in two thousand years.¹⁷⁶

Since Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land focuses on the person of Jesus, who also lived in troubled times and in the midst of political contingencies, to include aspects of contemporary politics has an added justification:

I think it is part of pilgrimage. It's not something new. It's just [that] we experienced it in... our time. But those conflicts have gone down through the ages. So in a sense... it was just an experience that we needed to feel... it just brought... things that happened in the time of Jesus... much closer.¹⁷⁷

All the tension and people from different lands, and the rubbish that's there and the terrible things there, it actually made me think that at the time of Christ it was possibly like that as well. They were an occupied nation. There were soldiers there... there were tensions...¹⁷⁸

There are all these different people with different cultures and different religions living together... and they don't know each other. That's what I find... sad, you know. And I am sure Jesus must have done as well.¹⁷⁹

It will be perhaps through this association with Jesus' own experience that we find the phenomenon of the “pilgrim conscience” developing from later reflection on political encounters during pilgrimage.

(b) “GOING NATIVE”

A powerful form of “awakening” to social and political realities can occur when the pilgrim is separated for personal or circumstantial reasons from the “sacred itinerary”

¹⁷⁴ Sizer's research (1993-1997) also indicates that pilgrims tend to begin their journey with expectations of “Bible Experience” (53.8%) and “Growth in Personal Faith” (12.1%) uppermost in their minds, but after experiencing a “Living Stones Pilgrimage” their focus shifts to “Political Situation” (49.5%) and “Meeting Local Christians” (25.3%). Cf. Stephen R. Sizer, “Responsible Tourism: The Ethical Challenges of Managing Pilgrimages to the Holy Land”; Volume 1: Explication (IMC Buckingham DPhil. By Explication 1997) 20.

¹⁷⁵ Pat (I.a): “Pilgrimage Reflections” (1)

¹⁷⁶ Michael (I.l) – interview.

¹⁷⁷ Cathy (I.m) - interview.

¹⁷⁸ John (II.e) - 1998 Group interview (Appendix A, Interview D).

¹⁷⁹ Martha (I.c) - interview.

and is allowed or required to enter into the life of the local people in a more spontaneous and unplanned way. One fairly elderly woman (Jane) found herself alone in Galilee for ten days after the rest of the pilgrims had gone home. A fellow-pilgrim had an illness which kept her hospitalized in Tiberias, and no one else was free to stay nearby to keep her company, so Jane volunteered to do so:

But it was a very useful time... I found various lectures I could go to and things I could do... I used to go to the hospital [*to visit the sick colleague*] every morning... I traveled on the local bus. I could have taken a taxi because the insurance company would pay... But I enjoyed this local bus because it went all around the villages, and picked up all sorts of people... Over that time they got to know me you see, because every morning I was on this bus. And... they were all Arabs... and I enjoyed that very much. I learned a lot about the Holy Land during that time... I went out there thinking, Jerusalem for the Jews, the whole land and everything. And I came back nearly a member of the PLO! [*Laughter*].¹⁸⁰

In a different but similar episode, another pilgrim (Pat) also discovered an “authentic” encounter through an accident. One of her party had fallen on the steps to a shrine which Pat was very interested in visiting – the Church of the Primacy of Peter at Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee. Pat felt she had no choice but to accompany the woman and her husband to the hospital, and thus missed the visit to the Chapel.

Instead of having this Tabgha experience that I was really, really looking forward to, I spent the day with them at the hospital. I couldn't have done anything else, you know... So I am still reeling from that... And every time I see this particular person, I don't feel bitter towards her... but I am still grieving for this Tabgha experience that I missed out on.¹⁸¹

Pat felt the sacrifice of the “shrine” acutely. She associated Tabgha with reconciliation (the site commemorates the conversation of Jesus with Peter in John 21). This was an important theme in her life, and to replace this with an unscheduled bit of pastoral care was not easy for her. And yet, the outcome is clearly positive for Pat. In the course of waiting for the ambulance and then getting back to the hotel later in the day, she met a Jewish taxi driver and a Muslim gatekeeper who offered her coffee, and, in she “had a real chance to get to know some real people.”

This search for the “real thing” appears during the first minutes of the long interview with Pat, and dominates her pilgrimage narrative:

We went to Dominus Flevit... that was wonderful, I absolutely love that place... There was a little sort of garden/grave plot just beneath that... with a gate, well it wasn't a gate but a hole in the wall that was permanently open... So I would tend to go there for my morning meditation... So I made that time for myself and that was very important. And one morning I got lost and ended up about half way down the Kidron Valley, in the middle of a rubbish

¹⁸⁰ Jane (I.o) - interview.

¹⁸¹ Pat (I.a) interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

dump. Sort of scrappy olive trees and cats and dogs... The real thing. Absolutely.¹⁸²

As we have seen above, the categories of “authentic” and “inauthentic” (“genuine” and “spurious”) are central to MacCannell’s thesis of tourism as “(post)modern pilgrimage” – marked by Goffman’s “extensive ceremonial agendas involving long strings of obligatory rites”.¹⁸³ In our pilgrim interviews we find a contrasting and complementary philosophy to the MacCannell thesis.

MacCannell writes of the tourist impetus, that “authentic experiences are believed to be available only to those moderns who try to break the bonds of their everyday existence and begin to ‘live’”.¹⁸⁴ For Pat and other pilgrims, “real life” (and “real grace”) is found in leaving the structure of the pilgrimage journey and joining (however briefly) the “everyday existence” which invisibly surrounds the pilgrim route and the sacred itinerary. Of course, in agreement with MacCannell, the “real life” thus found is anything but the “everyday life” of the pilgrim herself in her home context. However, in the case of pilgrimage, through the workings of a particularly sacramental theology, the pilgrim may in fact return home with a transcendent vision of “everyday existence”. What is especially intriguing about the “everyday pilgrims” like Jane and Pat is that they recognize the value of being drawn away from the desired “site” (what many pilgrims assume is the “real thing” – e.g. the “authentic” place of Jesus’ reconciliation with Peter at Tabgha), to try a “more authentic” journey into the mundane.

At the heart of tourism, for MacCannell, is the observation that

Everyday life and its grinding familiarity stand in opposition to the many versions of the ‘high life’ in the modern world... The dialectics of authenticity insure the alienation of modern man even within his domestic contexts. The more the individual sinks into everyday life, the more he is reminded of reality and authenticity elsewhere.¹⁸⁵

The tourist, then, can return home only with disappointment, while the pilgrim has transformed and redeemed the return. While Jane and Pat represent somewhat “renegade” forms of pilgrimage, they are nonetheless a challenge to any strict equation of pilgrimage with tourism.

The common ground between this study’s subjects and MacCannell’s tourist/pilgrim, lies in the distinction between “genuine” and “spurious”. MacCannell’s model (again, following Goffman) sees the “tourist site” as a composite of “spurious” front region (the façade of a fishing village restaurant), and a “genuine” back region (the unadorned kitchen – or family space not open to the public). The real attraction is so layered over with representations that the representations often become attractions in their own right. Because all genuine “sites” also generate “spurious” markers (souvenirs of, books about and even

¹⁸² Pat (I.a) interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

¹⁸³ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 43 and 145 ff.

¹⁸⁴ *The Tourist*, 159.

¹⁸⁵ *The Tourist*, 160.

reproductions of sites), the only way to distinguish between “genuine” and “spurious” is to ask if it is for sale. “The dividing line,” writes MacCannell, “between structure genuine and spurious is the *realm of the commercial*... The entire structure of everyday reality in the modern world, depends on the perpetuation of authentic attractions which themselves are not for sale.”¹⁸⁶

The priceless quality of real experience is evident to pilgrims like Jane. On one of her several pilgrimages to the Holy Land, she took time to visit an Arab village in Galilee with a travelling companion, and was hosted by village residents (all women and children) who spoke apparently no English. Jane and her companion communicated happily by pointing to words in a dictionary produced by their hosts, and eventually were served a meal:

While we didn't quite know what to do, lunch was produced!... And gradually people began to arrive. Now I don't know how they communicated, because we didn't hear anyone talk on the telephone or anything, but gradually people came, almost like an audience.

After the meal, “the lady of the house” (in Jane's words) handed Jane an emptied cup of Arabic coffee, in a way that Jane construed as an invitation to “read” the coffee grounds, “just like we used to do with tea leaves in England.” Although her companion disapproved strongly of anything resembling superstition, Jane herself did not hesitate to “play along” with her hosts, in spite of (or because of?) the language barrier:

I said [to myself], I know what she wants me to do, but she can't speak any English and I can't speak and Arabic... So I just went ahead, and I said, you know, that there is somebody coming from over the sea, and you will get a letter... And all of these people nodded [*Laughter*] – none of them speaking any English. It was the funniest thing!¹⁸⁷

This “pilgrim legend” has several layers. Jane and her (female) companion have reached the remote village looking for a famous local (male) priest who is building a school there. Since the priest is away on business, the two English women are hosted by the womenfolk of the village, who share their generous table with these “strangers”. The guests' every need is graciously met (Jane mentions needing the dictionary to find Arabic equivalents of “diabetes” and “water closet”). Although Jane is ostensibly recounting an opportunity to “observe” local life, it soon transpires that the pilgrims themselves are the object of the “compassionate gaze” of their hosts and other villagers. Jane's description of this (“like an audience”) has the ring of a meeting involving the highest respect. The natural sense of vulnerability and apprehension with which they arrive is soon dispelled by the good humor, patience and warmth of their hosts. The spontaneous gesture with the coffee cup further bridges between the distant familiar world of English folk customs, and the similar customs in Galilee. Finally, Jane reassures her travelling companion that she is not engaging in superstition because, in any case, “I can't read tea leaves, and they can't understand [what I am talking about]!” The general tenor of the account is one of

¹⁸⁶ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 157-158.

¹⁸⁷ Jane (I.o) - interview.

gentle (feminine?) alternatives to conventional (masculine?) issues of language, communication, reason, control and protocol – all subtly symbolized and understated.

Jane's adventures in Galilee and Pat's encounter with the Jewish taxi driver can indeed be described as "not for sale", but they have a genuine quality different from a free view of the Golden Gate Bridge or the Pyramids. It is not what these experiences cost or don't cost which mark them as "the real thing", but their compassionate and therefore transformational content. This is the spiritual "locus" of encounter of which MacCannell's "pure (i.e. without price) attraction" is only a shadow.

(c) *PSYCHOTIC EPISODES*

One of the purposes of the present thesis is to evaluate the experiences of pilgrims through close analysis of first-person accounts, in the words of the pilgrims themselves, with a view to proposing a viable contemporary theology of Holy Land pilgrimage. One of the challenges in developing such a theology, which is more thematic than systematic and more experiential than intellectual, will lie in sorting out the genuinely and radically spiritual from the merely pietistic, and in some cases from the purely fantastic. It is important at each step to distinguish healthy religious emotion and creative subjective insight from the idiosyncratic inventions and fancies that can only serve to exacerbate the current negative theological attitudes toward pilgrimage in general, and toward Holy Land pilgrimage in particular.

Each year, a significant number of visitors to Jerusalem suffer from psychotic decompensation (1200 individuals between 1980-1993, with a continuing average of 100 subsequently seen annually at the Kfar Shaul Mental Health Centre in Jerusalem). The most accessible study of this "Jerusalem Syndrome" is by Dr. Yair Bar-El et al.¹⁸⁸ Bar-El and his associates identify three types of the syndrome: Type I ("Superimposed on Previous Psychotic Illness"), Type II ("Complicated by Idiosyncratic Ideations"), and Type III ("Unconfounded By Previous Psychopathology").

Thanks to the work of the Kfar Shaul staff, it is now possible to identify the classic symptoms of an acute psychotic state "induced by proximity to the holy places of Jerusalem", and thus to distinguish these symptoms from normal and healthy forms of pilgrimage experiences and "encounters".

Briefly stated, in Type I Jerusalem Syndrome, individuals have an existing psychological illness (e.g. paranoid schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, etc.). In addition, these individuals strongly identify with a biblical character (e.g. Samson¹⁸⁹, the Messiah, or Satan¹⁹⁰), a religious idea (e.g. defeating the Anti-Christ

¹⁸⁸ Yair Bar-El, Rimona Durst, Gregory Katz, Joseph Zislin, Ziva Strauss and Haim Y. Knobler, "Jerusalem Syndrome", in: *British Journal of Psychiatry* (2000), 176 and 86-90.

¹⁸⁹ Clyde Haberman, "What Makes Samson Run Amok? He's Manic in Jerusalem," in: *The New York Times International* (May 13, 1992).

¹⁹⁰ For comparative statistics cf. Moshe Kalian and Eliezer Witztum, "Facing a Holy Space", 322-323. Of 89 patients studied, 45 were Jewish, 18 Catholic and 14 Protestant. Only 4% (all of them Catholic!) thought they were Satan. Dr. Witztum reported that nearly one third of his patients thought

or giving birth to the Messiah¹⁹¹), or a magical idea about healing; alternatively, they may have serious family problems which culminate in a psychotic episode in Jerusalem.

In Type II, individuals may have personality disorders or an obsession with a fixed idea, but fall short of psychosis. They can belong to small religious groups (Christian or Jewish) with unorthodox ideas (like bringing about the resurrection of the dead or the return of Jesus Christ or succeeding in breeding the biblical red heifer for a rite of purification – cf. Numbers 19). Alternatively, individuals may act alone (e.g. confronting priests at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and accusing them of being pagans). According to the Bar-El study, the majority of Jerusalem Syndrome patients probably suffer from Type II, and although their behavior is colorful and dramatic, they do not often pose a threat and thus do not usually undergo psychiatric examination.

Type III Jerusalem Syndrome is described by Bar-El et al. as “the ‘pure’ or ‘unconfounded’ form, since it affects individuals who have no previous history of mental illness. Subjects usually arrive in Jerusalem as regular tourists, with no special mission in mind. On arrival, they have “an acute psychotic reaction” to Jerusalem. This “psychotic decompensation” follows a characteristic seven-stage sequence: (1) Anxiety and agitation; (2) Desire to split away from group or family; (3) Obsession with cleanliness and purity; (4) Preparation of a long white garment (often a hotel bed-sheet); (5) Need to shout or sing biblical verses or hymns; (6) Procession to a holy place in Jerusalem; and (7) Delivery of a confused “sermon” with an “unrealistic plea to humankind to adopt a more wholesome, moral, simple way of life”.¹⁹²

Treatment of Jerusalem Syndrome usually requires crisis intervention psychotherapy and “physically distancing the patient from Jerusalem and its holy places”; medication is not usually needed. Although subjects apparently return completely to normal life, they are unfortunately reluctant to talk about their experiences, and none of them have responded to a questionnaire sent them by the Kfar Shaul Center.

“Jerusalem Syndrome” is a clinical term that gives some scientific solidity to an ambiguous pilgrimage phenomenon. One researcher in Jerusalem has recently suggested that the scope of study needs to be broadened to include neuroses as well as psychoses; this researcher provides case studies from the Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem, which indicate how difficult it is to “pin down” the syndrome in terms of Christian pilgrimage.¹⁹³

they were the Messiah, but that they were not easy to study: “Someone who thinks he is the Messiah just doesn’t have time to fill out a questionnaire.” (Amy Dockser Marcus, “Jerusalem Syndrome Makes Some Visitors Believe They’re God”, *The Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 1992).

¹⁹¹ The Rev. Canon John L. Peterson (former dean of St. George’s College Jerusalem) told me of a pilgrim “whose experience of an ‘other’ led to her conviction that she was the Virgin Mary... While this was a ‘positive’ experience for her (happy to be the BVM) it had a somewhat negative impact on the [College] course and she had to be first hospitalized and then flown home.” (Private correspondence, 1992)

¹⁹² Bar-El et al., “Jerusalem Syndrome”, 88.

¹⁹³ Jeff Spivak, “The Jerusalem Syndrome” (unpublished paper: 2000, undated). Spivak reports that Jerusalem Syndrome neurotic disorder is “a common phenomenon in the circles of Messianic Jewish church [*sic*] in Jerusalem. It is found in both immigrants and tourists...” Spivak concludes from his

Nonetheless, the conclusions which Bar-El et al. draw from their observations of Jerusalem Syndrome patients are relevant to the findings of the present thesis. This is especially true in light of the fact that the pilgrims interviewed here are mostly from Protestant backgrounds, many from very religious homes, where the Bible is held in great reverence and a very high significance is given to Jerusalem and the places associated with Jesus – all seen in an idealized light. This profile exactly fits 40 of the 42 Jerusalem Syndrome Type III patients treated at Kfar Shaul. While it would be rash to “diagnose” decompensation every time anxiety, demonstrative behavior and sermonizing appear in a pilgrim narrative, we should still remain alert to the major issue pinpointed by Bar-El et al. – i.e. *unresolved perceptual incongruity*:

Those who succumb to type III of the Jerusalem syndrome are unable to deal with the concrete reality of Jerusalem today – a gap appears between their subconscious idealistic image of Jerusalem and the city as it appears in reality. One might view their psychotic state... as an attempt to bridge the gap between these two representations of Jerusalem.¹⁹⁴

Examples of perceptual incongruity are found throughout the interviews, but only a very few cases remain unresolved. Trudy’s insistence on publicly judging the moral stature of her companions on the basis of her intensely private “legend” involving a revelation of Jesus, arose from a perceived incongruity between the religiously tolerant attitude of the group, and her own expectation that Jerusalem should be free of “idolatry” and religiously exclusive. This incongruity was resolved with relative ease by Dan, but what Trudy’s psychological state might have become had she physically separated herself any further from the group remains an open question. It is much more common for tensions between reality and expectation to be balanced by the pilgrim’s ability to translate incongruity into surprise, reflection, or even delight – rather than into depression, anger or religious zeal. When asked about religious questions arising from her encounter experiences, Linda recalled her surprise, upon visiting the Western (“Wailing”) Wall in Jerusalem, to see so many Jewish people gathered to worship in their own (to them legitimate) tradition:

Well, I know it sounds a bit strange, but just that they are still... You know, they seem... still seem to be in the past, and you know... and that *Christianity meant... obviously meant nothing to them!*¹⁹⁵

Linda did not seem to have formulated a clear response to this observation (incongruous, for her) of the limits of Christianity’s hegemony. Her husband,

case studies that “Charismatic/Pentecostal emphases on the individual internal experience, unhealthy eschatology, and the immediate ‘power’ of God create a fertile ground for both neurosis and psychosis... Strong and helpful community, sound Christian teaching, and proper pastoral care are some of the best means to prevent... Jerusalem syndrome.” All of his case studies are, I think, simply examples of “Type II” Jerusalem syndrome. One might legitimately add (and I am indebted to Boston Globe correspondent Charlie Sennott for this observation) that groups of heavily armed and religiously motivated Jewish settlers colonizing biblical “Judea and Samaria”, or occupying Arab homes in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City, may well be demonstrating a less benign strain of Type I Jerusalem Syndrome. These subjects, however, are immune from psychiatric evaluation.

¹⁹⁴ Bar-El et al., “Jerusalem Syndrome” 89.

¹⁹⁵ Linda (I.i) - interview.

however, immediately interposed that he had experienced the same scene as positive evidence of the depth of Jewish faith in that place.

Pat, who demonstrated a high level of religious intensity, never allowed her perceptual incongruities to overwhelm her good humor and openness. Her colorful description of the Church of the Resurrection ("Holy Sepulchre") is full of harsh contrasts between expectation and reality, but these never devolve (as they might have in another individual) into a psychotic episode:

Full of oil lamps and razzmatazz and dirt and lint and all the rest of it... and on one level that's fine... But at the same time, one's also been to places like Tabgha [by the Sea of Galilee], which are relatively simple... and the two don't match up! Because I have a problem thinking that this Christ who was wandering around the Mount of Olives... would have wanted... or expected... or needed all this strange razzmatazz... the incense, the gold...¹⁹⁶

In spite of the disappointment Pat felt in situations like these, she was consistently able to resolve the tension by appeal to a deeper spirituality, for which all the external contrast and incongruity was simply a symbol or pointer. Early in the first interview, Pat made reference to a shift in her concept of the "spiritual": "Spirituality is out there, in the people in the street, [and] it's not just this very contemplative thing that I thought it was." A conscious and active approach to the spiritual life is expressed in Pat's case through her practice of the Ignatian exercises, writing poetry, and paying attention to her dreams; all these effectively provide for a ready balance and resolution of the incongruities she encountered on pilgrimage.

7. ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST IN THE "OTHER"

While Trudy responded to her encounter with a major Muslim shrine with some of the symptoms of Jerusalem syndrome Type III, her husband Dan took a very different approach. Throughout the interview, Dan kept very quiet about the "Cleansing the Temple" episode. When pressed for his opinion, he said:

Well, I had sympathy with Trudy... and the stand she took. But, I never saw it that way. I believed that to reach those people [*i.e. Muslims*] you've got to try to understand them... Somehow we're going to have to try to reach everybody, and get them to believe in the Trinity. I firmly believe that one of our duties, probably our main duty on earth, is to bring other people to Christ. And the only way we can achieve it is by trying to understand them.¹⁹⁷

For Dan, to meet the theologically "other" is an opportunity for understanding, although not really a full acceptance of religious diversity; he would hope to eventually convert the Muslim to Christianity. Christ, meanwhile, remains aloof, expectant, unsatisfied.

¹⁹⁶ Pat (I.a) - interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

¹⁹⁷ Dan (I.j) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

Wholly different is the *experience of the "other" as Christ*. To have an encounter with Christ as lovingly embodied in the "other", rather than with a Christ who merely forgives the "other" for being unlike ourselves, or who is a divine judge who has come to convict or convert the "other", is to allow a more radical theological direction entirely.¹⁹⁸ This goes beyond tolerance of religious diversity to a full affirmation of spiritual "otherness". An expression of this affirmation is found in the words of a pilgrim who stayed for several months in the Holy Land, and wrote a journal of her reflections during that time:¹⁹⁹

Holy Christ... I bless you for never finding one Christianity more acceptable than any other; ... I thank you for never finding one religion more acceptable than any other. And though it tires the world that there is not one faith and that faith theirs, it in no way tires you, and for that I thank you.

Such unconditional acceptance of a person of another faith or conviction is not possible without transformations of faith-exclusive modes of thought. What is needed is a difficult passage of perception, in which the "disruptive stranger"²⁰⁰ who judges us, becomes the "familiar stranger" who blesses us. In pilgrimage, the catalyst for these transformations is – for some pilgrims – the heart of the journey.

A theologically motivated positive attitude toward the stranger is part of the scriptural and ethical heritage of both Christianity and Islam, and is derived directly from the sacred texts of Judaism. The narrative in Genesis 18 describing the perfect hospitality that Abraham extended to the three divine visitors serves continuously as a biblical model for a developing belief that the "other" who appears to us as a stranger is in fact an angel, a holy messenger, a divine surrogate, or – in fact – God. There is a haunting genius to the tale of Abraham's hospitality that has inspired great works of spiritual art like Andrei Rublev's Trinity Icon. The same passage served as inspiration for the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* 13:1-2: "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Abraham was the host, and due to a typically biblical divine "guest/host role reversal", the angelic guests blessed Abraham more than he could bless them.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ The theological direction indicated here is one more familiar to Eastern Orthodox theology in terms of divine *ekstasis*: "God is love, and as such He creates an immanent relationship of love *outside Himself*... Love as *ekstasis* gives rise... to an *otherness* of being..." (John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*; Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1997; p. 91). Zizioulas also provides a response to the objection that the "other" cannot be Christ, because the "other" is one individual, in need of salvation, while Christ is another individual, who grants salvation. The confusion of "person" and "individual" in western theology was pointed out already by Vladimir Lossky (*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*; Cambridge and London: James Clarke 1957; p. 121). On this issue, Zizioulas writes: "It is possible to envision a type of Christology in which Christ, although a particular person, cannot be conceived in Himself as an individual... In other words, when we now say "Christ" we mean a person and not an individual; we mean a relational reality..." (*Being as Communion* 110).

¹⁹⁹ J.W. (anonymity preserved), privately printed journal reflections (May 7-June 19, 1990) 28.

²⁰⁰ The postmodern terror of the "disruptive stranger" is a basic dynamic in Mark Taylor's theology; cf. *Erring*, 23.

²⁰¹ Cf. Elizabeth Rankin Geitz, *Entertaining Angels: Hospitality Programs for the Caring Church* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse 1993) 28 ff.

The “guest/host reversal” is a biblical theme that re-emerges, as we shall see below, on the Road to Emmaus, in Luke’s decisive pilgrimage narrative of Christological “difference”.²⁰² This reversal is paradigmatic of the role of the Christian pilgrim in the Holy Land, who has first hand experience of the paradox of the vocation of hospitality. It is in fact the pilgrim who is a stranger in a strange land, the one in immediate need of hospitable acceptance. Yet, because the pilgrim ethos clings unconsciously to an identity situated in the missionary experience of “representing” or “witnessing to” the true faith in a pagan world, it is ironically the pilgrim who often needs to be reminded to be kind and receptive and tolerant of the “resident strangers” she meets. A total liberation from the illusion of spiritual superiority is sometimes intuited in the midst of a pilgrimage-like journey, and from that moment the pilgrim recognizes the “other”, the “stranger”, not with tolerance alone, but with reverence. The “other” has become, not symbolically but really, Christ.

(E) RETURN

The homeward journey is an integral part of the pilgrimage, with particular significance in light of the ambiguities of the competing discourses encountered in “sacred place” – especially in the Holy Land. The fulfillment of a pilgrimage cannot be grasped in the moment of arrival at the shrine; it requires the reflection and integration of return.

In general travel theory, and in postmodern tourism theory in particular, there is a profound sense of malaise associated with the “outward” journey, and a corresponding new emphasis on the “inward” (“homeward”) journey, as the world shrinks and becomes more homogenous and (in the MacCannell sense) less “authentic.” One aspect of this “homeward” shift is the emergence of “post-tourism”, meaning that the tourist knows that it is impossible to visit anything truly unique “out there.” Increasingly, tourists substitute nostalgia for adventure, and eventually abandon the actual journey altogether, in favor of the virtual experience of gazing upon a “site/sight” via television, video, or internet.²⁰³ The radical and pessimistic conclusion of “post-tourism” envisioned by Leed²⁰⁴ is the “bitter end of the dialectic” between traveler and “other”, so that the original “outward” quest for uncrossed boundaries can now only be pursued “within”:

The force of travel is corrosive, stripping and wasting, an experience of continuous loss... The historical journey outward – no longer possible now without expensive space technology – creates a necessity for the journey back, inward, to origins and what has been left behind.

By contrast, pilgrimage still visits and celebrates the sanctity of the “other”, thereby contradicting the social pessimism of “post-tourism”. The return of the pilgrim to the parish of origin is not a form of cultural defeat, a flight to the familiar, but rather a constructive element with social significance transcending the individual journey.

²⁰² Luke 24: 13-35.

²⁰³ Cf. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 100.

²⁰⁴ Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler*, 288, 292.

Pilgrims return to their church contexts both as “strangers” (bearing new journey narratives) and as “homecomers” (seeking the affirmation of the familiar community narratives); a balance between these is hard to achieve:

Both the homecomer and the home community must be disabused of the belief that neither has really changed. In fact both have changed... The homecomer’s experience... is bewildering because the Christian community with its familiar narratives and faith appears to the homecomer to have changed, or the homecomer... is no longer the same person who once lived in the community.²⁰⁵

It is remarkable how little attention is given to the homecoming by travel agents and pilgrimage organizers, and even by some pilgrimage theorists, who focus instead on the journey to reach the “goal” – i.e. the “sight” or the “shrine” – leaving the pilgrim’s homeward path as an anticlimactic afterthought.²⁰⁶ And yet, in Joseph Campbell’s words, “the ultimate aim of the quest, if one is to return, must be neither release nor ecstasy for oneself, but the wisdom and the power to serve others.”²⁰⁷

1. TELLING THE STORY : INDIVIDUAL OR COMMUNITAS?

Pilgrim accounts of their return home reflect in the first instance elements of the “unfocused journey” – just as at the beginning – due to the effects of rapid modern transit. They arrive tired and “saturated” with their experience, and sometimes can do nothing for some time but recuperate:

HRC: What was it like coming back... the homecoming?

Becky: Very stressful. [*Laughter*] ... I think I felt flat when I came home, but that happened with the journey because we were coming back late... We were coming up to about quarter to midnight as we were coming into [the home town]... and I thought, Oh God! [*Laughter*], I hope we can get a taxi! And when we got there, a farmer who lives down the road who had been [on the pilgrimage] said, We’re not going to let you go home in a taxi... You’re coming home with us! He had a friend bring a station wagon to the station to pick us all up...

The kindness of the fellow pilgrim (who is also a neighbor) might not seem remarkable after a ten day journey together, but it does not escape the “grateful gaze” of sensitive Becky. She remarks that the anonymous “farmer” took great care to bring her right to her door, and even carry her luggage in for her. Telling this leads Becky to think of a connection with the context of group worship:

Something about the fellowship that builds up... I think the worship that had been carefully planned by the diocese was a significant part of the pilgrimage. None of it was haphazard... Everything we did was in the context of prayer. And that made it so different.

²⁰⁵ George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM Press 1981) 173-174.

²⁰⁶ Alan Morinis (*Sacred Journeys*, 14ff) reduces the components of pilgrimage to “The Journey” and “The Goal” – with no mention of Return.

²⁰⁷ Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By* (quoted in Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*, 217).

Simply put, Becky understands the seemingly mundane final scene of the pilgrimage – the late-night homecoming – as “sanctified” with a compassionate fellowship forged through the prayerful nature of the entire journey. Becky does not come home alone.

One is tempted to discover in Becky’s remarks evidence of Turner’s liminal “communitas”, as a radical “metastructure”, but this takes the evidence too far. The sense of fellowship appears more often in accounts of *after* the pilgrimage than *during* the journey:

What was important was that it was a collective experience, and the family of Christians who went there have come back, closer... And it’s funny you know, when we occasionally run across those of us [*who participated in the pilgrimage*]... You run across them in the shopping mall... on the street... and, well, I certainly... You know, [you] throw your arms around [them], and [say]: Hello pilgrim!²⁰⁸

I’ve been to [an] ordination the other day... and ah... there was people there that I’ve met from the Israel tour, and they say to me, Oh hello! You know, it’s so nice to see you again... And it’s so nice to think that you are sitting in this place far from home, and there’s people coming up to you that have something in common with you from all that time ago... I think if you bumped into them in forty years’ time you would still have that bond.²⁰⁹

Accounts of apparent communitas-type bonding in the pilgrim group are residual and retrospective. They seem to be nostalgic echoes of general appreciation for the pilgrimage experience as a whole, not a significant reality in their own right, and should always be tested by comparison with reports of actual events “in the field”. An example from the interview with Dan and Trudy illustrates the point:

I think we gelled... I was amazed, that we all became so friendly immediately. Even with the other two groups, you know, the whole lot, the hundred and twenty of us became great friends. There was no animosity whatsoever.²¹⁰

The fantastic and exaggerated nature of this “memory” of Trudy’s is all the more striking when we remember that she was the pilgrim who experienced profound alienation and feelings of hostility toward her fellow-pilgrims along the way. Trudy was of course an extreme instance. In general, however, the interview material rather supports the observations of Aziz:

Although pilgrims tend to travel in groups, these might be better considered as assemblies than as mergings... Pilgrims do not invariably form a homogenous mass of single-minded celebrants... There is for many pilgrims

²⁰⁸ Michael (I.I) – interview.

²⁰⁹ Maggie (III.v) - interview.

²¹⁰ Trudy (I.k) - interview (Appendix A, Interview B).

a growing dissociation from others around them, as opposed to the idea that there are increased feelings of oneness.²¹¹

2. RESPONDING TO THE PILGRIMAGE THEOLOGICALLY

The interview material already cited gives a preliminary depiction of the impact that the pilgrimage encounters had on pilgrims theologically. In their return to their home contexts, pilgrims find themselves struggling to integrate the effects of the journey itself, the arrival at the shrines, and the ensuing encounters. The parameters of their initial motivations need to be modified by the unplanned processes that intervene between the pilgrim's expectations and the actualities that are brought home.

(a) *THE "FIFTH GOSPEL"*

A first theological issue is the review of biblical stereotypes and assumptions, in light of experiences of the Holy Land itself - the "fifth gospel". Pilgrims bring the Bible home with a renewed appreciation for its historical, archeological and social context. Especially in the literature of Protestant pilgrimage to the Holy Land during the past two centuries, the theological impact of the journey is expressed in terms of finding "help from the senses in making [spiritual things] real and commanding". This has been called a "sacramental quality... for those who seek especially memoirs and realizations of Jesus Christ."²¹² This particularly sense of "sacramental" indicates the power to bring the Bible alive. Accordingly, the concept of the Holy Land as "the Fifth Gospel" developed in Protestant circles to indicate the ways in which a journey into "the lights and shades of the land where Jesus lived and taught" positions the pilgrim directly inside an inspired "text" of the life and teachings of Jesus.²¹³ "The Land, the People and the Book" were inseparably entwined as sources of revelation and - just as important - as means of participation in Christ's life.²¹⁴

An important corollary to these biblical insights is, for many pilgrims, the expectation of a more immediate understanding of the Gospel texts and a more personal encounter with Jesus "as if for the first time". Here, as we have seen, contrary to expectations aroused by the last century of "Jesus of History" studies and by the interview recordings of the pilgrims' own expressed hopes, the theological aftermath of pilgrimage does not generally reveal any significant revelations or shifts in doctrinal beliefs or attitudes about Jesus of Nazareth.

However, in the formation of Christian vocation (both lay and ordained), in the view of Jesus as a citizen of his world and affected by it, in the application of the faith of

²¹¹ Barbara Nimri Aziz, "Personal Dimensions of the Sacred Journey: What Pilgrims Say", *Religious Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 2 (June 1987) 252-253.

²¹² John Kelman, *The Holy Land* (London 1904)3-6; quoted in: Ruth and Thomas Hummel, *Patterns of the Sacred* (London: Scorpion Cavendish 1995) 26-27.

²¹³ Cf. J.M.P. Otts, *The Fifth Gospel: The Land Where Jesus Lived* (London 1893) 5. The Hummels remark that Otts' "sacramental" use of the "Fifth Gospel" idea is diametrically opposed to the "human story mistakenly made divine" idea of Renan's *Life of Jesus* (cf. *Patterns of the Sacred*, 28).

²¹⁴ "The Land and the Book" was the title chosen by W.M. Thompson for his 1870 collection of visual depictions of the Holy Land coordinated with biblical texts. The sacramental meaning of "re-presentation" or "making Jesus present" (Zwingli versus Calvin) is noted by the Hummels in *Patterns of the Sacred* 27.

Jesus to the pilgrim's daily life in society (i.e. Christian discipleship), and to some extent in changes of religious and liturgical practice, some very interesting and even radical transitions were recorded. While not reflecting a "statistically determinative" number of the pilgrims interviewed, these transitions are nevertheless signs of latent transforming potential in the pilgrimage experience from a theological point of view. The pilgrims who reported such radical transition in their narratives can be understood as laying claim to "vital symbols", rather than representing the "typical", in pilgrimage experience.²¹⁵

(b) RADICAL PROCESS AND THE PILGRIM CONSCIENCE

The primary indicator of the theological effects of the "pilgrim gaze" and the self-referencing encounters of pilgrimage is the development of a "pilgrim conscience". This is informed primarily by an awakening of identification with and concern for the "other" as "Christ" encountered in the fellow pilgrim, in the guides and hosts, and most particularly in the struggles of Israelis and Palestinians for safety and liberty in their shared land.

It is intriguing that the effect of the "other"/"Christ" encounter will not necessarily take an overtly social form. Maggie, for example, sees the theological challenge in the perception of a sacred tradition that courageously evolves, rather than remaining static. She understands that Jesus was also a child of a certain tradition, and raises the question whether Jesus understood his mission only in terms of his own (Jewish) people. Applying the same question to the context of her visit to the Holy Land, Maggie then asks: "In the present Israeli/Palestinian conflict, where is God?" In other words, what is the possible divinely blessed evolution of two traditions in conflict? She then goes on to develop her theological response to all this, with a strong inclination to view what she experienced on pilgrimage as a catalyst toward "radical simplicity":

Being able to understand the evolution of the tradition enables me to see more clearly what is the root of the tradition and what is later accretion, and this can have quite a radical effect. Why for instance do we insist on a priest (not a NT word) to celebrate Eucharist? Why separate confirmation from Baptism? We have complicated the rules for God's people and it probably was not intended.²¹⁶

The theologically radical aspect of pilgrimage here concerns *practice*, not *doctrine*. This is especially potent in Maggie's case, as she was recently ordained for ministry in the Church of England and was assigned a (non-stipendiary) post as assistant curate in an urban parish at around the time she composed these responses.

A similar case involves a pilgrim (not a member of any of the three groups) who was interviewed about one month before being ordained and about one year after his pilgrimage. When asked to reflect on the link between the two events, he immediately indicated three places in the Holy Land with particular significance in relation to his imminent ordination. The first was the road to Emmaus, where he had

²¹⁵ The terms are from Jenkins, *Religion in English Everyday Life* 34.

²¹⁶ Maggie (III.v): Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire..

seen half-buried paving stones from the first century Roman road, “where he [Jesus] very likely walked... That made me shiver. The Gospel is real, the resurrection is real... and I look forward to functioning more meaningfully as a deacon, and to share that [insight] more fully... It’s got some geography to it now for me, as well as some history!”

The second “shrine” in his vocational experience was the “Galilean triangle” on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (i.e. the area between Capernaum, Chorazin and Tabgha, in which many of the recorded acts of Jesus took place²¹⁷). The pilgrim commented that the compactness of this geographical region was associated in his mind with community: “It’s compact, it’s walkable, so Jesus would have been part of a community...”. This in turn evoked a feeling of responsibility toward a specific community of faithful within whom and for whom he was to be ordained for ministry.

The third memory was of a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, and especially the “haunting” children’s memorial, followed the next morning by a powerful “Contemporary Way of the Cross” experience arranged by a group of Palestinian Christians. The political and social impact of the two experiences moved this pilgrim to anger, in his words, that

...here they are, the Jewish people, trying not to forget the Holocaust, and now, right on their doorstep... It makes me angry that the Palestinians are always the ones portrayed as not being ready to give up.

Again, although markedly social in context, these insights are translated into theological terms that encourage dialogue and negotiation between certainty and doubt. This pilgrim ended his reflections with an observation:

The truth may have to be doubtful, not always available, but needs to be delved and dug for...²¹⁸

Another pilgrim, also preparing for ordination, recounted one particularly relevant memory. This was her visit to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. There, she reads the “opaque” circumstances of the shrine as a personal invitation to a vocation of integrity and “transparency” as an ordained person:

I waited an awfully long time to go down into the crypt [*i.e. of the Nativity*], and there were a lot of clergy down there. And I couldn’t see what I was meant to be seeing because of the priests. And I thought: I must never be a priest who gets in the way like that. We should be there for people, but not to get in the way between people and God...²¹⁹

Yet another pilgrim’s detailed comparative analysis of three Jerusalem shrines – the Church of the Resurrection, the Dome of the Rock, and the Western (“Wailing”)

²¹⁷ “Galilean Triangle” is probably a reference to Bargil Pixner’s “Evangelical Triangle”; cf. B. Pixner, *With Jesus Through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel* (Rosh Pina Israel: Corazin 1992)

²¹⁸ A.B. (anonymity preserved), telephone interview June 22 2001.

²¹⁹ J.H. (anonymity preserved), telephone interview, June 22, 2001.

Wall - reveals an awareness of the conflicted and broken nature of all human faith systems:

The Church of the Resurrection... is a sober reminder of the broken world, and the broken body set in, and not apart, from it... One looks for majesty and finds squalor... for light and finds dingy darkness, for peace and finds only rigidity and division...

The Dome of the Rock... is the opposite of all these things... a unity of structure and purpose, a reflection of the certainty and triumph of its builders. Too much certainty, too little ambiguity...

The Western Wall, by contrast, is only a length of genuinely historic, if bitter, stones. A shrine, a place of hope for the future and anguish in the present...

The Western Wall represents... a wall, a dead end, a barrier of enmity and partition...²²⁰

These descriptions – which are not atypical - are replete with clues to dilemmas in interfaith relations between this Christian pilgrim and Judaism and Islam. In general, the theological challenges posed through pilgrimage are most often found in the realm of inter-community relationships and practical dynamics within the Church and society, rather than in any unorthodox insights into religious doctrine. For the most part, then, pilgrimage seems to have bolstered rather than weakened pilgrims' links with their church communities, and invited them to find Christ within the home context:

I decide that I could not return to the UK with any “religiosity” – the historical Jesus is here – but he is being crucified still every day.²²¹

It... helped me look at my vocational goals in a spiritual, scriptural and theological perspective... After I returned I became much more interested in an offer to move into a new position which would return me to parish work. Within four months I accepted the offer... I feel much more engaged as a priest than I have felt for years. This is not a coincidence.²²²

I have never been very good at seeing Christ in others and have come to realise that I cannot see Christ in the ‘others’ of the Holy land, until I can see Christ in the people that I do know and have contact with. I need to be able to see him in the Country and culture that I reside in, in the Church community that I am part of, and, maybe even in the Holy places that we have in our country, such as Iona, Bradwell, and St. Paul’s Cathedral...²²³

Having said this, the “traces” of the impact of “radical pilgrimage” on an individual pilgrim’s sense of religious vocation – and especially on issues of religious practice and interfaith relations – are serious enough to require further study through a sustained and detailed follow-up process over a period of active ministry and theological reflection.

²²⁰ Trevor Pitt, *Journey to Jerusalem*, 95-96.

²²¹ Abe (III.bb) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

²²² James (III.h): Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

²²³ Pat (I.a), “Pilgrimage Reflections” (1)

(c) *FAREWELLS AND TRANSITIONS*

A small (but still significant) number of pilgrims take their pilgrimage beyond the boundaries expected or even sanctioned by church and society, and eventually break with their religious traditions. While these examples are not the norm, they are important as “vital symbols” of potential trends in postmodern Christian pilgrimage,²²⁴ and must therefore be considered as part of an evolving theology.

Jennie – a 51-year old single woman working as a university administrator - participated in the large diocesan pilgrimage (Group I) in March of 1999. Soon after her return, she wrote a short reflection in which she lists four memorable aspects of the pilgrimage; (1) a “journey to a foreign land”, with different cultures and dramatic physical landscapes; (2) a “journey into past and present”, with all the political interfaith aspects this entails; (3) a “journey to the land of the Bible”, which will “bring the Bible to life”, and (4) “a spiritual journey”, where Jennie had an especially meaningful encounter with Jesus at the Empty Tomb.²²⁵

Nothing in this summary (intended for her community and friends) hints at the subsequent turmoil in Jennie’s life. Moved by her pilgrimage encounter with disenfranchised Palestinians near Bethlehem, she soon made arrangements for early retirement from her job, and began studies toward an M.A. degree in Human Rights at the University where she worked. With considerable effort, she completed the degree, with special focus on refugee issues in the U.K. During this period, a series of follow-up interviews revealed that Jennie was going through a critical transition in her life of faith. In a telephone interview more than two years after her pilgrimage, Jennie referred to ever deepening changes in her attitude toward religion in the light of her pilgrimage memories:

As I look back on the Holy Land, the important thing was that I was in the place that Jesus was. The importance of Jesus’ work and sayings has risen to the fore. I don’t think now that Christianity is the only religion. The reality of Jesus as a historical figure concerns me more. So I began to question whether he was the “Son of God”. I began to feel happier with Jesus as a historical figure and a man. My view of religion has shifted toward a more general spirituality, and interest in other faiths.²²⁶

Following these insights, Jennie joined an organization for Jewish-Christian dialogue, but found it – in her words – “very pro-Israeli.” She therefore also joined a U.K. support group for a Palestinian Christian forum based in occupied East Jerusalem and engaged in a discourse on liberation theology. In all of our several conversations, it was clear that Jennie’s pilgrimage had led to radical changes and growth in many aspects of her social, intellectual and religious life.

²²⁴ Jenkins raises the question of who to talk to in social research. Do we question “typical” members of society? Or do we look for people who are to some degree “ahead of the pack”, who “lay claim to ‘vital symbols’”? These bearers of ‘vital symbols’ may in fact “hold positions which will be taken up by a much wider constituency when circumstances press them.” (Jenkins, *Religion in English Everyday Life*, 34 - citing Bruce, *The Edge of the Union*; Oxford 1994,1). Jenkins, as we have seen, implies that clues to the understanding of religious phenomena must be sought in mapping the domain of ‘vital symbols’, not only in “typical statistics.”

²²⁵ Jennie (I.g) – “Pilgrimage to the Holy Land”.

²²⁶ Jennie (I.g) - Telephone conversation, August 18, 2001.

Pamela was 74, a retired professor, and a widow when she spent two weeks in the Holy Land on a pilgrimage/study tour in August 2000. About a year later, Pamela wrote as follows:

I was in a state of transition which led to my lack of clarity about my goals for this pilgrimage... The pilgrimage did raise many theological questions for me which confirmed the shifting that I had already begun before I left home. I particularly remember being in that cave outside Bethlehem and hearing that Jesus' birth could not have been in December because the sheep were in the fields! This and other facts confirmed the direction of my theology which was being formed by Borg²²⁷... This period of my life has been a period of great discovery...²²⁸

Reading the detailed pilgrim story Pamela provided, one is struck by the comprehensive nature of her religious transition, which was accompanied by much reading (Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, John Shelby Spong and Carter Heyward are all cited in her account) as well as counseling and reflection under the guidance of a qualified spiritual director. Finally, she writes,

I found support for my belief in Jesus as a friend, brother, lover, full of compassion, love and forgiveness. This showed a clear example of how to live my life without all the theological overlay of the church... I came to understand that I could call myself Christian without believing in resurrection, eternal life, heaven, and Jesus as God's son.²²⁹

While it is clear that Pamela's radical theology was developing before her pilgrimage, her record of encounters in the Holy Land confirms the impression that the journey was a vital context for confirming her on her chosen path. Her experience in the Negev desert was particularly powerful, as shown in her excerpts from journal entries:

Day 2: Morning reflection... During that time a vision came and left very quickly... I recognized this as a Pieta – Jesus and his mother after death.
 Day 3: Sunset at the mountain top overlooking the desert... I chose to face west and not participate in the prayers... During the hike in the desert the next day, I experienced grace... through being vulnerable on the path and having helping hands reaching out to guide and support me...
 Day 5: Dawn over Jericho desert – I opened wide my arms, stretching out to God, breathing deeply – the words came – all is well, with my soul, all is well, all is well...

It is these remarkable glimpses into a personal pilgrimage, rather than the superficial "facts" about shepherding customs at the cave in Bethlehem, that reveal the intrinsic

²²⁷ Marcus Borg, author of *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, and *Jesus: A New Vision*, is often cited as a writer who has inspired people to pilgrimage into the "social context" of Jesus.

²²⁸ Pamela (III.w) – Email response to May 2001 email questionnaire.

²²⁹ Pamela (III.w). A significant "critical" use of lower case rather than capitals when writing of God and Christ (e.g. "he" and "son" rather than "He" and "Son", etc.) occurs in some pilgrim reflections that reached me in written form. The oral interviews were punctuated instead with critical nuances of inflection, which I have not, of course, tried to reproduce in the transcripts.

link between Pamela's inner and outer journeys. The demise and loss of the old life, rejection followed by the grace of acceptance, and finally an ecstatic experience of well-being – these follow precisely the sequence of Pamela's departure from the traditional Episcopal Church in which she had lived all her life, and her new life in her chosen denomination, the New Spirit Community Church.

Perhaps the most radical theological transformation through pilgrimage was in the case of Pat, who was faced with a serious dilemma in ecclesiology shortly after her return:

The first immediate problem I had umm... was...was that we have a small Eucharist at the end of term... and I was down to [administer] the chalice. And I had great problems actually physically doing it... and emotionally doing it. And I didn't know why... And what the problem is does have direct relationship to, umm... places like the Holy Sepulchre... full of oil lamps and razzmatazz and dirt and lint and all the rest... On one level that's fine. But at the same time one's also been to Tabgha, which is relatively simple, and the Upper Room where there is nothing... where it's just all plain, isn't it.. And... the two don't match up... I have problems thinking that this Christ who was wandering around the Mount of Olives and going into this Upper Room would have wanted... or expected... or needed all of this strange razzmatazz.²³⁰

Ostensibly, this seems to indicate nothing more than an acquired taste for liturgical simplicity. On a deeper level, Pat realizes the implications of seeking the "real Christ" in the context of exterior appearances. Remembering that her actual experience at Tabgha had been interrupted by the need to care for a fellow pilgrim who had fallen ill, Pat acknowledges that "on a practical [level]... it's really just a fantasy, it's a bit of umm... spiritual fantasy that I am looking for." This disclaimer, however, is belied by the sobering new direction now taken in her relationship with the church to which she belonged:

So that's the moment... It is difficult for me to see the Eucharist in that light and go through it... there is so much protocol attached to it... and all the rest of it. So for the moment I have withdrawn from that particular ministry.²³¹

Pat had experienced a moment of understanding during her pilgrimage that had a real impact on the practice of her faith when she returned home. A perceptual incongruity arose between the ornate superfluity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Nativity Church, on one hand, and the simplicity of Tabgha and Dominus Flevit on the other. "And then you transfer back to present day liturgy... and the protocol within that liturgy... That does not match up to what I would consider the real experience of the Last Supper." Although Pat had felt comfortable with the existing liturgical norms before her pilgrimage, this situation changed in the aftermath. During the interview, she confirmed that she felt that something essential was missing, and that she was going through a radical change in her attitude toward church life:

²³⁰ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

²³¹ Pat (I.a) - interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

It may be that I am in the wrong church, and that's maybe something that, you know, I'll discuss... It may be that I'll end up going to the quieter service on the Sunday... not so many people, there's no smells and bells, there's no protocol.²³²

It is significant that the theological difficulty experienced by Pat is in the Eucharist, a Christian sacrament involving complex issues of "reality" and "appearance". She had given this some thought and seemed aware of the implied link between the issues of "authenticity" and the eucharistic ministry. Pat had heard of pilgrims who had become hesitant about administering the eucharistic cup for reasons of deference and "because they had found that now this chalice and this sacrament were very, very special, and I can see that, but that for me wasn't the problem."

In fact, what Pat consistently refers to as the "problem" is essentially a reflection on the whole issue of authentic spiritual experience. Immediately after describing her new-found difficulty with being cast in the ecclesiastical role of eucharistic minister, Pat speaks of a special moment of understanding during the pilgrimage. One evening, in conversation with one of the pastors who had organized the pilgrimage,

...he thanked me for being there, and thanked me for my sense of humor... And I stood there almost open-mouthed. Because, here I was aiming to be this very contemplative person, and he obviously didn't see that... And I was in tears that night... Oh [*Laughter*], don't tell him this, because, you know... what he has actually done is do me a great favor, because since then what I have been doing is to re-look at spirituality and be able to see it in different ways.²³³

Pat's story was complex, and required a follow-up interview, which was conducted by telephone one year after the first personal interview. In the interim, Pat had continued her theological reflection within the context of a course in Ignatian spirituality. She spoke of her (very negative – "horrible") memories of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and of a general need to be aware of "where you are, in the light of your corporate faith", and reported that she was now attending meetings of the Society of Friends. While she described the simplicity and silence of the Friends' meetings as "nice, and free... there's no what I call gobbledygook or mumbo-jumbo or magic", she added that "it doesn't have the Eucharist, of course", and that she felt the need for a "balance" which includes the sacramental element of worship.

During the telephone interview, Pat returned to the imagery of the Dominus Fleuit church in Jerusalem, associated with Jesus weeping over the city. This she related to an incident in her church, in which she felt that "people were not... their fellowship was not being valued, they were not being met where they were. So I am identified I think [with] that body of the people as the church... who might leave the church... maybe [I am] crying, crying with Christ for them."

²³² Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

²³³ Pat (I.a) – interview (Appendix A, Interview C).

The center of this telephone interview was the relating of a dream. Pat had this dream some time after she had, in her own words “withdrawn from being a eucharistic minister... after going on a trip to the Holy Land”. Pat related that in her dream she was in her (former) church for a eucharistic celebration. The priest was wearing “not his usual regalia, but... just a plain white alb.” The altar was set very simply as well. Pat was given the basket of bread to distribute to the congregation, and she stepped down from the altar toward the people to do so.

I stepped down to do that [and] I noticed there were no sides to the church. At the back of me was the high altar. There were no walls to the church. And at the back as far as you could see was... a countryside scene, and there were people coming in from all sides... all dressed in totally different things... And the bread in the basket wasn't the usual sort of holy wafers, it was like pita bread... there was no sort of smells and bells and mumbo-jumbo or anything... it was a sharing of the meal with everyone coming in and joining in...²³⁴

Pat's dream was indicative of her state of mind and of the transition in attitudes she had experienced toward ecclesiastical forms since her pilgrimage. The Gospel imagery of the countryside setting, a “church with no walls”, the diverse congregation, the informality of the meal, the basket and the loaves of bread of a type associated with the Holy Land – all point to a “sacred place” of eucharistic sharing that transcends the given boundaries of her church context.

In a written account of the same dream,²³⁵ Pat writes that this dream “stems from a desire to open the sacramental sharing of Christ to a universal population, and to do so without liturgical restrictions.”

The contextual background for this “reforming” view of the church is provided for Pat in three paradigmatic shrines remembered from her pilgrimage. Each of these bears the imprint of a theological association:

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (“horrible”) – representing the church as full of “mumbo-jumbo and magic”, characterized by rigid hierarchical norms;

The Church of Dominus Flevit (“wonderful”) – representing a moment of grieving with Christ for the people of God who are abandoned and unappreciated by the church;

The Chapel at Tabgha by the Sea of Galilee – representing “reconciliation”, a truly open Eucharist, and the possibility of spiritual and fulfilling participation in church life.

Pat's entire account of her pilgrimage is a consistent, sustained and critical reflection on church structure and sacramental practice. In the telephone interview, she repeated her criticism of church “management which leads to a devaluation of... the fellowship of the church and not using people's gifts, and... therefore in a way

²³⁴ Pat (I.a) - telephone interview July 12, 2000.

²³⁵ Pat (I.a), “Two Dreams”, February 2, 2000.

restricting the Holy Spirit... The Holy Spirit is a free gift to everybody, not just to them, when, you know, the bishop lays his hands on them... Actually, the church is about people.²³⁶

²³⁶ Pat (I.a) - telephone interview July 12, 2000.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE THEOLOGY FOR THE PILGRIM WAY

(A) WHY NARRATIVE?

The purposes of the present study are (1) to listen carefully to the journey-tales of Holy Land pilgrims, and (2) to propose a theological model of and for Christian pilgrimage, based on and responsive to the first-person testimonies of living and contemporary pilgrims.¹ The collection, selection and citation of verbatim accounts from pilgrimage interviews in the previous chapters, and the evaluation of these accounts in terms of both traditional and postmodern "categories" of pilgrimage experience, together comprise a body of data that are by nature multivalent. The words of pilgrims, and our words in evaluating those words, do not in themselves constitute theological meaning or message. Interpretation is required. To adopt a principle from the Jewish exegetical tradition, each empirical pilgrim story says "*darsheni!*" ("Interpret me!"). It is to that *midrash*² that we now turn.

Several possible theological approaches are suggested by the personal and contemporary nature of the material. It might be argued that similarity to first-person encounters characteristic of clinical pastoral education would suggest that pastoral theology will provide the best context for translating pilgrim stories theologically. On the other hand, the historically established context of a journey to the Holy Land as "worship in motion" might point to the model of liturgical theology. From different angles, other aspects of pilgrimage have emerged as formative: "contesting the sacred" (questioning ecclesiastical definitions of faith and practice), or "seeking the real person of the (human) Jesus", or (especially) "seeing Christ in the other" (the radical discovery of the poor and oppressed as divinely privileged). These different aspects of pilgrimage might point to a theological setting in ecclesiology, feminist theology or liberation theology.

The method, process and material content of the present thesis, however, all indicate a more basic theological context – in *story*. Pilgrims tell their tales of personal growth, loss, encounter and renewal; these may be interpreted systematically as revelation, fall and salvation, or as liberation and social responsibility. In the final analysis, however, pilgrim stories cannot be reduced to theological categories. The thread that binds them into spiritual coherence is not a system of theological ideas, but the very process of recounting and thereby reliving a moment of significance. Accordingly, the broadest and most creative theological context for hearing and interpreting pilgrim tales is that provided by narrative theology.

The religious insights and spiritual encounters of contemporary pilgrims can provide a narrative paradigm for a postmodern theology that embraces text and context, fidelity and ambiguity, tradition and change. Pilgrims stay close to the Bible, but

¹ For "if there is anything worth calling theology, it is listening to people's stories, listening to them and cherishing them." (Mary Pellauer, quoted in K. Norris, *Dakota*, 69).

² *Midrash* (from the Hebrew root *d.r.s* – "to seek") denotes the seeking of human meaning in divine story. Cf. Jacob Neusner, *The Midrash: An Introduction* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc. 1990). The concept is increasingly used in Christian exegesis: Gospel is *midrash* of Hebrew Scripture.

often venture far from their familiar translations; they are faithful, but they do not insist on "facts". Neither are postmodern pilgrims enamoured of creed or cult. Like Gerard Loughlin in Telling God's Story,³ they can affirm the essentially narrative character of religion, which is "only a story... but an important one, for religious stories provide our lives with significance."⁴ Going beyond this, pilgrims will not be content with the stories they started with; they will give new narrative significance to the religious convictions they held at the beginning of their journey. Pilgrims are both storytellers and characters within the plot - narrators *en route*; they create their own sacred medium in the shifting and ambiguous terrain between "center out there" and "boundaries in here". Pilgrims enact their faith, but also boldly or hesitantly forge it anew out of the raw material of their encounters.

(B) TEXTUALISM AND NARRATIVISM

Faced in postmodernism with the dissolution and incredibility of both pre-modern and modern "master stories"⁵, and with the proliferation of individual stories built of fragments of the grand narratives, Loughlin speaks of "textualism": a state of knowledge and belief in which

there is only language, understood as a vast and proliferating system of signs... Meaning is produced as the difference between signs. If the world is to have meaning for me, it must come into language, into meaningful being.⁶

Loughlin differentiates between "nihilist" textualism (which he sees exemplified in the work of Taylor and Cupitt⁷), and "orthodox" narrativism (rooted especially in the work of Hans Frei, and in George Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic" and "rule theory" approaches to religion and doctrine⁸). In order to appreciate the unique role of pilgrimage as a form of narrative theology, it will first be useful to outline Loughlin's orthodox narrative theory, and trace the path along which that theory leads him toward an orthodox narrative interpretation of Scripture, of Jesus Christ, and of salvation in the Church. Next, we will explore alternative "liberal" narrative theories, and interrogate Loughlin's criticism of them. Finally, we will suggest that pilgrimage embodies the affirmation of a narrative theology which encounters the incarnate God in the person of Jesus without the certainties of piety, adventures into radical story without negating faith, and celebrates an "unorthodox orthodoxy" on and beyond the very edge of "scripture", "faith" and "church".

³ Gerard Loughlin, Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology (Cambridge University Press 1996).

⁴ Loughlin 15.

⁵ Pre-modern master narratives included the biblical models of Creation, Fall and Redemption; modern master narratives included *inter alia*: Marxism, Darwinism and Freudianism.

⁶ Loughlin 12-13.

⁷ Mark C. Taylor, Erring: A Postmodern A/theology (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1984); Don Cupitt, What is a Story? (London: SCM 1991) and The Religion of Being (London: SCM 1998).

⁸ George Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1984).

For Loughlin, textualism must lead to nothing and darkness, since textualism teaches that there is no escape from language, which is simply a system of signs:

For the textualist theologian... God is also a sign... God is not outside language... for language has no outside... God is the play of language upon the Void... [Textualism] is imaging a space without light; and without light human beings cannot survive.⁹

Textualism, then, is nihilism. It “waits for the night”, while Christianity “waits for the dawn”. Loughlin, however, must agree that Christianity’s expectation of the light is exactly one of the “master narratives” which postmodernism critiques. The Christian’s expectation cannot be justified through appeal to an objective source of knowledge situated “above” the story – because “our deepest convictions about the world and ourselves are constituted in stories only.” In other words, Loughlin cannot deny (without reverting to the modernist “certainties” refuted by postmodernism) Cupitt’s formulation of the basic premise of textualism, that “stories go all the way down”:

Language still forms time and stories fill it... The world remains fictional, as it must... Outside our stories there is nothing but formlessness... Fiction goes all the way down. Fiction comes first. First the world has got to be fictioned into existence from nothing by some kind of story – religious, cosmological, evolutionary, historical or whatever – and only then can we find a place for talk of truth and falsity, relative to the world as thus produced within the story.¹⁰

Loughlin’s challenge to such a manifesto of textualism does not consist in denying the essentially narrative character of reality, but rather in shifting the focus of thought away from the “fictionality of the world” and toward “the particular world fictioned”. Loughlin’s main point is that textualism too is “just a story”, and cannot dictate our choice of what is most important. In fact, we are not indifferent to the stories we tell, and we naturally seek stories that support our spiritual and moral survival.

If, for us, the “most important thing” is that there is *nothing* but story, then *nothing* will go “all the way down”. If, on the other hand, we focus on *what is told* rather than simply on the telling, then we can choose to survive and to live within the story of God’s love through Christ and the Church, and that love will go “all the way down”. The key terms in Loughlin’s thesis here are “choice”, “preference” and “concern”. These “actforms”¹¹ – not simply the narrative nature of reality – are what determine our response to the Christian story. Nihilistic textualism can lay no particular claim to our “choice”; there is no particular reason to “prefer” the story of “signs upon the surface of the Void” over the narrative of a loving God incarnate in

⁹ Loughlin 16.

¹⁰ Cupitt, *What is a Story?* 81.

¹¹ The term is Cupitt’s. An actform is “a temporally extended pattern or form of action”. It is a sentence (“a sequence oriented towards a target...”). It is also a value, embodied in a narrative, and recognized by our feeling-response (cf. *What is a Story?* xii, 6 and 34).

Christ. On the contrary, writes Loughlin, "the Christian story of Christ and his Church is preferable to all others. It is a story to live by."¹²

Loughlin does not claim to possess a guideline from outside the Christian narrative that will justify the choice of the "preferable" story to live by. To make such a claim would amount to an objective "proof" of Christian doctrine and practice, and would reduce narrative theology to another form of modernism, with its ubiquitous and idolatrous "master narratives".¹³ The Christian story, for Loughlin, "goes all the way down"; it can only be presented and recounted, never brought before the tribunal of certain knowledge. In this, it is no different from the story of Nihilism – it is "*an* alternative", not "*the* alternative". And yet – and here we see the orthodox nature of Loughlin's narrativist theology – Christianity remains "*the radical alternative*", precisely because human freedom has not been rendered senseless in a world of fiction. Loughlin's criticism of textualism includes the assertion that while textualism itself emancipates us *from* master narratives, it cannot answer (or even ask) the question: "What have we been freed *for*?" Human freedom, in fact, is demonstrated for Loughlin through the telling and retelling of the Christian story, and in Christian terms through the free choice (not forced by "proof") to see God's story of love as the measure of the world.

Lindbeck's "rule theory", upon which Loughlin's narrative theology stands, is not, then, a system of objective guidelines for distinguishing religious truth from faithless fiction. Rather, according to rule theory, "doctrines acquire their force from their relation to the grammar of a religion,"¹⁴ since "doctrines are rules for the imaging of God and world".¹⁵ More precisely, doctrine is a "language grid" within which the stories of God are inscribed. Doctrine provides useful but imperfect rules for understanding the "deep grammar" of the Church's language, through which we can read and understand our own story in a comprehensible way. Central to Loughlin's thesis is the idea that, while Christianity cannot be measured in terms of universal reason or human consciousness, it can still be measured – as a *commitment to a story*.¹⁶ Because of that commitment, Christians have doctrines: they make narrative choices and set narrative priorities. Christians comprise a "constituting community", whose theology "fits the world into the story of God rather than God into the story of the world."¹⁷

In Loughlin's terms, "Scripture" denotes the Bible as an inspired testimony read by a "constituting community" – i.e. the Church. Anyone can read the Bible in any way he or she chooses; only the Church can read Scripture, and by definition Scripture can only be read in a constitutive way.¹⁸ This point is crucial to understanding Loughlin's narrative theory; it is the affirmation that all story is understood in the

¹² Loughlin 18-20.

¹³ Loughlin (23) reminds us that even the master narrative of science has disappointed our greed for objectivity, since the principles of relativity indicate that there is no scientific "absolute reality" against which experimental data can be measured as "true" or "false". In a process of ceaseless discovery, "science matches theory-stories against observation-narratives."

¹⁴ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine* 81.

¹⁵ Loughlin 19.

¹⁶ Loughlin 33.

¹⁷ Loughlin 34.

¹⁸ Loughlin 35.

light of Scripture, and that people of faith are determined by and make sense of themselves in Scripture:

As we allow the biblical story to become our story, it overcomes our reality. We no longer view the world as we once did; we view it from the point of view of a character in the Bible's story.¹⁹

The priority and "authority" of story in postmodern textualism becomes, in Loughlin's Christian narrative theology, an affirmation of Scripture. Scripture not only describes and forms, but even "overcomes" and encloses all other stories, incorporating them into itself. A progression can be discerned from the "tyrannical text" of Auerbach to the "absorbing text" of Lindbeck;²⁰ the metaphor develops a more mutual and less dominating tone. Finally, for Loughlin, "consuming text" refers not only to the way Scripture gives meaning to Christian life, but equally to the need of Christians themselves to consume the text, inwardly process it, interpret it and be nourished by it in their lives.²¹ The intimate relationship between text and reader is a theological relationship: God's Word (the story of Scripture) consumes our stories. This is "narrative eating up the world"; but "it is not so much the Bible that does this as its readers".²² Texts mean nothing in themselves; people mean something. So it is people who use/consume texts, and texts can only "mean something when they are used in some way by someone."²³

(C) JESUS STORY/CHRIST EVENT

Loughlin's orthodox narrativism proposes "a true postmodernism, a story that is neither pagan nor modernist, but Christian. It is a story about the possibility of human formation for harmonious and charitable union with God."²⁴ This is the story of Jesus. The person or character of Jesus Christ is a narrative identity, not simply because he is known through Scripture, but also because he is in a real sense constituted from Scripture. "Jesus", writes Loughlin, "is God's embodied reading of his own writing."²⁵

Auerbach claimed a qualitative uniqueness in the way character and personality are presented in Scriptural narrative. Here, unlike the "unmistakable meanings" of Greek myth, character has complex psychological dimensions, a "multiplicity of meaning" and "a need for interpretation".²⁶ Biblical characters are "fraught with background" (Auerbach's term²⁷), or "constituted through their engagement with

¹⁹ Loughlin 37. Here Loughlin leans heavily on Eric Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature; trans. W. R. Trask (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1953).

²⁰ Lindbeck, Nature of Doctrine 117: "A scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe."

²¹ "Narrativist theology sets the Scripture before us as a consuming text; or better, as a text to consume in order that we might grow in the strength and shape of Christ" (139).

²² Loughlin 42.

²³ Loughlin 132.

²⁴ Loughlin 25.

²⁵ Loughlin 118. Elsewhere (112), Loughlin says that "Christ self-consciously constituted himself through his own reading of the Hebrew Scriptures."

²⁶ Auerbach, Mimesis 23.

²⁷ Mimesis 12.

contingency" (Loughlin's term). Like Abraham and Sarah and all other biblical characters, so also Jesus of Nazareth, standing at the center of the Christian narrative, is eminently made present to us through his deeds. In light of his "realistic" understanding of narrative character, Loughlin cites Hans Frei in saying that "Jesus is his story... This was his identity. He was what he did and underwent: the crucified saviour".²⁸ Frei also refers to the person of Christ as a "self-enacting agency or performative project."²⁹ A more accessible way to put this is to say that in terms of narrative theology, the answer to the question - Who is Jesus? - is to say that Jesus is all that he did and said, and the way that he did and said it, and "all that cannot be explained, only described."³⁰ Faith, and the declaration of faith, are not empirical propositions; they are (both) sacred stories.

Because we encounter Jesus in a narrative, the intimate relationship of text to person is embodied in him. The principle of interpretive identity³¹ has, in Jesus, two complementary aspects: he is both the interpreter and the interpretation of Scripture. He "finds himself" in the scroll of Isaiah, and "he is able to speak because he has been spoken".³² Jesus interprets himself in Scripture,³³ and that interpretation is nothing less than a sacred life well lived. "One day, Jesus walks out of Nazareth to become the story of the world."³⁴

What Christians discover as they follow Jesus in the Gospel story is an added layer of significance - the plotting of a Christ-meaning in their own lives. "We are invited to identify ourselves in the story being contemplated, to re-appropriate who we are... in terms of the story."³⁵ This reading of our limited selves into the limitless text of the God-event is not just about our identity, but about our salvation as well. We read Scripture for our very lives.

Faith, then, is not about an affirmation of propositions, however true, but rather about "finding one's own story in his".³⁶ Through faith, salvation is also a "finding" story, and - like faith - an important one. In pre-modern scripts, salvation was understood as a purposeful and inevitable divine intervention in history (the redemption of a world ruled by evil and enslaved to sin). In modern scripts, salvation meant a social or psychological utopia of political and personal equality/equanimity, devoid of conflict. These scripts both imagined the salvation of "selves" and "communities" ("a sum of selves") as if selves were discrete entities, "things" that needed saving from other "things". Not surprisingly, such "salvations" never definitively happen

²⁸ Hans Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, edited by George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (NY and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press 1993) 57.

²⁹ *Theology and Narrative* 184.

³⁰ Loughlin 67.

³¹ See especially George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM 1981) 105: "Personal identity is a hermeneutical concept because it is primarily an exercise in interpretation... And individual selects certain events from... personal history and uses them to interpret the significance of the whole."

³² Loughlin 188; Jesus is also understood (118) as "God's *midrash* on the Law and the Prophets; God's embodied reading of his own writing."

³³ Luke 24:27.

³⁴ Loughlin 188.

³⁵ Rowan Williams, "The Literal Sense of Scripture", *Modern Theology* 7 (1991) 125.

³⁶ Loughlin 210.

anywhere “out there”. Expectations of such “salvations” are always deferred. Instead, what “happens” is story.

What then are we to make of salvation, if “story goes all the way down”? Salvation can only be understood in narrative terms if we begin with the idea that the self is a narrative – or more clearly, a *questing narrative*.³⁷ The unity of a self is not a matter of physiology or psychology but of narrative enactment. To the extent that a human life is enacted with unity, the self is unified. Human lives are not “fictional” in any negative sense, as if people do not exist. However, the reality of people is a narrative reality. We are “faithful fictions”. The unity, genius and holiness of human persons lies in their ability to interpret and reconfigure their own narratives. In what context can this be done? For Loughlin, the answer is the Church.

In his understanding of the Church, Loughlin’s narrativist theology is most thoroughly “orthodox”. Although based on Lindbeck, who opens his study with the growing tone of doctrinal reconciliation in “the ecumenical matrix”, Loughlin’s ecclesiology is not doctrinally open-ended. One has to wonder whether an ecumenical Christian forum could adopt his view of “the Church”, to say nothing of a serious panel of interfaith theologians. Does Loughlin recognize any validity at all in narratives other than Christianity? It seems not. Having determined that “the good for humankind [not “for Christians”] is Jesus Christ, and that “salvation entails the reordering of a person’s story” [not “a Christian’s story”] “within the story of Jesus”, Loughlin goes on to declare:

It is by entering the community of the [Christian] Church that one enters the story of Jesus, and one does so through Baptism: immersion in the story.³⁸

There is a tension in Loughlin’s presentation between his own prophetic depiction of the “tragedy of the Church” – which has failed to enact the gospel message – and the almost totalitarian vision of the Church’s indubitable saving role espoused here:

The Church is the gospel-shaped ‘narrative space’ where Christians learn to ‘sacrifice’ themselves, over and over again, to the community’s narrative texts... this they do by consenting to be interrogated by these texts in such a way that they learn, slowly, laboriously and sometimes painfully, to live the way of Jesus.³⁹

This tension is to some extent attenuated by the timely reminder (in the same passage) that this “pedagogy of discipleship” may in fact “have the consequence of actually decomposing... certain already existing patterns of Christian ‘identity’”. In other words, a prophetic deconstruction is crucial for the Church. But how can that deconstruction be essayed if Christians sacrifice their voices to the community text?

³⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Beyond Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, second edition (London: Duckworth 1985) 205, 219.

³⁸ Loughlin 215.

³⁹ Loughlin 217 – citing Kenneth Surin, *Turnings of Darkness and Light*, 218-219. Cf. also Stroup (*The Promise of Narrative Theology*, 133) – “The community’s common narrative is the glue that binds its members together. To be a true participant in a community is to share in that community’s narrative, to recite the same stories... and to allow one’s identity to be shaped by them.”

Loughlin's thesis is a good place to begin in forging a narrative theology for pilgrimage. However, narrative orthodoxy cannot contain all that pilgrims tell. The principle of narrative priority ("our deepest convictions about the world and ourselves are constituted in stories only") offers a corresponding narrative theory of self ("As I recount my life-story, my story produces the 'I' which [*sic* – rather than 'who'?] recounts it").⁴⁰ The narrative self is consumed by, and consumes, sacred text – and this occurs through a mutual process of interrogation in Scripture. "The 'revelation' of the text is not its comprehension as a totality, but rather a partaking in the text itself... a sacrament of God's Word."⁴¹ Jesus, too, in his life, "self-consciously constituted himself through his own reading of the Hebrew Scriptures," and equally constituted – and was formed by – the Scripture we call Gospel. God reads God's own writing;⁴² this is incarnation. That Jesus gave himself to us through his death, and that he is given still to us through resurrection and through Eucharist – these are not propositions but "performances" of Scripture – sacred stories that can only be believed by love.⁴³ "The Gospel narratives do not give us the resurrection... Yet there is a ... performance in which the risen life of the Lord is manifested... This is the practice of prayer in which the Church reads Scripture."⁴⁴ The Church, then, is the "narrative space" in which the faithful are saved, because "story, resurrection and incorporation are all part of the one economy of salvation."⁴⁵

Much (but not all) of this narrative theology is evidenced in pilgrim experience. Pilgrims make the journey to Jerusalem, not only in diocesan or parish groups, or in formations of "religious tourism", or even in pious or sceptical isolation. They journey, more essentially, in a theological matrix of textuality in which their personal experience is interpreted (by themselves or through encounters with the "other") as revelatory, "saving" and sacramental. In this sense, like Jesus (who is historically and associatively the "author" of Christian pilgrimage), each pilgrim is "bound to Scripture" – or perhaps it is better to say "constituted in Scripture":

Person and text are interconstitutive: the Word and words of God. The one is necessary for the meaning of the other.⁴⁶

The question remains, however, to what extent Loughlin can allow the "Christ-event" to be mobile outside the "constitutive" confines of "orthodoxy" and "Church". This question is important because the issue of divine mobility enacted in Jesus' life, and the corresponding radical mobility of Christ's disciples, is essential to pilgrimage theology. Loughlin's orthodox narrativism will need elucidation and adaptation on this point before it can serve as a model for pilgrimage.

⁴⁰ Loughlin 18.

⁴¹ Loughlin 109.

⁴² Loughlin (111) quotes Cowper's hymn: "God is His own interpreter / And He will make it plain."

⁴³ "Only love can believe the Resurrection" (Wittgenstein); cf. Loughlin, 200.

⁴⁴ Loughlin 207.

⁴⁵ Loughlin 200.

⁴⁶ Loughlin 113.

(D) THE CHALLENGE OF DECONSTRUCTION

Mark Taylor carefully traces the deconstruction of what he terms the "Western theological network". The processes of that deconstruction are: the death of God, the disappearance of the self, the end of history and the closure of the book.⁴⁷ Taylor finds that each of these is modelled in the work of Hegel ("the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing"⁴⁸), in the "illegitimate" but deliberate "misprision" of Hegel in the writing of Kierkegaard (who "did not really write books"⁴⁹), in Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power, and finally in Jacques Derrida's postmodern focus on "writing" (*écriture*).

The authors of deconstruction, like the authors of Scripture, are writers. The deconstructive processes are "stories", or reports of the death of stories. They point to endings, but in them is already the seed for a "deconstructive a/theology" which "opens up" or "emerges" from the death of God. This term of Taylor's – "a/theology" – can be written but not read, described but not defined. The "/" of "a/theology" is the unutterable and "unpresentable" position of the postmodern theologian – a "marginal person", betwixt 'n' between:

Suspended between the loss of old certainties and the discovery of new beliefs... marginal people constantly live on the border that both joins and separates belief and unbelief."⁵⁰

What is it like to do theology in a place between belief and unbelief? The pilgrim knows the answer experientially; the theologian derives it conceptually. Taylor's answer is in his "radical christology". When Taylor says that deconstructive christology is "radical" and "thorough", he means that

...incarnation *irrevocably* erases the disembodied logos and inscribes a word that becomes the script enacted in the infinite play of interpretation.⁵¹

This understanding of incarnation is not orthodox; it does not allow for a transcendent God the Father to "survive" the "Word" of the Son; in fact, "writing inscribes the disappearance of the transcendental."⁵² It does not allow a procession of Spirit from Father and Son; it premises the death, not the proliferation, of God. Taylor's liminal language is logical, but subversively so. God is word, so the divine is always and already embodied. If "God" *is* "word", then there is no "signified", independent of the "signifier". "God" and "word" are both signs. There are *only* signifiers, there is nothing signified; "writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*."⁵³ For Loughlin, this is nihilism. For Taylor, the incarnation is radically and thoroughly deconstructive of orthodox theology, but it is still relevant and still theological. It is not nihilism, because "the death of God opens and

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Erring* 7-8.

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 26 (quoted by Taylor: *Erring* 74).

⁴⁹ *Erring* 91.

⁵⁰ *Erring* 5.

⁵¹ *Erring* 103.

⁵² *Erring* 105.

⁵³ *Erring* 104-105.

releases... the free play of a/theological writing."⁵⁴ And *writing is something*, not nothing.

Loughlin's critique of postmodern nihilism/textualism includes his claim that textualism "understands the narrative as one of emancipation rather than of formation... as freedom from rather than freedom for."⁵⁵ On my reading, this is not accurate of Taylor's a/theology, which always speaks of "opening" and "birth":

The incarnate word spells the death of the God who alone is God. The death of God, however, is the birth of the divine that is not only itself but is always at the same time other.

For Taylor, it is writing (Scripture), not the inspired Church's performance of Scripture, that is the "absolute passage" of revelation.⁵⁶ His theology of Scripture is anarchic, revolutionary. Scripture dismantles the old, disrupts structures, not through authority or consensus, but through the force of *difference*. Every word is a crossword, signifying and joining time and space, likeness and unlikeness. All words are "articulations... joints... sites of passage". Scripture is reality, and reality is moving, passing, joining, relational.

The a/theological "constitutive relationality" of this Scripture "on the edge" should not be confused with Loughlin's "constitutive performance" of Scripture emplotted within the Church.⁵⁷ Taylor is "errant" while Loughlin is "orthodox". The key to understanding this is to be found in their respective attitudes to "difference", "other", and – especially – to Jesus Christ.

For Taylor, "difference from other is at the same time relation to other."⁵⁸ Difference, then, is not about isolation, subjectivism, or "freedom from" the "other". Because "*difference is not indifferent*,"⁵⁹ postmodern a/theology counterbalances the orthodox centrality of identity/self/presence with the anarchic marginality of difference/other/absence. One "trinity" is not superior to the other; both are true.

Loughlin's argument with textualism is an argument with difference. Diversity, unsystematicity, multiplicity, plurality, transgressiveness – all are seen as creating merely a "tyrannous space of freedom" – a nihilistic space occupied willy-nilly by the slavery of capitalist consumerism.⁶⁰ The only salvation from this enslaving difference is the "constitutive community" of the Church, and the Church's reading and performance of the grammar of Scripture, which reveals all (different) stories to be overcome and absorbed in the "one story" with "one center" - Christ.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Taylor, *Erring* 106.

⁵⁵ Loughlin 25.

⁵⁶ *Erring* 106-107.

⁵⁷ Loughlin 111-112.

⁵⁸ *Erring* 108.

⁵⁹ *Erring* 109 (emphasis mine).

⁶⁰ Loughlin 30-31.

⁶¹ Loughlin 45.

Loughlin lists, in his index to Telling God's Story, nineteen thematic contexts for "Jesus Christ", with over 50 page references. Taylor's index to Erring has separate entries for "Jesus" (4 page references) and "Christ" (7 references). In two books of equal length about narrative theology, this contrast is significant. It is not enough to say simply that one is written for a "less Christian" audience; the contrast is theological, not circumstantial. For Taylor, "Christ" denotes the "Logos" in Western (Christian) thought, the center of a unified totality, the "hinge of history", the anthropocentric sign (for Reformation thought) of God's special care "for us" (*pro nobis*), and "the second Adam" – a kind of logocentric anchor for human self-consciousness.⁶² All these are functions of a traditional theology that Erring reminds us has ended with the end of history. Jesus, however, remains. Although Jesus, in traditional (orthodox) theology, is the Logos, the "intelligible event", the reason, meaning, aim and anchor of history and the enactment of God's transcendence, for a/theology he is someone quite different, and *not indifferent*.

Jesus is manifested as word, and word is read as writing... Writing is an interplay of presence/absence and identity/difference that overturns the polar opposites of classical theology. The way of the word, of course, is also the tortuous path to Golgotha. ... On Golgotha, not only God dies; the self also disappears.⁶³

We cannot propose a synthesis of Loughlin and Taylor; too much is at stake, and the task would be impossible. Orthodox postliberal narrative theology and errant postmodern a/theology both encounter Jesus as "incarnate word" – but there the similarity ends. Two roads diverge, and the traveller cannot take both. And yet we must resist the academic temptation to impose a choice between these two ways, for our observations show that the pilgrim – i.e. the story-constituted pilgrim – will somehow walk the "neither/nor" between.

(E) PILGRIMS ON THE PLURAL PATHS

Following the signposts of narrative theory, we will summarize a postmodern theology of pilgrimage in terms of actual pilgrim story and "actform", rather than in terms of systematic categories. Although the themes addressed by the two narrative approaches outlined above are similar to systematic categories (Revelation, Incarnation and Salvation), pilgrims develop them empirically and express them in ways not typical of textbooks. Our task will be to interpret the voice of pilgrims theologically, while respecting the actual storied context in which that voice is heard.

Pilgrims tread the plural paths between orthodoxy and erring. The baptism of orthodoxy is "immersion in the story... a narrative transition that does not destroy the old story but reorders its trajectory...";⁶⁴ for the other way (of erring), baptism is a wound and a risk, inscribing a name but missing the mark – for "self" is "other".⁶⁵ One way has intrinsic meaning and *telos*, the other only marginal meandering and

⁶² Taylor, Erring 14, 21, 60, 65.

⁶³ Erring 15, 13 and 33.

⁶⁴ Loughlin 215.

⁶⁵ Erring 130-132.

endless tales. On one road stride believers, on the other road wander "posthumous people... called to die the death of God."⁶⁶ Postmodern pilgrims move, wander, arrive, kneel in prayer, and depart between order and anarchy, and they do so with great grace. Their doing of theology is an "actform", not a proposition; they embody a faithful fiction with difference and impiety.

1. DISCOURSES OF DIFFERENCE

MacCannell refuted Boorstin's thesis of the tourist's indifference. For MacCannell, the tourist is a postmodern pilgrim, and tourism is a system of "rites to difference". To Loughlin's concerns about the "delirium of consumerism", MacCannell's tourist responds with the delight of diversity and multiplicity. The postmodern person is not simply – *pace* Loughlin – the slave of market forces, but is also free to seek the authentic and the priceless. MacCannell, in his affirmation of the secular "authenticity" of tourism, opens the way for pilgrims who write their own sacred way in a world of meaningful difference. Loughlin declares that the world is affirmed in Christ, and "freed from the need to write itself."⁶⁷ Postmodern pilgrims respond with the Christ-like courage not only in fact to "write themselves", but to "right the world", to author and to challenge, to reform and to change.

Turner, in the tradition of Eliade, saw the pilgrim's goal as a "sacred center", a place "where heaven and earth intersect... [and] where there exists the possibility of breaking through into the realm of the transcendent." The deconstruction of this concept was already well advanced when Eade and Sallnow published Contesting the Sacred;⁶⁸ their anthropological insights are postmodern in the sense that they dismantle transcendence in the pilgrimage process. What now emerges from the pilgrimage process is the disappearance of transcendence and the birth of discourse. Discourse is communication (word, writing and composition), but it is also prayer and reflection, as well as the translation and application of Scripture into the immediate contingencies and personal responsibilities of social reality, the wrongs and rights of the world. These compass points – the composition of story, the reflection of prayer and the translation of action – are the pilgrim's ever-moving spiritual geography; the map of the place where – to paraphrase Kathleen Norris – "I've wrestled my story...out of circumstances and *discourse*."⁶⁹

In Jerusalem especially, pilgrims enter a discourse comprising a complex matrix of place, word and person. As long as Christ can be confined to text and place alone, the pilgrim encounter with Christ is predictable, mediated and orthodox. But persons and the "sacred person" intervene. The ambiguities of the Holy/Unholy Land deconstruct the certainties of Christology through "rites of difference": Judaism, Islam, local Palestinian Christianity, Israeli secularism and orthodoxy,

⁶⁶ Taylor, Erring 122.

⁶⁷ Loughlin 33.

⁶⁸ In 1991.

⁶⁹ Dakota 2 (Norris has "inheritance"). Tom Wright's similar image – in describing a "sacred space" in Montreal – posits a more "objective" and Eliadean divine "residue": "When God is known, sought and wrestled with in a place, a memory of that remains, which those who know and love God can pick up" (The Way of the Lord 5). I would say rather that discourses of the sacred are exchanged in such places.

fundamentalism(s), living stones and dead stones, oppression and rebellion, conflict and peacemaking. In Jerusalem, and especially at the Empty Tomb, the “sacred center” is entirely incarnated in person and persons as a discourse involving saints and sinners. Christ’s “absence” is the “presence” that frees pilgrims from “self” and for “others”; it also (subversively, as “he-is-not-here!”) frees pilgrims from “Church”:

The personification of the sacred centre is a movement to the limits of ecclesiastical control, a control which begins to be regained only after the death of the saint, and his or her transformation into a mute, hieratic, domesticated shrine.⁷⁰

The secret life of pilgrims is the ability to avoid muting and domestication. In this their model is the Jesus who evades the confines of the “house” and takes to the lonely hills to pray.⁷¹

2. THE IMPIETY OF PILGRIMAGE

The meaning of Scripture and the meaning of Jesus are linked in a particularly powerful way in the experience of pilgrimage – which is “a way of enacting or performing the Scripture”.⁷² Christians perform Scripture, not only through liturgy, but more deeply by a situating of their own lives within the story of Jesus. They “make themselves over” to his story, in order to be “made anew” in their own.⁷³ However, pilgrims go beyond this to interrogate the story of Jesus through context. A pilgrim’s “situation” in the life of Jesus is not an automatic copy; this “writing” is not “mute, hieratic or domesticated”; the pilgrim repeats, not by rote, but impiously.

One of the most salient links between theology and narrative is Ricoeur’s suggestion that the truth of narrative is primarily a *phronetic* truth – i.e. relating to practical wisdom, the recognition of the possibilities of (wrong and right) human action, fulfilment and happiness.⁷⁴ Part of the phronetic function of narrative must also be the recognition of the failings of human life, the neglect of possibility, the loss of happiness. In this sense, Loughlin’s discussion of the “tragedy of the Church” is very relevant to the agency of pilgrimage in its liminal and phronetic character. The pilgrim to the Holy Land experiences in narrative form (in the “faithful fiction”⁷⁵ of

⁷⁰ Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred* 7.

⁷¹ Paradigmatically, Mark 1:35. “House” (Greek *oikos*) is in Mark’s Gospel equivalent to “church”; it designates structure and orthodoxy. The “early morning escape” of Jesus has parallels with the morning of the Resurrection (Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1) and conceptual links with deconstruction.

⁷² Nicholas Lash, “Performing the Scriptures”, in: *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM 1986).

⁷³ I am grateful to Ed Durst in private conversation for the epigram “History (His Story) becomes Mystery (My Story)” – which sums up the pilgrim’s way of performing Loughlin’s “literal reading” of Scripture.

⁷⁴ Paul Ricoeur, “Life in quest of narrative”, in *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (London and NY: Routledge 1991) 23-26; cf. the discussion in Loughlin 144ff.

⁷⁵ Like biblical stories, pilgrim stories are “both history and poetry, remembrance and possibility, testaments of both past and future: faithful fictions.” (Loughlin 153).

the pilgrim's own journey) both the invitation to right action extended by Jesus, and the tragic refusal of that invitation:

The history of the Church, which should be the history of a concrete grace, bringing forth freedom and joy... has proved itself to be at least equally a history of destruction... a history that mocks the gospel and brings despair...⁷⁶

The pilgrim, however, is not a tragic hero. She will not be reduced and destroyed by the truth; rather she will grapple with speaking the truth, and in so doing bring down the corrupted structures of both piety and despair. It is the pilgrim's mobility that makes this possible. The pilgrim moves in a theological medium more unstable than the Church, because the pilgrim moves by definition on the edge of "church". This mobility is anti-structural, but pro-truth, and it is – through the pilgrim's merging of "narrative horizons"⁷⁷ – a reliving of a theological mobility – the "impiety of Jesus".

In terms of narrative theology, the freedom of Jesus is not to be construed only in the historical sense of wandering as an itinerant Jewish teacher in first century Galilee, or even in the (dubious) religious sense of making a successful round-trip journey from heaven to earth.⁷⁸ A more radical form of mobility is indicated by the *narrative significance* of the words and acts of Jesus in terms of his story. In describing the mobility of Christ, Loughlin cites Lyotard's concept of "narrative phrase" in his description of the God-event. A narrative phrase is not something "static" (simply revealed to a recipient), but rather a dynamic communicative process involving addressor, addressee, referent and meaning, and their relationship to each other. That "phrasal" relationship is "gift":

We do not give phrases to one another, we are given by phrases. The addressor does not give a phrase to the addressee... Rather it is the phrase that gives them to one another... The world is given in narrative phrases, and we live within them.⁷⁹

The uniqueness of Jesus, for Loughlin, lies in his "phrasal" mobility. Jesus is simultaneously the one who speaks, and the message spoken, and the one spoken to – as well as the meaning or interpretation of the phrase. This mobility is not a linguistic device; it is theological, not neutral, and has a (subversive) meaning of its own:

This is the "impiety of Jesus" – he breaks the "one-way" mold of revelation. He is both the addressor and the addressee in the phrase of divine address.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Loughlin 171.

⁷⁷ "A reader who enters the text, merges its horizon with that of his or her own world... the two horizons become one" (Loughlin 146).

⁷⁸ Cf. Ivor Smith-Cameron, *Pilgrimage: An Exploration into God* (London: Diocese of Southwark, no date) 73: "Christ is the eternal pilgrim. He came from God and he has returned to God..."

⁷⁹ Loughlin 183. I understand Lyotard's "phrase" to mean the same as Cupitt's "sentence/actform": "Sentences generate, reflect, guide and finish processes, events and actions. They thereby shape reality" (*What is a Story?* 6).

⁸⁰ Loughlin 189.

When a pilgrim sets out on the sacred trace, he enters the mobility of Christ, and shares in the “impiety of Jesus”. By definition, the phrase of pilgrimage reverses the “one-way” street of revelation, cracks through solipsism and makes to the other a gift of challenge and acceptance. A pilgrim is a prophet, speaking out the possibilities of the story.

3. FAITHFUL FICTIONS

These are not the self-referencing terms pilgrims use of themselves. It should be clear from the *verbatim* transcripts, that for the most part, the pilgrims I interviewed did not in fact describe themselves as postmodern prophets, nor did they use a vocabulary indicative of religious impiety, rebellion and anarchy. On the contrary, usually (though not always) they began and ended their journey as faithful and church-going Christians. Many said they found their faith not only challenged but enhanced by their pilgrimage, and only a few exemplified radical transitions of a religious nature, or a move beyond the edge.

Only very close attention to nuance and tone in pilgrim narratives reveals the subversive substratum outlined above, and this discovery is confirmed by the more explicit witness of those pilgrims who engaged in “radical process”. Like Jesus, pilgrims choose words from within tradition. They do not talk openly about “erring”; rather, they demonstrate the liminal character of their journey obliquely, by means of interrogation, “pilgrim legend”, understated paradox and anomaly.

Because pilgrims to Jerusalem are especially bound to or embodied in sacred text, they might be inclined to see the story of Jesus as *the* Story (in the Auerbachian sense), to which the individual’s pilgrim path must be totally conformed. Yet, constantly presented with the absence of Jesus, and constantly surprised by difference, the same pilgrim has no choice but to interpret the Gospel in terms of non-Jesus encounters.

The interpretive nature of pilgrimage is a powerful antidote to fundamentalism. Cupitt views fundamentalism in terms of narrative theology as a function of scriptural language. Specifically, this entails

...the intense belief that some natural language – Latin, Greek, Arabic or Hebrew, perhaps – can be used, *has* been used, with superhuman precision and control... [In fundamentalism] we are committed in perpetuity to the particular way that Jesus happened to get fictionalized by the early Christians.⁸¹

This slavery to a text is bound to the belief common to all fundamentalisms, that “religious truth is something objective, revealed, unchangeable, eternal and divine.”⁸²

It is undoubtedly true that many pilgrims reach the Holy Land with just such beliefs about Scripture and religious truth. It is just as true, as has been demonstrated in a close study of the interview material, that encounters with ambiguous places and

⁸¹ Cupitt, *What is a Story?* 101-102.

⁸² *What is a Story?* 101.

differences in persons have a radical nuancing effect. Many pilgrims quickly become practical exegetes, and the exegesis of pilgrimage is never the (moot) “original meaning of the text” although always “original”. Pilgrimage is a story, a moral fable, a legend, a reflection – but never meaningless. It is a faithful fiction.

(F) MAPPING A PILGRIM CREED

1. GOD ON THE EDGE

Plunged into ambiguity, many pilgrims stay as close as possible to what they regard as the certainties of faith. But even as they do so, they “write down” (or “compose”) the threshold of impossibility (e.g. the absence of God “out there” and the challenges of prophetic vocation within the Church) toward which they move, and from which they recoil:

Setting off into a dark, unknown wilderness can be a frightening and risky experience... Out there is darkness and uncertainty. Like Moses we may feel lost, sinking, desolate, enduring a mini-hell, everything has gone wrong at the core, helpless and powerless. But out there God for Moses was his heartbeat. Closer than close. In the refuge of that rock crevasse he felt safe, protected, covered by the hand of his God, his friend. Out there is where God is.⁸³

What is “out there”, really? Darkness and uncertainty, or God and safety? Pilgrims are not sure. They walk the “/” between orthodoxy/impiety, transforming theological language into a/theological insights. Thus, an encounter with the wilderness, the threshold of the Holy/Unholy Land, is expressed in terms of subverting a canonical theology of inheritance and possession:

Jesus Christ is part of a longer story... Genesis 12:1-9 [The Call of Abraham] ... highlights four recurring emphases in the longer story: 1) The call of a surprising God; 2) The call of creation... of Israel... the world and the church... bound together in God’s story; 3) the call to Abraham (a type of the disciple)... The journey is a metaphor for faith. But it is also an actual journey; 4) Abraham is in the land, but he never owns it; the Canaanites are also there. The story is subversive of ideologies of settlement, ownership, and claims to possession. *Even God moves about without a fixed place.*⁸⁴

⁸³ Rex (II.q): Written reflection in the Wilderness of Zin.

⁸⁴ Trevor Pitt (Eucharistic Reflection in Beersheba; with permission; italics mine). Dispossession (*hefker* in Hebrew) is one of the *midrashic* names for the biblical desert, and one of the principles of Christian mysticism (cf. Gregory of Nyssa: “To all of God’s creatures God has given the broad earth... not as a private possession, not restricted by law, not divided by boundaries, but as common to all” – quoted in K. Norris, *Dakota* 126).

The theology of pilgrims is instinctively dialectical, embracing both affirmation and its opposite, and striving for diversity. In a poem entitled "Images of God", Pat processed some of her encounters with this divine diversity in various shrines:

The image of God in the Holy Sepulchre / Is enshrined in Gold, enrobed in a marble box / Under which, a fire-blackened chapel of disunity lies...

At Dominus Flevit,... / Here is the God of humanity / Reaching out to gather in the chicks / of his creation...

In the Holy Land of today, / We see another God. / The image of God at a check point / where the people are oppressed, / An image of God at Yad-Vashem / where memories try to rest.⁸⁵

The mobility of the pilgrim on the road, the temporary freedom of the pilgrim from creed and Church, and the immersion of the pilgrim (especially in the Holy Land) in the religious ambiguity of other faiths and social contexts – all these conspire to encourage an experience of a "Pilgrim God":

It requires effort to avow that one is a pilgrim: that one's clan, tribe, nation or race is on the move, does not have a monopoly of wisdom or virtue. In terms of theological discourse, it requires even greater effort to allow that God is disclosed as a pilgrim God.⁸⁶

Denis Carroll's *A Pilgrim God* is not a reflection on the experiences of actual pilgrims; his "pilgrimage theology" remains systematic and "catholic" rather than empirical and "reformed". Still, Carroll's conservative academic insights have an applicable edge; his synthesis of relevant themes from Tillich, Moltmann, Schillebeeckx and Macquarrie provides tools for placing the dialectical experiences we have found recorded in our pilgrim interview material into theological perspective.

Carroll argues, following Moltmann,⁸⁷ that "revelation" is not more than a relative term in Scriptural faith, since God appears only in a "certain absence" or hiddenness,⁸⁸ and God's "hidden appearances" point rather to a "promise" than to a "presence". A pilgrim might express this even better by saying: "All the sites that I experienced, were not 'sights' of the Living God... they were only pointers... only broken stones, and foundations."⁸⁹ The God who is a God of pilgrims is elusive, moving, changing, even "evolving".⁹⁰ The God of pilgrims is not to be found, except in "secret unscheduled places"; not to be known, except "in darkness or at best in

⁸⁵ Pat (I.a), "Images of God" (private correspondence, Dec. 1999).

⁸⁶ Denis Carroll, *A Pilgrim God for a Pilgrim People* (*Theology of a Pilgrim People Series*; Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1988) 19.

⁸⁷ *A Pilgrim God* 49.

⁸⁸ Cf. *A Pilgrim God* 5 and 44. Carroll quotes Blaise Pascal (*Pensees*; trans. A.J. Krailscheimer; Penguin: Harmondsworth 1966, p.586): "A religion that does not affirm that God is hidden is not true."

⁸⁹ Pete (III.k): Email response to May 2001 questionnaire.

⁹⁰ "An evolving man [*sic*] can only be addressed by an evolving God" (Adrian Hastings, *The Faces of God*; London: Chapman 1975, p.4).

twilight.”⁹¹ This play of “absence/presence” has a religious impact. As one pilgrim wrote: “I went to Israel ‘seeking God’, but God playfully reminded me that S/He would be waiting for me in Albany, NY.... I came home with a renewed and more vigorous devotional life.”⁹²

Positivist theism, postulating a monolithic status for Scripture and revelation, can lead to a “use” of God to support the monolithic status of human institutions and their alienation and injustice. The “Pilgrim God”, for Carroll, is “greater than all our imaginings”, i.e. greater than our theology. As we speak of God, our speech is marked by an apparent incoherence of affirmations and denials. God is being, and non-being; knowable and incomprehensible, impassible and compassionate; immediate and mediated.⁹³ For Karl Rahner, the essence of Christianity is the “experience of darkness”, in which “Mystery remains eternally mystery, but... wishes to communicate Himself... as self-giving nearness – to the human soul.”⁹⁴

The perfect embodiment of such “dialectical theism” (Macquarrie’s term⁹⁵) is the cross of Christ on Golgotha. The death of Jesus, who proclaimed the Kingdom of God, is itself a “question put to God.”⁹⁶ Jesus is crucified between the silence (and/or absence) of God and the vicious order of the world. It is this “between” which makes the death of Jesus a “God-question”, and simultaneously a challenge to “our unjust society and our perverted ideas of God,” which, as liberation theologians know, “are in close and terrible alliance.”⁹⁷

The Pilgrim God, the God of Jesus, is the God of the dispossessed, the voiceless, and the crucified. This is a theological principle *par excellence*, and is encountered by pilgrims *en route* in the “suffering body” of pilgrimage.

2. THE SUFFERING BODY

Eade and Sallnow pointed out the significance of “the suffering body” in pilgrimage discourses. This image goes beyond the quest for miraculous individual healing, the desire for a “well self”. The primitive (and selfish) response to illness is guilt: if the body is sick, the soul has sinned, and repentance brings relief. This double theological fallacy is refuted by Jesus himself in no uncertain terms;⁹⁸ it is however still used to “domesticate” shrines of healing, where orthodoxy invites pilgrims to pray, do penance, and hope for a cure. However, the “impiety of Jesus” moves beyond that, into the theological significance of suffering and restoration in a broader

⁹¹ Gabriel Daly, “Knowing God”, *The Furrow*, July 1979, 447.

⁹² Ken (III.s): Email response to May 2001 questionnaire.

⁹³ Carroll, *A Pilgrim God* 142ff.

⁹⁴ Rahner, quoted in: Urban T. Holmes, III, *Ministry and Imagination* (New York: Seabury 1976) 122.

⁹⁵ John Macquarrie, *In Search of Deity* (London: SCM 1984).

⁹⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology* (London: Collins 1979) 319.

⁹⁷ J.L. Segundo, *Our Idea of God* (New York: Orbis 1974) 8. The “J’accuse” of liberation theology is not only that we image God wrongly, but that we have legitimated theologies that “did not seriously challenge the plunder of continents [or]... the extermination of whole peoples” (*Why We Need A Third World Theology*; London: Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, CIIR 1976, 13).

⁹⁸ Luke 13:1-5.

sense: “meanings which constitute the pilgrims as a social body – a transient community of sick and healthy travellers.”⁹⁹

A female Anglican priest, in her reflection in the desert near Beersheba, reads Genesis 21:9-20 as a text of the suffering body in the inclusive rather than individual sense. In the biblical story, Sarah suffers childlessness, then jealousy. Abraham suffers, first with Sarah in their childlessness, then through Sarah’s rejection of Ishmael. Hagar suffers as an outsider, through the hatred of Sarah and the rejection of Abraham. Ishmael suffers ultimately and raises his cry: he is about to die in the desert.

But God hears the oppressed. God hears the cry of a child suffering and responds. God cares not only for the blood line of Abraham and Sarah but also for Hagar and Abraham’s child... God cares for all people. God is even in the rejection and humiliation, in the rootlessness of life.¹⁰⁰

This pilgrim’s theological attitude to the suffering of Hagar and Ishmael is the exact opposite of the canonical interpretation, for which Hagar is the “old covenant” (“bearing children for slavery”), while Sarah is the “new covenant” (bearing free “children of promise”).¹⁰¹ The pilgrim in the desert of Beersheba suffers thirst and rejection, and so becomes compassionate in a way not allowed in conventional typology. Orthodoxy and canonicity satisfy the self with the teaching that “we are not the children of the slave but of the free woman”; the pilgrim on the contrary is not satisfied; she becomes the child of the thirsty slave, and is “gifted” with an inclusive vision/perception of suffering and redemption. The suffering body is “outside” and “inside” – both “self” and “other”:

For us today here in the desert God has placed us in an alien and different environment... We all have our stories of rejection and acceptance... We have left what is familiar to come to another place, another culture, which within it has various communities and much rejection and unrest... We may be asking, “What on earth are we doing? What is God doing?” ... Many in this place will have asked the same questions... driven out like Hagar, outcasts... But... God is with all people... with the factions who live in this country, those who don’t see eye to eye... May we have our eyes opened, like Hagar, and may we see what God wants us to see...¹⁰²

During her pilgrimage, Pauline accidentally fell on the slopes of the Mount of the Beatitudes, breaking her leg with painful compound fractures. The group’s itinerary was severely disrupted. An ambulance was called, the group leader accompanied the injured pilgrim to hospital, and the rest of the pilgrims regrouped by the Sea of Galilee, shaken by the injury to their companion. Because of the serious nature of the injury, Pauline was able to rejoin the pilgrim group only much later, in Jerusalem. Her experience illustrates the role of the suffering body in a unique way, as recorded in the “pilgrim legend” of the whole group. One of Pauline’s companions, Janice,

⁹⁹ Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Anna (II.k): Written reflection in the desert outside Beersheba.

¹⁰¹ Galatians 4:21-31.

¹⁰² Anna (II.k): Written reflection in the desert outside Beersheba.

had intended to present a reflection on the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes (Mark 6:30-44) on that day. In the collection of written reflections gathered later by the group, one can read the following prepared contribution:

“The Feeding of the Five Thousand”

This is a story about mission and ministry; and about the Kingdom of God which the church’s ministry proclaims... Significantly the feeding of the five thousand is recorded as occurring when the disciples had returned from a mission. They needed time to draw aside, to be with Jesus, to pray and reflect – but it wasn’t possible... The crowd... represents the needs of the world. Jesus had compassion on them and fed them...

Suddenly, at the end of this fairly conventional reflection, Janice adds:

Postscript

This reflection never happened! ... I’ve tried to write what I think I would have said if things hadn’t gone the way they did. Pauline’s fall on the Mount of Beatitudes meant that as a group we were suddenly aware of fragility, vulnerability, how much we rely on our plans to work out and things not to go wrong. ... I can begin to see it all as a piece and in the context of pilgrimage... The dynamics of the community changed... we learnt and grew through it.

Perhaps it would have been more appropriate at this point in the collection of reflections... to leave a gap – a blank sheet of paper – for each one to fill... as they recall that moment in the pilgrimage.¹⁰³

“What I would have said, if things hadn’t gone the way they did.” That “if” marks the threshold between the real and the imagined journey; it is the condition of a narrative experience in which “fiction comes first”. What journey, what insight, “actually happened”? Not the one recorded and printed and signed, but a different one, a “blank” now full of loss and pain, fragility and vulnerability.

One year after the event, during a group interview with most of the pilgrim participants present, Pauline herself spoke up about the experience:

This is the first time I have been able to speak about the whole thing. The processing I have done has been about getting well, rather than reflection on it. For me there was a dynamic about coming along as a “hanger on” [*unlike most of the group, Pauline had not been a student in the ministerial training course*]. [I] really joined a living community which had a language and a process already engaged. ... Not only was I taking on a new environment but a new community...

What actually happened of course is that I managed the desert and nothing else, and lived in the desert for the following months. Quite a lot of the time I was on morphine... There is a sense in which I revisited the desert, which was not inappropriate... I underestimated the power of it... And of course

¹⁰³ Janice (II.r): Written reflection “to have been offered at the lake at Tabgha”.

the fact that these complete strangers [*her fellow pilgrims*] suddenly they had to look after this woman whom they did not know. So my visit to the Land of the Holy One was being visited by people who were behaving as the Holy One. That was quite powerful. But I couldn't write it... I guess that time will come now.¹⁰⁴

The staff person who had been required to step in and assume leadership (Rose) continued on with the pilgrimage when the group leader had gone to the hospital with Pauline. In the same group interview, Rose also spoke of the impact of Pauline's injury on her own pilgrimage:

Most of it was a nightmare, as far as I'm concerned. I felt a terrible sense of responsibility... Golly, these people and this place, and I cannot do anything... I felt like I was carrying everyone inside me. The strangest feeling. In terms of pilgrimage, I guess I learned a lot about my capacity to carry people inside me...¹⁰⁵

These passages from several different pilgrim perspectives are examples not only of the direct and immediate relevance of "the suffering body" to the dynamic of pilgrimage, but equally of the power of "word", "memory" and "writing" in the pilgrimage experience. Alternative pilgrimages radiate from the moment of Pauline's injury, and each of these is the "original" pilgrimage. Story goes all the way down.

3. WHO IS THIS MAN?

For the Jerusalem pilgrim, Jesus Christ is the suffering body encountered in the pilgrim "self" and in the "other". He is also the triumph of goodness and life – not *over* suffering and death (which continue and cannot be denied or sublimated), but *within* suffering in the steadfast refusal of violence toward self and other:

In Jesus we see the overcoming of coercive and selfish power through the refusal of violence, the practice of forgiveness and the transformation of suffering.¹⁰⁶

However, the person of Jesus described (not defined) by his action and intention, is not discrete and unambiguous. The ambiguity of Jesus is encoded in the subjective. It is written into the Scripture, not only in the particular question: "Who do you say that I am?" (*not* "Who am I?") but even more so in the injunction not to voice the general answer, "to tell no one that he was the Christ" (*not* "I am not the Christ").¹⁰⁷ The ambiguity of Jesus is the "Christological secret", and lies between particular and universal, exclusive and inclusive. Although pilgrims come to the Holy Land with one or the other of these aspects, they often leave with both, and especially with the

¹⁰⁴ Pauline (II.b): Group interview session, May 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Rose (II.i): Group interview session, May 1998.

¹⁰⁶ Loughlin, 219.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 16:15-20.

inclusive and human particularly enhanced. Their expectation of an “objective” Christ (who cares for some but not all) is broadened:

Jesus, as we have heard, appears to be clear. Today, today he has come to seek the poor, the prisoner, the blind and the oppressed. We might note not just this, perhaps, single-minded, identification with the oppressed, the exploited and the marginalised, but with all human kind – Jews and Gentiles alike.

Can we assume that this was neither what was wanted, nor anticipated?¹⁰⁸

For this pilgrim at Nazareth, the identity of Jesus is his difference – “neither what was wanted, nor anticipated” – *not simply* the expected Christ, the “one who is to come”. Repeatedly, pilgrims give voice to a dialectical rift between experience and doctrine, a rift represented perhaps in the very name “Jesus/Christ”. One pilgrim wrote: “I believe that I am more grounded in my beliefs about Jesus. [But at the same time] I still have questions about the church’s teachings on the divinity/humanity of Jesus...”¹⁰⁹ Another pilgrim was struck by the decidedly unflattering impression of Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem that she received from a reading of the relevant Gospel text in the context of the real city. Unlike the “triumphal entry” described from the pulpits of Christian churches on Palm Sunday, this historical pilgrim Jesus on his donkey was “humble, pathetic, the Prince of Clowns...” Again, a pilgrim has gazed upon a Jesus who is “neither what was wanted, nor anticipated”. It is in response to this unwanted perception that the pilgrim asks: “Will my church accept this vision?”¹¹⁰

In Christian orthodoxy, and in Loughlin’s orthodox narrativism, the identity of Jesus is “unsubstitutable”: “Jesus gives circumstantial identity to the saviour figure.”¹¹¹ By contrast, the pilgrim’s own words “write” Jesus in a way that seems to both assert and subvert the traditional and circumstantial:

It must have been a strange experience [for Jesus] to stand up in the Nazareth synagogue, with all those familiar faces before him, and preach to them... Jesus is presenting a radical challenge to the comfortable orthodoxy... He is challenging tradition, but from within the heart of tradition itself...¹¹²

In Jesus... promises and longings are fulfilled. Baptism in the Jordan marks the opening of Jesus’ ministry. What kind of subversion is immersion? What is the status of Jesus? Is Jesus a challenge from above or a threat from below?¹¹³

It is because there is “subversion in immersion”, because Jesus has no “unsubstitutable” status, because he is mobile, because he is both “outside” and

¹⁰⁸ Ronald (II.g): Written reflection at the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

¹⁰⁹ Dennis (III.I): Email response to May 2001 questionnaire.

¹¹⁰ Lottie (III.ee): Email response to May 2001 questionnaire.

¹¹¹ Loughlin 74.

¹¹² Pilgrim Reflection on “Tradition (Luke 4:14-30)”; anonymous, privately printed.

¹¹³ Dot (II.x): Written reflection on the banks of the Jordan.

“within”, both “above” and “below” – it is because of all this that Jesus is alternatively representative of identity and difference in pilgrim experiences. For Trudy at the Sea of Galilee, Christ is at the center of her own identity - as she reads the Gospel, the written wind is hushed and the textured sea is still. Becky on the Way of the Cross, and the pilgrims at the house of Caiaphas, sense the presence of Jesus in his absence; today it is myself, but yesterday “my Lord walked here”. For Pat, the identity of Christ is invisible to her in the Holy Land, until “I can see Christ in the people that I do know and have contact with...” For Jennie, Jesus is *simply what he did and said*: “The importance of Jesus’ work and sayings comes to the fore. The reality of Jesus as a historical figure concerns me more.”

Especially in Jerusalem, pilgrims feel called to imitate Christ. But who is the Christ they imitate, and who are they to imitate him? Is Jesus “universally repeatable”?¹¹⁴ Do our lives establish identical horizons with his? Are we walking in his footsteps (to use a pilgrim idiom), or are we merely loitering in his shadow to keep out of trouble?

The Mount of Beatitudes is a place of inclusion where God draws near, where the invitation to be part of the Kingdom is open to all. This is a challenge to be “all goodness” as our Father is (Matt 5:28) and if Christ is the image of God then we too are called to live like him and be “imitators of God”, concerned with the peace and integrity of creation. It’s not only in the Middle East that this must be to do with negotiating a different kind of reality...¹¹⁵

In these words from a pilgrim’s reflection, the imitation of Christ cannot be divorced from “actforms” relating to creation and society, and even to “negotiating reality” – that is, “writing” the story of the world in the light of the story of Jesus. In this sense, Taylor’s description of *imitatio christi* might come directly from a pilgrim journal, although the language is more philosophical and the tone more whimsical:

The human subject’s full realization of the *imago dei* necessarily entails the *imitatio christi*... By becoming a copy of a copy, the self paradoxically becomes *itself*... The human subject attempts to... fulfill the divine mandate: ‘Become what you are!’... The interplay of image, imitation, and identity reveals that the stages on life’s way that comprise the believer’s journey to selfhood repeat the stations of the cross marked by Christ.¹¹⁶

The paradox of Christian identity in discipleship - following the invisible and presenting the unrepresentable - is strongly felt throughout the pilgrim interviews, and even more so in theological reflections written over the course of time. Stan, in a reflection entitled “Mad Joshua and the Den of Thieves”, chose to describe himself as a young man who witnessed the dramatic events at the Temple in Jerusalem in Matthew 21:12-16. In Stan’s subversive pilgrim *midrash* of the Gospel, Joshua (Jesus) overturns the tables of the moneychangers, then heals people in the admiring crowd, while the Temple priests are overwhelmed with anger:

¹¹⁴ John Milbank, “The name of Jesus: incarnation, atonement, ecclesiology”, *Modern Theology*, 7 (1991) 324: “The universal repeatability of Jesus is made possible by his specific historic occurrence.”

¹¹⁵ Molly (II.z): Written reflection at the Mount of Beatitudes.

¹¹⁶ Taylor, *Erring* 40.

Some were berserk with rage... Some of them went across to Joshua and started yelling and screaming at him. 'THIS IS DISGRACEFUL. WHY DO YOU PERMIT THIS?'...

And Joshua looked at them and... everyone could hear him say, quietly, sadly, "out of the mouths of children thou hast brought forth praise." What a thing to say to the priests... That came from one of the psalms, and the full verse goes on to say 'in order to silence your enemies'. In other words, he was saying that the PRIESTS were the enemies of God. And the priests knew what he meant too...¹¹⁷

Stan – as the faithful/fictional contemporary of Jesus – writes a "pilgrim legend" which purports to identify good and evil in terms of Jesus and his followers versus the Temple priests and their henchmen, a scenario not unlike much traditional exegesis. Now, however, we find the difference. The heart of this "pilgrim legend" is Stan's conversation with his fictional uncle, to whom he relates his encounter with "Mad Joshua":

He [*Stan's uncle*] looked at me, and smiled, and said, 'Stan, son of my brother, I say to you that you have met no one today but yourself.' My uncle is very wise but sometimes I worry about him... So a few days later... I asked him, 'Uncle, tell me how can a man going, meet himself coming?'

The uncle proceeds to explain to Stan that within himself he can find the eager young admirers of Jesus, the wicked and bitter priests, and the broken invalids and sinners in the Temple courtyard. They are all, in some way, Stan. The "legend" ends with this subversive and difficult ethic, and with the question of discipleship:

As we said our farewells, a thought occurred to me. 'Uncle, on that day I also met the prophet Joshua. Is he also within me?' My uncle smiled and said, 'Ah, Stan, only you can provide the answer to that question!'¹¹⁸

4. CROSS-ROAD AND EMPTY TOMB

"Jesus is most himself in his resolve to go to Jerusalem, to drink the cup his Father gives him."¹¹⁹ This is Loughlin's view of the center of Jesus' narrative identity, based on Frei's theory of narrative intention-action sequence: "A person's identity is constituted (not simply illustrated) by that intention which he carries into action."¹²⁰

In terms of narrative, Christian pilgrims are "most themselves" when they intend to go up to Jerusalem. The crux of that intention is often encountered at Mount Tabor, where pilgrims have since the fourth century remembered the Transfiguration of Jesus. The Gospel of Luke establishes the closest link between the Transfiguration

¹¹⁷ Stan (II.t): Written reflection "offered at the Temple Excavations in Jerusalem".

¹¹⁸ Stan (II.t): Written reflection "offered at the Temple Excavations in Jerusalem."

¹¹⁹ Loughlin 74.

¹²⁰ Hans Frei, *Theology and Narrative*, 51 – cited by Loughlin 74.

(Lk 9:28-36) and Jesus' determination to "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51). This connection between the revelation of Jesus' divine identity and his responsibility to confront his human destiny is a formative moment for Christian discipleship:

This is the turning point of Jesus' ministry... the word used at this point by Luke implies an interior sense of direction also. It does not take very long to reach Jerusalem from here, but it could take a lifetime... Luke emphasizes the travelling Jesus, always moving forward... this crucial decision to make this journey [to Jerusalem] affects all our lives too.

The purpose of our trip is not just to follow where other people have gone, but to follow in such a way that we can also lead. This requires us to draw on the links between the Hebrew and Christian scriptures in ways that will resonate with the great themes of our time. This task of biblical reflection comes into sharper focus as we begin to look towards Jerusalem.¹²¹

In terms of the embodiment of Scripture, pilgrims encounter "the suffering body" of Jesus in the Passion narrative in Jerusalem. The words they choose at places like Gethsemane and Golgotha indicate the particular interpretation of suffering appropriate to the Christian pilgrimage – i.e. identification and incorporation, but also difference. Jesus is alone, like the pilgrim, even among a group. The destination of his intention-action sequence is not a democratic destiny, although it invites *imitatio Christi* (or "non-identical repetition").¹²² The suffering and grace of the disciple are perfected not in their identity to the suffering and grace of Jesus, but in their significant differences – because in those differences they become "proper" to the pilgrim.

The Garden of Gethsemane is situated on the lower slope of the Mount of Olives and on the edge of the Kidron Valley. As a pilgrimage shrine, it is replete with theological symbolism as the threshold between life and death and a place of christological decision:

Jesus and his friends leave the city and cross the Kidron... a well named dark stream.¹²³ Whilst there, church and state move against him. Jesus steps forward to surrender himself... "Let my people go" is his demand... to set humankind free. A big change is about to take place as God moves to secure our freedom.

What does this narrative suggest to us now?

- We face stresses, conflicts and challenges in being identified with [Jesus].
- His will is to set us free so that we might serve him... in the service of others.

¹²¹ Trevor Pitt, *Journey to Jerusalem: Re-visiting Biblical Faith in the Country of its Origin* (Alresford, Hampshire: O Books 2001) 71-72.

¹²² Citing Milbank, Loughlin (219) stresses that *imitatio Christi* is not a platonic imitation of a transcendent idea, but the "repetition of a historically emergent practice... a structured transformation."

¹²³ "Kidron" derives from the Hebrew root *k.d.r.* – "dark, somber".

- Jesus... steps out as it were from the city and meets us in the open places of daily living...¹²⁴

The theme of transition represented in Gethsemane re-appears at the heart of a pilgrim's theology of the cross. Like Jesus, the pilgrim comes to Jerusalem through a vocation of "necessity", and is presented with political and contemplative choices. The pilgrim experience, like the suffering of Jesus, is both nailed to a local tree and sent freely into the world on a mission of liberation and identification. Like Jesus, whose last words were a probing God-question, the pilgrim at the cross asks: "Why am I here?"

Why are we here now in this chaotic, noisy place? I believe we are here because of Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. We are here because this is where redemption was brought about and the 'liberation of mankind set in motion'. We are here to learn to love as he loves us, to take up our cross and die to ourselves as we go forward from this place back to the familiar but into the unknown.¹²⁵

Since at least the fourth century, as evidenced in the diary of Egeria, Christians have stood as pilgrims "at the cross"; it is an opportunity to sum up the entire meaning of their pilgrimage in one coherent narrative, an *anamnesis* of transition:

Do you remember where we began? The lush pastures of the Vale of York, the green hills of the Pennines, the moorlands of North East England. Then we encountered the aridity of the Negev Desert... We experienced an unplanned transition in our community with Pauline's accident. Rabbi K. told us of the transition in the development of the modern state of Israel... Transitions are points for looking back, for looking forward; and for looking at the transition point itself...

John 19:28-30 ... present us with a new transition. John... wants his readers to be quite clear that Jesus goes to his death entirely reliant upon his more than adequate resources. Those final three words 'It is finished' tell it all... In fact the original tense used is a perfect one, 'it has been and will forever remain finished.' Jesus is claiming a real achievement! He has accomplished what he came into the world to do.

... At this point of transition, a new relationship with God, into which we are all invited to enter, was established... This new relationship, this rebirth, this resurrection... was established through this ultimate transition – Jesus' death on the cross.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Charles (II.a): Written reflection "offered at the Garden of Gethsemane". Tom Wright (*The Way of the Lord*, 81 ff.) sees Gethsemane as a theological crossroad, where Jesus rejects the options of paths going on to political or contemplative safety, and decides instead to stay and accept the cup of mortality. In terms of discipleship, Wright's question is: "What does it mean for us to stay there with him?"

¹²⁵ Gary (II.h): Written reflection "offered at the Church of the Resurrection".

¹²⁶ Gary (II.h): Written reflection "offered at the Church of the Resurrection".

After the cross-road of the Cross comes the perplexity of the Empty Tomb. Repeatedly, as we have shown in the interview transcripts in the previous chapter, the pilgrim's experience of the archetypal Christian shrine is marked with scandal and whimsy:

I had no "buzz" at all in any of these places... I met a woman who had just come back... and she said, I went to see the Tomb, she said, and to me it was like a fireplace! [*Laughter*]. And I thought... how interesting... I was glad to know there were others like me who were having difficulty, so... I didn't feel too badly about it... I loved the Greek Orthodox priest, monk or whatever he was standing [*Laughter*] at the Tomb... If only he was dressed in white [*Laughter*], it would be absolutely superb! Ushering us in and out... and the look on his face... I do remember that actually quite clearly. And people inside not knowing quite what to do. Some on their knees and some trying to take a photograph, some just standing... I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do either. But, ah... [*Laughter*]...¹²⁷

This apparently rambling account is of crucial significance, expressing as it does the sheer incongruity of the Resurrection – in concrete story form, rather than in theologically developed propositions. Hearing these words as a contemporary "witness" to the Resurrection provides a powerful example of the impiety of pilgrimage, and its uncanny Scriptural fidelity. The woman who bears witness that the "fire is out", the ambiguous figure of the monk/angel "usher" at the celestial peep show, the consternation of the incongruous disciples (postmodern Peter and John), some on their knees, some trying to snap a photo, and – finally – the honest bafflement of the narrator/pilgrim – all of these elements are life-size and perfect representations of the Resurrection of Jesus, in a perfectly subjective mode.

In Jean and Wallace Clift's work on pilgrim archetypes,¹²⁸ a similar approach to the Empty Tomb is recounted by a Congregational Church member, "Rachel", in a dream sequence rather than an actual pilgrimage. It is cited here as an example of the symbolic power of a pilgrim shrine in terms of spiritual discovery and healing:

Now is the time for the young man to detach the boulder from the wall and 'roll it away from the tomb'. I wait with great excitement to see what is behind the boulder. Whatever is there is very important, a treasure... [*When the cave was revealed*] there was nothing visible in it, but I felt the power and holiness of the place and looked at it with awe and reverence; I knew it was the receptacle of some great feminine treasure...

The great gift of this dream for me personally was a profound sense... of the spirit of God within me, which had been healed of its one-sidedness, and now encompassed both the masculine and the feminine aspects of the divine. Now, at last, there is a place from which I can call myself a Christian and feel whole in doing so...

¹²⁷ Jim (I.h) - interview.

¹²⁸ Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace B. Clift, *The Archetype of Pilgrimage: Outer Action and Inner Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press 1996) 143-145.

The Resurrection of Jesus is “given” as Gospel story only in the sense of a narrative of intimation. For “Rachel”, the very emptiness of the tomb in her dream was a feminine revelation and empowerment. Similarly, pilgrims standing at the actual Empty Tomb in Jerusalem can be witnesses to a resounding absence, like the women in the “short ending” of Mark’s Gospel (16:1-8). The pilgrim encounter with the absence of Christ is formulated in practical questions - exactly like the “Who will roll the stone away?” of those women - and these are *not the questions of faith*:

Does the Church of the Holy Sepulchre really contain both the Tomb of Christ and the Rock of Golgotha? Is the slab of stone you encounter... the actual stone on which the body of the dead Jesus was laid?... Such are the questions of the pilgrim in the Holy Land... *But they are not the questions of faith*... ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead?’ those women were asked at the tomb. You will not find this Christ confined by the restraints of what you think possible, credible or historical. He has burst forth, leaving behind shrouds for historians to examine and shrines for pilgrims to visit. He has left those places...¹²⁹

The dialectical significance of this pilgrim account is enhanced by the ambiguity of its sermon form. Here, the pilgrim pastor returns to preach to his home congregation; the pilgrim is reconstituted within the Church. The pilgrim in the Holy Land asks questions that are “pre-faith”; the preacher in the Church recommends answers that are “post-faith”. The orthodox narrativism of Loughlin moves too quickly from the first to the second instance, leaving “pre-faith” witness outside belief:

The story of the resurrection resolves ambiguity concerning the identity of Jesus... Jesus [is] the person who was dead and *is* risen – the one whose non-resurrection is inconceivable.¹³⁰

[The] gospel identification of Jesus as he-who-cannot-not-live, is only an argument to the truth of the resurrection for faith. All it can mean for people without faith is that if they think Jesus was someone who died nearly two thousand years ago and that was the end... of his story, then they are thinking of someone else, a character in another story.¹³¹

Orthodox theologies of redemption require that the cross be emptied of its immediate and horrific meaning (the death of God) and be “subdued” by the glory of the resurrection:

Christian discipleship is defined by the cross... But... the meaning of the cross in Jesus’ narrative is intelligible only in relation to that other event in the narrative... “resurrection”.¹³²

¹²⁹ Rev. Douglas E. Remer, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” - Sermon for Easter Day, April 12, 1998, St. Martin in the Fields Church, Atlanta; St. Martin’s Web Page printout (italics mine).

¹³⁰ Loughlin, 209.

¹³¹ Loughlin, 210 (citing Hans Frei: “He lives as the one who cannot not live, for whom to be what he is, is to be” – *Theology and Narrative*, 85).

¹³² George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology*, 260.

It is characteristic of the pilgrim encounter, however, that the interpretation of the cross and the empty tomb is *not* predetermined. Both cross and tomb can be encountered by Jerusalem pilgrims at the edicule (“indulgently described as a ‘hideous kiosk’”¹³³) in the Church of the Resurrection, or at the apocryphal Garden Tomb, or in an alternative shrine, an unscheduled space, or an anomalous cave or room. Just as the women who came before faith were shocked to find the tomb empty, so too for pilgrims the absence of the Risen Jesus is certainly conceivable. Like the anonymous women in Mark, and like Mary Magdalene in John, pilgrims are privileged to encounter Jesus *precisely* as “someone else, a character in another story” – i.e. the story of the pre-Church pilgrim, *a story not yet written*. It is Jesus as “someone else” that pilgrims bring home with them. This apostolic originality of pilgrims is “pre-faith”. This is a perspective that is normally qualified by the Church, and is all too soon abandoned when the pilgrim becomes a preacher, a price paid for the benefits of *kerygma*:

As followers of the risen Christ, we are invited both to contemplate the place where he was and to recognize that there is more to following him than geography. ‘Come, see the place’ is important, but must be balanced with ‘He is not here; he is risen.’¹³⁴

(G) DARING THE ‘DIVINE MILIEU’

1. THE PILGRIM REFORMER

A pilgrim’s relationship to “Church” may be both confident (“post-faith”) and ambiguous (“pre-faith”). An individual from a well-defined denominational context, for example, may encounter Jerusalem as an ambiguous icon of diversity and even division within the Christian family of faith:

We have witnessed the strong, at times violent, divisions between the faiths – even within the same faith... The holy sights of the three main faiths are so near in place, and yet so far in spirit from each other. We see the disunity within Christianity at each holy site with the multiplicity of churches and altars.

Another point of view – a different “pilgrim gaze” – reveals a positive diversity of faiths, something to be celebrated, not mourned:

As we go home, it would be easy to become cynical about the failure of religion to unite peoples, to bring peace and justice... And yet on the day of Pentecost, the coming of God’s spirit broke down the barriers... to understanding... All faiths come to Jerusalem to touch the rock, to pray where prayer is valid...¹³⁵

¹³³ Jerome Murphy-O’Connor op, The Holy Land (Oxford 1998) 52.

¹³⁴ Tom Wright, The Way of the Lord 8.

¹³⁵ Carol (II.v): Written reflection “offered at Mount Zion”.

A pilgrim from the United Reform Church (URC) in the U.K. composed a theological paper¹³⁶ based on his 1997 pilgrimage, with special focus on his visit to the Church of the Resurrection ("Holy Sepulchre"). Beginning in the lowest regions of the Church, Tony ascends steps from the enclosed darkness of the Chapel of the Cross and through the Chapel of St. Helena. This occasions a reflection on security and dependency:

It is tempting to remain in the cave of security... of the church. The church hierarchies have encouraged this dependency, since it sustains their own security. The natural family is extended to the church community... and in Judaism to the nation...

The dangers of remaining within the clan, the tribe, the church community... are self-evident. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which permeates the Land, is a spectacular illustration of these dangers. Wars... dispossessions, terrorism, curfews and anger stem from fear and the desire to remain separate from 'the other'.

After visiting other parts of the Church, each with a corresponding reflection on religious and political issues, Tony finally ascends to the Chapel of the Crucifixion on the Rock of Calvary (Golgotha):

The rock which was a shelter, a source of refreshment, a fortress, a wall of communication and a prison is now an altar, a place of execution, of salvation and atonement. But what does this mean?... While intellectual understanding struggles with Calvary, women sit silently weeping in the Chapel of Calvary, just as their sisters wept through the ages. We still cling to the cross, as fugitives clung to the horned altar... long ago.

The last "station" on this pilgrim way is the Tomb of Christ, which he remembers as "a dark, bleak monument", touched by a shaft of sunlight from above:

The contrast and the meeting of light and dark present a powerful image of resurrection. Standing there, I listened to the competing voices of three church services. Here was struggle with little silence, declamation without dialogue, the Church broken and divided.

This pilgrim's journey within the Church has ramifications outside the Church, especially in "contexts shaping the United Reform Church". Here, Tony briefly traces some Reformation history and points out that "it is the fate of reformers... to open new doors only to be overwhelmed by a deluge." He then ends the paper with a call for the URC to live up to its mission of "openness, exploration, humility, sensitivity and compassion in action, all under the grace of God," to become more

¹³⁶ Tony Haws, "The Influence of Context on the Mission and Ministry of the Church and, in Particular, that of the URC"; in: NEOC Occasional Paper, Winter 1997 (NEOC, Durham; privately reproduced) 18-26.

deeply involved in social issues, and also to “seek unity with other churches and to enter into dialogue with... other faiths.”¹³⁷

Tony’s theological insights on “Context” bear a remarkable thematic resemblance to the passages quoted previously from the interviews and dream accounts of Pat. The “Church of the Holy Sepulchre” plays the same symbolic role for both Pat and (less radically) Tony, as the “context” of darkness, pain and division. Pat uses the Dominus Flevit Chapel as a contrasting symbol of openness to God’s abandoned people (a “context” described by Tony in the religious and social awakening of the “dissenting reformed churches in England” from the 17th to the 19th centuries). Finally, Pat’s dream-description of a totally “un-churched” Eucharist is modelled on the open altar at Tabgha by the Sea of Galilee – a “sacramental sharing of Christ to a universal population.” For Tony, this “context” is evoked in his hope for the future of the URC and the entire Church:

This... mission and ministry is needed in the Land of the Holy One and across the world... Fear, mistrust and the blinkered pursuit of self-interest dominate so much of late twentieth century thought and action. *Sola Gratia* – only by the Grace of God can the world be transformed and made anew. This is a truth that transcends time place and culture.¹³⁸

The pilgrim who plays a role of prophetic reformation on the edges of the Church will remind the community of its original character as a witness to the Christ who is “God-With-Us”, not “God-Over-All”.

We are a pilgrim church. We are no longer a fixed society perched on a hilltop overlooking the world below, but a pilgrim people painfully journeying through the valley, journeying in solidarity with God’s people... And the journey itself binds us together and heals us of our loneliness... The meaning of life is not found at the end of the journey, but in the very journey itself...¹³⁹

2. SALVATION AND STORY

Loughlin says of salvation that “it is the gift of a journey, or... an adventure.”¹⁴⁰ Orthodox narrativism offers a story that is “the radical alternative” and is to be chosen above all stories as a saving story, a story to live by. Pilgrims begin with precisely this view of the Scripture they live by, but move in some instances into an ambiguous place beyond. Is there grace and salvation beyond the archetypal “saving story” – beyond the closure of the Book?

Don Cupitt describes the dilemma of postmodern Christianity in terms of the confrontation between the “realistic optimism” of belief and the “textualist

¹³⁷ Haws, “The Influence of Context” 25.

¹³⁸ “The Influence of Context” 25.

¹³⁹ Fr. Thomas M. Rosica, “Towards a Biblical Spirituality of Pilgrimage: The Holy Land and North American Catholics”; *Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Press Association of North America* – Tampa Florida, May 27, 1994 (privately printed), 6.

¹⁴⁰ Loughlin 218.

pessimism” of non-belief, between which is an ambiguous middle ground. For the optimists, there is a “God out there”, Scripture is objectively true, and Grace is real and by definition friendly. For the pessimists, there is no God “out there”, Scripture is always already fiction and only fiction, and Grace is real only as a “rule” within the game of fiction.¹⁴¹

It would seem impossible to find a middle ground between realistic optimism and non-realistic pessimism. The postmodern pilgrim, however, “saunters” in the “divine milieu”.¹⁴² Taylor theologically enhances Turner’s concept of liminality and renders it more mobile and applicable to postmodern pilgrimage. Turner focussed on the “center” and on the social status aspect of the sacred journey; pilgrimage has a subjective and social purpose, and therefore takes on the “elliptical” shape already described (departure, liminal transition, arrival at the “center out there”, and return with enhanced social rank). Taylor’s critique of history as a “detour” taken by “unhappy consciousness” in its insatiable hunger for a center, and for an end to erring, will not be satisfied with Turner’s shape of pilgrimage.¹⁴³ Taylor’s interest is rather in the acentric, transgressive and “place-less”. The ellipse illustrates Turner’s pilgrimage, the maze/labyrinth Taylor’s.¹⁴⁴ “The divine milieu marks the liminal time and space where marginal passengers always roam.”¹⁴⁵ Is this an image of salvation or damnation?

In the orthodox Christian story, erring ends eschatologically, when salvation is finalized and realized in Jesus Christ. The difficulty of orthodox Christology arises from an underlying instability in the role of Jesus in the saving history of God. If Jesus is the divinely constituted agent of good who saves humanity and overcomes the evil of this world, then he is from “outside the story” and to some extent “dehumanized”. If, on the other hand, Jesus is fully human, a “human being... entirely made of stories all the way through,”¹⁴⁶ then how can Jesus save?

For Loughlin, the answer is that Jesus saves through the Church – the “constitutive community” - because it is “by entering the community of the Church that one enters the story of Jesus.”¹⁴⁷ For Christians, salvation implies a significant connection

¹⁴¹ Cupitt, *What is a Story?* 92ff.

¹⁴² “Saunter” derives from “*Sainte Terre*” or “*sans terre*” – both describing medieval pilgrims to the Holy Land. “Milieu” denotes “middle, midst, heart, medium, mean.” Cf. *Erring*, 115 and 150. I would relate Taylor’s “divine milieu” to Jenkins’ “complex ‘middle distance’”, a domain of “vital symbols” in which human lives are lived (Jenkins, 35). The sociological “mapping of the middle distance” can serve as model for the theological mapping of the divine milieu.

¹⁴³ Taylor describes history as a course from pure origin to ideal conclusion, which “inscribes a closed circuit of departure and return... Eschatology offers the final word, which is supposed to put an end... to erring” (*Erring* 155)

¹⁴⁴ Taylor (erroneously) uses “maze” and “labyrinth” synonymously. “The labyrinth is not a maze. There are no dead ends. The path leads surely, if mysteriously and circuitously, toward the center. No matter where you are in the labyrinth you feel some sort of connection to the center... where God is found.” Cf. Douglas Burton-Christie, “Into the Labyrinth: Walking the Way of Wisdom”, *Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (July/August 1997) 26. In this sense, “labyrinth” is theological, “maze” a/theological.

¹⁴⁵ *Erring* 112.

¹⁴⁶ Cupitt, *What is a Story?* 43 and 67.

¹⁴⁷ Loughlin 215.

between a “perfect life” and a “little narrative”¹⁴⁸ – between the Jesus-story/Christ-event and the present “storied” individual. In pilgrimage, this connection is made primarily through movement, perception and reflection in contexts evocative of the Jesus-story. Ironically, these contexts are constituted by Scripture but often “un-churched”; they are found in regions of “pre-faith” beyond the boundaries of “church” in any familiar sense.

How then does the pilgrim to Jerusalem enter the story of Jesus? Not necessarily through the Church, and not through a “slavish copying... a crudely literal imitation of Christ”¹⁴⁹ – that is the way to a temporary psychotic episode, not salvation. Reflective pilgrims rather stress the role of “focus and freedom”, the radical vision enabled by the pilgrimage journey:

I see how important it is to get away from routine demands in order to see the holy, and perhaps the vision of change is a freedom in itself. My old self, as I knew myself, was reawakened in this journey. I could look at things with a different eye, and I saw things I had never seen before.¹⁵⁰

Cupitt, acknowledging here his debt to Turner’s “liminality”,¹⁵¹ suggests that the saving activity and redemptive power of Jesus are none other than his “talismanic quality”. Cupitt associates “talisman” with the “anomalous” – i.e. a unity of opposites, “bridging the gulf between two realms”. Jesus is anomalous, in that he bridges human and divine, present and absent. The anomalous, writes Cupitt,

is ambiguous, transgressive and liberating because it is a story-catalyst. By making Jesus so anomalous, the Evangelists were seeing him as questioning rather than consolidating value-scales... What matters about Jesus is not an orthodoxy fixed in one story, but his anomalousness, that is, his power to generate many stories for many people...¹⁵²

Where the saving role of Jesus is anomalous, it is a function of freedom and imagination – a bridging of the chasm between worlds. Pilgrimage provides a sacramental journey in the “divine milieu”, among the traces of which imagination is brought to bear. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land is itself a “place of imaging”, where the pilgrim puts her feet in the sandals of Jesus, sits on the boat with him, calms the storm and feeds the hungry with compassionate bread. The pilgrim journey is one of “imaginative meaning, full of ambiguity,” but also has a structure of contexts derived from the life of Jesus, a structure of “past experience of God”, that “carries the pilgrims through the ambiguity and risk of a world of symbol and myth.”¹⁵³ Vulnerable to experience, yet divinely protected, the pilgrim becomes a “hero or heroine of an adventure with infinite possibilities.” A narrative understanding of pilgrimage – especially to the Holy Land – reveals that the pilgrim’s confidence, the

¹⁴⁸ Lyotard’s “*petit recit*” – “the quintessential form of imaginative invention” (*The Postmodern Condition*, 60).

¹⁴⁹ Cupitt, *What is a Story?*, 12.

¹⁵⁰ Tom (III.a): Email response to May 2001 questionnaire.

¹⁵¹ *What is a Story?*, note 11 on page 158.

¹⁵² *What is a Story?* 106-108.

¹⁵³ Urban T. Holmes III, *Ministry and Imagination*, 126

“heightened feeling of individuation and of unique personal identity”¹⁵⁴ is not provided by an outside authority – not even through *imitatio christi*. These signs of salvation are “authored” by the pilgrim, “traced” along the pilgrim path, encompassed by the pilgrim gaze, and validated by the prophetic pilgrim conscience.

Pilgrimage is a mobile and anomalous story/sacrament of salvation. It celebrates the “oscillation”¹⁵⁵ of the human soul between faith and denial, between orthodoxy and heresy, between the call to establish order and the need to plunge into chaos. Pilgrims, then, are like Taylor’s “marginal people”, on the border between belief and unbelief. In summing up the theological impact of a pilgrimage as a “way of doing theology”, a pilgrim group leader and pastor writes:

Try to articulate what you have learnt, through hard listening, sweaty walks, physical endurance and personal struggle, through things you didn’t expect to do. Try to describe how the Bible makes a different kind of sense when you read it in its own very real context.... The purpose of doing theology like this is not to weaken your faith, but to help you to own it – to make it your own... We have tried to see Jesus more clearly... seeking to understand our own faith and practice in following this man [into] the tasks of ministry in our own time... Jesus is not confined to the ancient roads of Roman Palestine, and can be just as disconcerting a companion for our journeys too.¹⁵⁶

3. THE GRACE OF THE PILGRIM HOST

The “unsubstitutable” Savior Christ of theological history is in some way an emplotted identity; the Jesus of pilgrims is different – “another story”. It is the difference of Jesus that is the sacrament¹⁵⁷ of pilgrims, and it is his gift of surprising absence that gives pilgrims their grace. The uncertainties of their encounters mark pilgrims with the sign of the cross, and move them to challenge the legitimation of Church and State;¹⁵⁸ pilgrims return to their communities as “witnesses to the unrepresentable”,¹⁵⁹ not ambassadors of the obvious. Pilgrims also bear their journey home as a “manna” – a questioning form of nourishment.¹⁶⁰ They find their listeners hungry for “another story” – not a travelogue but a “story to consume”, a challenging parable to live by. Just as the celebration of the Eucharist is an inspiration for many pilgrims during their journey, so too the Eucharistic gathering of the Church becomes a focus for reflection and reform at the journey’s end.

¹⁵⁴ Barbara Nimri Aziz, “Personal Dimensions of the Sacred Journey: What Pilgrims Say”, *Religious Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 2 (June 1987).

¹⁵⁵ Bruce Reed’s term, cf. Holmes, *Ministry and Imagination* 127.

¹⁵⁶ Trevor Pitt : Written reflection offered at Motza (biblical Emmaus); with permission.

¹⁵⁷ I use the word “sacrament” in Tillich’s sense, as a “new realism”, a revitalization of ordinary matter, and an affirmation of the sanctity of both nature and the human person. Cf. Henry R. Carse, “Simple Water, Consuming Flame: Nature, Sacrament and Person in Paul Tillich”; *Theology* (vol. XCIX, no. 787; Jan/Feb 1995) 22ff.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Carroll, *A Pilgrim God* 86ff.

¹⁵⁹ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* 82.

¹⁶⁰ The meaning of the word *manna* (from biblical Hebrew *man-hu*) is “What is this?”

Significantly, one of Taylor's few explicit references to Jesus is his short reflection on Luke 24:13-35 – the story of the disciples' encounter with the risen Jesus on the Road to Emmaus:

'When he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.' *Hoc est corpus meum*. Hocus-pocus: a vanishing act that really opened their eyes! And what did they 'see'? They recognized presence in absence and absence in presence. This unending (inter)play is the eternal (re)inscription of (the) word(s).¹⁶¹

Emmaus is in a sense the "final shrine" in the Holy Land; it is not unusual for a pilgrim group to visit Emmaus on the last day of their journey. A pilgrimage itinerary that includes Emmaus has several a/theological advantages. First, pilgrims note that "holy places move": there are (at least) four Christian shrines of varying antiquity purporting to mark the site. At "Emmaus", then, one is *not* at Emmaus; there is no escaping the ambiguity of the Scriptural landscape:

Only a short distance away is Emmaus, but it is not easy to find! ...From a narrow street near some newly built Israeli houses, we began walking up a stony track seeming to lead to nowhere. A man... called to us over his fence, "Why are you going up there? There's nothing there!" That is how it seemed to us too...

Of course, Emmaus is wherever we want it to be, because it is a story about meeting Jesus, and that happens independent of place and circumstance... Wherever peoples of separate traditions and different convictions reach out to one another in hope of eventual unity, there is a genuine Emmaus, a meeting with Christ.¹⁶²

Then, in the reading of the Emmaus text in the context of one or the other of the designated shrines, pilgrims note both anomaly and anonymity surrounding the identity of the disciples and Jesus. One of the disciples remains unnamed throughout the narrative. Who is this disciple? Familiar or stranger? Man or woman? Jesus too remains largely anonymous; Luke takes narrative pains to ensure that he is regarded as a "stranger" until the very moment he is recognized, and at that moment he disappears. What did the disciples see? "Presence in absence." Finally, the Gospel passage in Luke is a story about story; it "presents" the Resurrection as a pilgrim trace, a story constituted of word, bread and compassion, based in Scripture but interpreted in a life, and retold in joyful company.

On the way to Emmaus, we return to the unsettled and unsettling discourse between orthodoxy and errancy. Loughlin describes the Church as

...the gospel-shaped 'narrative space' where Christians learn to 'sacrifice' themselves, over and over again, to the community's narrative texts...
Salvation is... entry into the narrative space of the Church; passage through

¹⁶¹ Taylor, *Erring* 103.

¹⁶² Trevor Pitt, *Journey to Jerusalem* 12-121.

baptismal waters into a new country. It is beginning to speak a new language in the company of those who are called to be friends by one who does not desert his friends...¹⁶³

For Taylor, by contrast, pilgrims dare the "divine milieu"; they do not enter but remain between, erring and non-centered. This is Derrida's "seminal adventure of the trace."¹⁶⁴ The disciples on the road encounter the incarnate word as a trace rather than a certainty. The ambiguities of the Emmaus text show forth the death of God (the optimistic theism of the disciples has been crucified), the disappearance of the self (the vanishing of Jesus as the familiar and intimate) and the end of history (the silencing of the "unhappy consciousness"¹⁶⁵ of the disciples, the stilling of their struggles to escape Jerusalem, the place of emptying and death).

The Emmaus road is not a context of comforting revelations, but an anti-shrine where "absence is original." The disturbing point of the story is that Jesus *does* "desert his friends" at the very moment they thought they needed him, and again when they expected him to stay; but he also comes to visit them at the very moment they assume him gone. Jesus at Emmaus is "an interplay of presence/absence and identity/difference that overturns the polar opposites of classical theology."¹⁶⁶

Pilgrimage to and from Jerusalem is a sacramental gift of absence. The pilgrim loses herself, and becomes present to the "other" along the way. This is the "mazing grace"¹⁶⁷ of unearned compassion, appearing again and again like Ariadne's thread through the maze/labyrinth of the pilgrim interviews.¹⁶⁸ It is a "'Yes' of anguished joy",¹⁶⁹ a "way of totally loving the world",¹⁷⁰ abandoning the craving for "self-organization" and allowing the "other" to feed and lead us:

Much is altered: Communication, Naming, Identity... the focus is outward. The mission to go beyond those the disciples call their own people has begun... It is part of our humanity to want to self-organize and cluster together... [but] Jesus' calling beckons us outward.¹⁷¹

Loughlin tells us that the believer, welcomed into the "new country", the Church, is "always moving forward by following after [Christ]." This believer is consumed by a story purged of ambiguity, yet a story that is "open-ended" and will one day be "positioned" by the Christ who returns to say the last word.¹⁷² Meanwhile,

¹⁶³ Loughlin 217 (quoting Kenneth Surin, *Turnings of Darkness and Light*, 218-219) and 220.

¹⁶⁴ Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 292.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor's term for history's "struggle for transcendence", becoming the "suffering of the historical agent... suspended between 'is' and 'ought'" (*Erring* 151).

¹⁶⁶ *Erring* 15.

¹⁶⁷ Taylor's term: "Erring endlessly opens the mazing grace eternally inscribed in the cross of scripture" (*Erring* 182)

¹⁶⁸ For the mythical metaphor, cf. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths: 1* (Penguin Books 1955/1960) 339).

¹⁶⁹ *Erring* 169.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Altizer, "Eternal Recurrence and Kingdom of God" in: D.B. Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Delta 1979) 232-246.

¹⁷¹ Pilgrim Reflection on "Gift (Acts 2:1-4, 22-38)"; anonymous, privately printed.

¹⁷² Loughlin 24.

postmodern pilgrims, those pre-faith “marginal thinkers”, like the “nuisances and nobodies”¹⁷³ of the parabolic world of Jesus, wander far from the center but close to the sacrament of the world. Together and alone, they travel incognito on the road to Emmaus, and they speak a rollicking idiom, a “language which has renounced producing *the last word*, which lives and breathes by giving itself up to others.”¹⁷⁴

To sum up the pilgrimage principle of Christ-like hospitality, I can think of nothing better than another invitation to listen to a pilgrim’s own words, spoken as if the pilgrim were identical with (yet still different from) one of the two disciples of Luke 24:

So come, my friend, let’s go back to Jerusalem together. We can’t stay at home in our old ways now. We’ve been changed too much for that. Mind you, Jerusalem won’t be the same anymore. There’ll be people who’ll know what we’re talking about... and others who won’t care. But go we must, and it will be that living spark that will keep on sending us out and drawing us back in again.

And when we get there, we must make sure that we are generous with our hospitality. It was so funny how, just when we thought *we* were entertaining a stranger, *he* took the bread and played host to us – and just for a second it was Jesus there with us. If I remember rightly, he said he wouldn’t break bread with us again until the Kingdom had come. Now, there’s a thought.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ A term coined by John Dominic Crossan in his work on the historical Jesus.

¹⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*; trans. R. Howard (NY: Hill & Wang 1977) 170.

¹⁷⁵ Pilgrim Reflection on “Hearts on Fire (Luke 24:13-35)”; anonymous, privately printed (NEOC).

CHAPTER FIVE: FAITH IN AMBIGUITY - THE PILGRIM SACRAMENT

In the pages above, I have made every effort to listen to pilgrim tales on their own merits, to hear the theological challenges they pose, and to respond with an open theological synthesis. The expert on postmodern Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land is not the armchair analyst, but the pilgrim. A commitment to the qualitative methods of interview proposed by Schwartz and Jacobs, and practiced in the field by Clandinin, Connelly and Jenkins, has replaced historical descriptions with real-time narratives. This commitment is irreversible; once we start listening to what pilgrims themselves say, we can no longer be content with mere statistics. My companions in dialogue, the pilgrims themselves, in accordance with the principles of "personal experience" research, have interrogated my own journey of faith even as they have responded to my questions about theirs. The result has been a theological adventure rather than the discussion of propositions. The itinerary of this adventure has been by nature circuitous; still, a straightforward summary is now within view.

1. A Theological Hermeneutic

I have first of all responded directly to Davies' challenge¹ concerning the lack of theological interpretation of today's pilgrimage, by proposing a postmodern narrative interpretation (although not a "justification" – as if that were possible or needed). This theological interpretation, while based in this instance on a very particular and limited sample of pilgrims, may still serve as a model for a broader future ecumenical study of *verbatim* pilgrim accounts from a variety of traditions.

The terms of pilgrimage studies are changing as the parameters of religion in a postmodern world first contract, then expand in disturbing ways. The secular culture of modernism has encroached deeply into the religious realm, and most Western Christians now live in a stark and muddled secular milieu of consumerism and unbelief. The inevitable reaction, in Christianity as well as other faiths, is an upsurge of literalism and a retreat to the defenses of fundamentalism. These can seem to restore religious certainty, but only at the expense of deeper and more subtle spiritual meanings. Eliade's challenge of creative hermeneutics – to "transmute [the history of religion] into spiritual messages", and "to produce an action of [spiritual] awakening"² is now more difficult – and more relevant - than ever.

Adopting Eliade's program and applying it to making this particular religious experience more meaningful, I have received the words of pilgrims and mined them for the spiritual messages or "vital symbols"³ they might bear. In the process, I have needed to part company with some of the anthropological conclusions of the Turner school, most especially the concept of a "center" which is in some sense intrinsically (or consensually) sacred, and of an axiomatic *communitas* which allows the pilgrim to spontaneously transcend individuality.

¹ Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today*, viii.

² Eliade, *The Quest* 36, 62.

³ Jenkins, *Religion in English Everyday Life* 17.

Traditional pilgrimage was understood by the Turners in the context of "rite of passage" in tribal societies. This context, and therefore this understanding, could not survive the subjective revolution of modernism, since now it is the discrete individual, not the clan, who is the sponsor and agent of quest. A Durkheimian "objective observation"⁴ can only reduce pilgrimage to a museum item, and the Turners' insistence on pilgrim shrines as "tears in the veil" between spiritual and material orders⁵ is no longer tenable, as postmoderns proclaim that the spirit/matter dichotomy is illusory.

The "elliptical" pilgrimage itineraries of the Turners' anthropological thesis are not now adequate models for describing today's pilgrimage – at least in the reforming traditions of Christianity – since these pilgrims do not claim a new social or religious status on their return from Jerusalem. Prescribed liminal behavior has now become optional liminoid recreation, and is no longer confined to initiations. Pilgrimage *communitas* is contested by the existential homelessness and loneliness of the individual. Also, in the case of Jerusalem, the effective sanctity of the visible "sites of salvation" has long been challenged by travellers and sceptics, many of whom were from Protestant origins. In the final analysis, however, it is just as unlikely that Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox pilgrims will want to, or be able to, continue their uncomplicated journeys to the "center out there", in a world wounded increasingly by the fragmentation of all exterior reasons, systems, goals and shrines. Pilgrimage is turning, inexorably, inward.

Society, meanwhile, has turned outward. Global tourism has become the "rite of initiation" imposed upon world culture, and the tourist is both priest and victim in the pseudo-cult of globe-trotting. Following MacCannell and Cohen, we have observed the deconstruction of the pilgrim centers once confidently offered to the faithful by medieval and modern Christian societies. Pilgrimage can no longer claim the once-evident purpose of "proving the Bible", or the pious expectation of "walking with Jesus", or even the simple distinction of being difficult. Pilgrimage and tourism are increasingly similar, both in form *and* intention: both are searches for meaning, and both are routinely frustrated in that search. Many pilgrims now know that their visit to Jerusalem is very much a "cultural production" involving a cast of thousands of mundane agendas. Certainly, fewer pilgrims are looking for local miracles, since they live in a scientific and social world now entirely both wonderful and terrifying. Even the axiomatic "liminal *communitas*" of pilgrims has become just another context for "competing discourse", theological scepticism, and souvenir hunting.

It is almost an axiom of pilgrimage research that pilgrims from the reformed traditions in particular are motivated to go to the Holy Land by a desire to read and understand the Bible in a new way. There is in some circles an implicit assumption that the text of Scripture can be in some way validated *in its own right* by a visit to the land where the text was born. The present research reveals a remarkable level of incredulity concerning the authenticity of the place/text "fit". The pilgrim's use of Scripture has become more idiosyncratic. At the same time, the faith of the pilgrim in

⁴ Turner, "Center Out There" 205.

⁵ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage* 205-206. Cf. also 125 – a characteristically Turnerian reference to the pilgrim's encounter with the basic elements of faith "in their unshielded, virgin radiance."

Scripture can remain firm. This can only be interpreted as indicating that for the pilgrim, “textual tradition” is not synonymous with “scriptural authority”. The latter can only be determined by the pilgrim’s own experience. Now, the Bible is not a proposition to be proved but a model or “grammar” to be lived and spoken. Thus, in theological terms, the interview material contradicts both Turner’s “center out there” and Eliade’s “absolute reality”. The pilgrim herself or himself is the essential theological agent in the experience. It is not a “tear in the veil” that a pilgrim confronts at a shrine, but rather a highly reflective and subjective mirror of self-reference.

2. Responding to Historical Models

It seems remarkable that Christian pilgrimage has survived at all. The fact that the practice is flourishing – even in the Holy Land between outbreaks of local sectarian conflict - indicates the tenacity of a physical sacrament of an invisible spiritual event, and the intrinsic value to the human spirit of the centrifugal journey. Although the religious center can no longer hold, the spiritual journey always continues, and Christian pilgrims still make their way to Jerusalem, even in the midst of cultural uncertainty and upheaval. Sumption’s categories of medieval pilgrim motivations – relics, mission, miracles and penitence – still provide a useful measure for the contemporary phenomenon, although the meaning of each of these categories is radically changed. Postmodern experiential tourists travel the world in search of something authentic to see, buy and bring home. Meanwhile, Christian pilgrims at the Empty Tomb stand in prayer before an authentic absence that they can never purchase or carry away, yet which they know to be more precious than any relic or indulgence ever could be.

Sumption’s historical categories had a tendency to enshrine the pilgrim practice in the past tense, as if pilgrimage plays not much more than a nostalgic role in today’s Christian experience. I have corrected this impression by presenting in its proper perspective the evidence of particularly modern and postmodern motivations (like the struggle with reluctance, the search for inner peace, the quest for the historical Jesus, and a growing sense of global moral responsibility). In addition, I have noted and documented the important shift among Protestant pilgrims away from a strictly “Bible-motivated” journey and toward one of deeper reflection and moral change.

An important aspect of this shift is expressed by pilgrims who nuance the Gospel *kerygma* (once seen as an external call to mission and repentance), and begin to internalize their insights and encounters, thus embarking on a process of personal growth, an opening of religious perception, and compassion for those of other convictions and faiths. Such a journey goes well beyond the “repentance” described by Cohen in relation to the existential tourist who resists the illusory “perfection” of the elected center.⁶ Here, Cohen shares with the Turners an exaggerated focus on the nature of the “center”, while real-life pilgrims render the center mobile, flexible, even peripheral, in their self-referencing pilgrim gaze.

Further, I have emphasized the centrality of encounters with the “other” in the pilgrim’s experience, and the anomalous measures of authenticity that these

⁶ Cohen, “Phenomenology” 191.

encounters require. Cohen's principle, that "the search for authentic experiences is essentially a religious quest"⁷, both assures and explains the survival of pilgrimage in postmodern terms. But the measure of reality has shifted from objective and propositional to relational and subjective. It is *difference*, not conformity, that now defines "authentic". Thus, MacCannell and Cohen, in their work on tourism, brought about a revolution in the Turnerian system, liberated the pilgrim from conformity to the central shrine and all it represented, and made difference and discrepancy the touchstones of pilgrimage: "Jerusalem may be the Holy City, but ordinary human life in Jerusalem is far from holy."⁸

3. The Image and Pilgrimage of Jesus

The dynamic person who is always present implicitly or explicitly in Christian pilgrim tales is Jesus. His presence is far from axiomatic, however, as it is not determined by canons or creeds. Pilgrims seem ready to envision Jesus in unanticipated ways. Against the orthodox thrust of Loughlin's Christ, who "gives circumstantial identity to the savior figure"⁹, pilgrims celebrate a Jesus who slips through their fingers and is absent. This does not remove Jesus from faith. Rather, the absence of the "image" makes a more mobile faith possible, and so Jesus joins the questioning and changing pilgrimage. Loughlin's Christ has the "last word" in history, but the pilgrim Jesus shares the mute unknowing of the pre-faith traveller. The radical mobility of Jesus is a *narrative* mobility, and is thus more immediately accessible to the pilgrim than the traditional idea of Jesus as a "pilgrim from heaven to earth and back again."

The Jesus who is a pilgrim to Jerusalem is "not what was wanted or anticipated" - not the triumphant Christ of Nicea. He does not have a status that is theologically incontrovertible, and therefore he is near the pilgrim, even within the suffering body, even at the cross. Compassion and "otherness" sum up the pilgrim Christology. The pilgrim at the Empty Tomb is in some essential way "pre-faith" - more akin to the women who stayed to love and mourn than to the Evangelists who rushed to proclaim. The pilgrim may set out to be a messenger of conviction and gain, but is called to repentance by witnesses of doubt and loss:

While intellectual understanding struggles with Calvary, women sit silently weeping in the Chapel of Calvary, just as their sisters wept throughout the ages. We still cling to the cross, as fugitives clung to the horned altar... long ago.¹⁰

The pilgrim's Jesus is not "objective, revealed, unchangeable". In fact, the divinity of Jesus is constantly mediated within humanity, always elusive, moving, evolving. Inevitably, the Christian pilgrimage theology leads to the cross, not as a proposition of redemption, but rather as an existential question: "In all this, where is God?" There is a total contrast between the "unsubstitutable" Jesus of Loughlin's narrative orthodoxy and the "errant" Jesus of Taylor's postmodern labyrinth. In my opinion,

⁷ "Phenomenology" 187.

⁸ Cohen, "Phenomenology" 190.

⁹ Loughlin, *Telling God's Story* 74.

¹⁰ Tony Haws, "The Influence of Context" 25.

pilgrims are often moving in identification from the former to the latter, and this is perhaps one of the most salient and original "findings" of the present research.

4. The Role of Ambiguity in Fidelity

Another discovery of this journey through pilgrims' words has been the revelation of the "blank page" of creative theological ambiguity, upon which each pilgrim's spiritual discourse can be personally and alterably traced. These Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem and the Holy Land encounter Jesus Christ in story, in their own story, not in canonized place or doctrinal proposition. They have alternative shrines. Following Loughlin, they "allow the biblical story [of Jesus] to become [their] story", but against Loughlin's narrative orthodoxy, their own and different reality is *not* "overcome."¹¹ Empirically, pilgrims and psychiatrists can confirm that when the pilgrim's own narrative is overcome by the biblical story, a psychotic episode of decompensation can ensue. An authentic living of the biblical story will be marked by a sober consideration of whether Christ declares the "other" impure, or graciously becomes the "other". The difference between a "Trudy" (who is unable to resolve theological incongruity) and a "Pat" (for whom incongruity is an inspiration to compassion) is an essential difference, not merely a matter of degree. The creative ambiguities of a pilgrim legend are one thing; Jerusalem syndrome is quite another. A chronic inability to resolve interior and external discourses is certainly not the desired denouement of a spiritual narrative journey.

Pilgrims en route are not systematic theologians, nor are they conceptual rebels. In general, they speak close to orthodoxy even when they walk close to heresy, and somehow manage to practice fidelity in the midst of ambiguity. Pilgrim narratives are "faithful fictions". Although the God of the theologians can be conspicuously absent in modern Israel and Palestine, the pilgrims I spoke with never abandoned their witness to the vision of a divine companion on the edge of their gaze. Jesus, too, is present in his absence. Sometimes a pilgrim will have to jettison an image of an incongruously blond and radiant Saviour, only to encounter Christ in the more earthly faces of refugee camp children or in the flickering candles at Yad Vashem.

Much theological reflection on pilgrimage has tended to force the pilgrim into the mold of *kerygma*, or at least into an orthodox narration of the Christ event. Our research into pilgrim narratives has returned us to the "unpresentable" Gospel. Pilgrims do not proclaim; they relate or relive or reflect the Jesus story, each in her or his own way. And that story, now filled with fidelity and ambiguity, becomes the creed and the sacrament for a Church on the road. We have spoken here with pilgrims who relive the story of Jesus through their pilgrim legends; they bless with him, weep with him, and together with him they calm the storm. Others, however, take the journey a step further. They come to accept that "the story goes all the way down", that there is no "Christ out there" to judge and organize the world of symbolic language, and that it is only in the stranger's face, only in their own responsive acts of compassion, that the Christian will encounter God in Christ.

¹¹ Loughlin 37.

5. The Importance of the Pilgrim's Return

This research began with a sobering observation: that scholars have been writing about pilgrimage from every angle, except the pilgrim's own perspective. Sociological and anthropological focus on the "goal" has given everyone copious excuses to talk about the history and position of shrines and itineraries, without hearing the story and disposition of the pilgrims themselves. The present research has endeavored to correct this by accompanying pilgrims on the homeward path, by lending an attentive ear to the narrative that gradually breathes life into the structures of memory, and by patiently using an absorbent/observant approach to "see" the invisible traces of theological processes *as they formed*, and before they were co-opted by each pilgrim's local orthodoxy.

The pilgrim's return, then, has turned our attention to the sacred particular and to compassion. Here are pilgrim stories that tell of a courageous reading of Scripture that does not demand a fixed denominational scenario for salvation. By the Sea of Galilee, a pilgrim gives up a life-long dream of serenity, in order to help a fellow pilgrim in need. At the Holocaust Memorial, a pilgrim faces the Jewish voices from her past, and embraces them together with their pain. In Bethlehem, a pilgrim walks away from the famous star in the Nativity grotto, and listens to Palestinian students telling of curfew and imprisonment. In each of these narratives, the certainty of site is revoked by the ambiguity of encounter. In each of these stories, attention to the saving difference of the "other" is the visible sacramental sign of a journey to the invisible God of love.

6. The Pilgrim Conscience

Since a "visit" is in a real sense a "vision", the pilgrim approaches the Holy Land through perception. The pilgrim gaze is constitutive of the pilgrim conscience, wherein what was invisible is now visited, marked, acknowledged, celebrated, mourned, and acted upon. The realm of conscience is action, not doctrine. The eventual realization of a pilgrim's theological reflection in terms of a life lived in an imperfect world stands in stark contrast to traditional views of pilgrimage as culminating at a shrine, or returning elliptically homeward in reverential reverie.

Yet another key theological direction indicated by this research, then, is the role of conscientious change in the pilgrim process. In the case of a specific sample representing certain English-speaking pilgrims, mostly from the reforming traditions, radical moral transitions are not so much normative as highly symbolic, yet their effects can be traced in pilgrim's perceptions of "where God is" and "who God is". "God is not *out there* (in the shrine, creed, event or Church), but rather God is *in here* (in this particular situation, in this person near me now, in myself)."

The scope of this thesis has not been sufficient to examine the corresponding role of conscience and transition in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian pilgrim experiences in the Holy Land. It cannot be assumed that pilgrims from these other traditions are also learning to seek God "on the edge", to encounter Jesus in the present suffering and questioning of the "other", to enact and interrogate Scripture through personal story, and to openly share the "original absence" of Jesus in the Emmaus Eucharist. On the other hand, even as the generic lines between

denominations first harden and then erode, the old theological distinctions shift to some degree during pilgrimage. No researcher of the early twentieth century would have thought it likely that one day Protestant pilgrims would be seeking out icons, or finding solace on the Via Dolorosa, much less affirming that the chaos of the Empty Tomb might be something more than superstitious idolatry. Similarly, when future researchers listen to the *verbatim* reports of pilgrims from Greece, Russia or the Latin countries, surprises may be in store.

Further research along these lines may well reveal that the creative ambiguities of the pilgrimage process span not only ecumenical fissures but interfaith chasms as well. All religious communities, Christian and otherwise, are increasingly polarized. On one hand, we find the literal understanding of Scripture (Torah, Gospel or Qur'an), and the quest for absolute truth "out there"; on the other hand, we encounter the symbolic, metaphorical and relational interpretation and application of the "divine narrative", the search for its meaning "in here" - in our community, in ourselves. In the aftermath of modernism, pilgrimage can serve to bridge the widening gap between these two opposing religious trends. The Turners knew this, when they wrote that the secret of the pilgrim is the inward movement of the heart, and that pilgrimage is "externalized mysticism". It is interfaith mysticism, not doctrinal discourse, that will emerge as the common spiritual grammar of a new humanity. Today, with the promising and maddening age of modernism behind us, we must chart the subjective terrain and the sacred landscape of that secret way, or lose ourselves and our communities between secularism and fundamentalism.

Although their categories are derived to some extent from medieval models, today's pilgrims have accomplished Eliade's very timely task: they have transmuted the historical material of their journey into spiritual messages. Motivation, journey, shrine, encounter and return - all are *traced with difference and alterity*.¹² It is not Jerusalem's orthodox presentation of itself as the "holy city" that determines the pilgrim's encounter with the sacred. Rather, it is the ambiguous context, the unscheduled meeting, the competing discourses of other faiths and politics, the pilgrim legend and the alternative shrine that awaken the pilgrim conscience and inspire theological process.

The present thesis has not only challenged traditional attitudes and social theories of the pilgrimage process, but has gone a step further to propose a theological paradigm. In narrative terms, pilgrims comprise a "constituting community" (not a "communitas") of story-tellers who enact their own interpretations of Scripture. Not bound by Loughlin's orthodox narrativism, our pilgrim narrators are mobile and ambivalent. Their encounters in the Holy Land not only enact Scripture but interrogate it. In the process, pilgrims become disciples of a saving story.

Year by year, pilgrimage will continue to attract millions of Christians to the traditional shrines. Of all these, Jerusalem remains the archetypal doorway into the meaning of Scripture and faith for Christians. Yet, the sacred spaces of the Holy Land are dominated, fought over and (sometimes) shared by Jews, indigenous Christians and Muslims, atheists and zealots, politicians and peacemakers. The

¹² This is a central concept in Taylor's a/theology, and denotes the "interplay of identity and difference and of presence and absence" (*Erring*, 49-50).

conflicting discourses of their faiths and non-faiths are today more than ever part of our present realities. Increasingly, Christians who make the pilgrimage to the Empty Tomb will encounter the Absent and Risen Jesus in the incongruity of the "other". Increasingly, the meaning of the pilgrimage will depend upon that encounter, rather than on the assumptions and categories of the past.

Taylor declared the book of history closed. For Christians, does this mean the end of revelation and the triumph of nihilism? Or does postmodernism offer the telling of a living story long muted? As church communities struggle to live the teachings of Jesus, and (significantly) to imitate his self-giving life in the midst of the secular city, Christian pilgrimage can offer these same communities sacramental scope for the liberation of minds and hearts from pessimism, narcissism and exclusivism. Pilgrimage is also a refreshing context within which to interrogate the text of Scripture with a creative hermeneutic, and to counter the reduction of the text to its letter. As Christians and other people of faith come face to face with the brutal results of religious literalism and exclusive truth claims, we are called to respond with life-stories of compassion and "otherness". The alternative to compassion, as we are finally beginning to understand, is the rapid destruction of difference, and a consequent indifference to the lives and faiths of others who are unlike ourselves. Without the saving "otherness" of Christ in our pilgrim gaze, we will watch our narratives overcome by old/new creeds that offer only the static idolatries of texts and territories, closing the paths into the sacramental labyrinth of the divine milieu.

Wittgenstein called philosophy a "cure for itself". Perhaps the same might be said of a practical theology for postmodern pilgrimage. Undertaking a sacred journey may well be a valuable form of religious practice, precisely because it "cures you of religion by fully returning you to the human world."¹³ The moral and mystical value of this return to the present remains personal and subjective, and only a few of the pilgrims I interviewed were able or willing to name it. It may be that those "untypical" pilgrims who dare to do so, and further have the courage to act on the insights of their pilgrim conscience, bear the "vital symbols" of an inclusive, compassionate and fully humane faith, a faith that we can hope will some day be more broadly embraced and practiced.

¹³ Cupitt, *What is a Story?* 139.

APPENDIX A

PILGRIM VOICES *VERBATIM*

Selected Pilgrim Interview Transcripts

Interviews conducted by Henry R. Carse
in the course of thesis research

All pilgrim names are pseudonyms

Interview A

Interview with "Becky" (I.b)
Interviewed by Henry R. Carse (HRC)
July 28, 1999

"BECKY" WAS 65 AND RECENTLY BEREAVED WHEN SHE MADE HER PILGRIMAGE WITH A LARGE DIOCESAN GROUP IN MARCH 1999. SHE IS A RETIRED HEADTEACHER IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AND HAS TWO CHILDREN AGED 40 AND 38.

HRC: What was it that prompted you to go on this pilgrimage?

Becky: Well, I had been once before in 1981, which had been an extraordinary experience... An unexpected experience, actually, because we were in a very difficult parish and the one [*inaudible*] member of the congregation said to my husband – Sunday morning – that he thought I looked tired, and would we like to go to the Holy Land? We agonized about whether we should accept that. And the same morning a poor member of the congregation came to the door and gave me a bag to put washing pegs into... And it was a bit like the widow's mite, you see. So we thought well that had probably cost her more than ... what this wealthy businessman was... So we went. And we always said we would go back. Then when my life sort of disintegrated around me I thought well, all those things we'd planned to do we wouldn't... there wouldn't be the opportunity to do... And then I saw in the diocesan newsletter that there was this diocesan pilgrimage to the Holy Land ... And I thought... That I can do. I can actually go on my own to that because it will be within a community of people with like persuasion, not necessarily that I would find a soul-mate, or anything like that, but that I could go... So... I went really to fulfill a longstanding promise to myself in a context in which I would feel safe...

HRC: You saw yourself then as a pilgrim from the outset.

Becky: Yes, yes.

HRC: Not as a tourist but as a pilgrim?

Becky: I think the first time I went, I went... as a tourist. Initially you know, it was... and there hadn't been any preparation. This was just so unexpected, you know, and um... and the businessman actually gave us three places because we had a son at the university... and we had already booked the holiday, so we sold, you know, we turned in the holiday we booked and all four of us went. And it was actually the last time any holiday we had was just the four of us, because the children were 21 and 19 you know and that was that. Umm... When we got there, we were warned that a lot of people suffered from spiritual indigestion when they were there – by the tour leader – he was from Interchurch Travel. And he warned us to be careful about that. And it wasn't planned as a pilgrimage, obviously you came from all parts of the country and you didn't know anybody. And there was no preparation and for us especially no lead time into it at all. And when you got there... our daughter said, isn't it strange because it was like being in a country that you have already known...

simply because the names were familiar and everywhere you went you are surrounded by reminders of this happened here and that happened there...

And one of the most astonishing experiences had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the planned itinerary. And it brought home to us the very strong contrasts that there were between Jews and Arabs and the underlying tension. The first Sunday morning that we were there, we went for a walk in the morning, and we... the hotel we were staying was on the end of a... just near... in the Arab section, but it was in the outskirts of an Arab village. And we said to the people who were standing, the men who were congregating, is it all right if we walk through here? And we went. And there was a little girl on the roof and she said Shalom! And because I was working in the East End of London I was surrounded by people who were Muslim, and I identified her immediately as being Muslim, and I said Salaam! And when we came back, she was waiting for us. And she said, Come in! Come in! So this happened to be the end of Ramadan. And they welcomed us into their home, and effectively into their family, and we went... We went back to see them and it was something about that... Because my husband's family are by extraction Jewish and we had gone there... expe- you know, we carried all the guilt of the Holocaust and all of that and we felt it would be very Jewish and suddenly on the very first day we were there we had our whole ideas turned over. And so if anything it was a sociological journey.

HRC: In 1981...

Becky: In 1981. As well as profoundly moving. It changed the people that we were but it was an occasion when we were just thrown into it... without any preparation. And on this occasion there was the opportunity with all the preliminary meetings that we had, and the fact that I had that amount of experience so that I could myself prepare more for going on this as a pilgrimage.

HRC: The preparation is part of what made it a pilgrimage, and you also mentioned the fact that you were moving with a group of people who had, who were of like mind... So those... Were there any other elements that would distinguish the pilgrimage from the tour?

Becky: I think for me, if I speak entirely personally, there was a sense that I was going to see if I could find myself. That sounds incredibly selfish, umm... but it was, I think, you know I had been married for nearly 38 years and I had known my husband for over forty. And... at his funeral the bishop said we were an example of mutual dependence, interdependence and independence. And that was absolutely true. And finding I found it hard really quite hard to know who was me? And I thought I am going there because we had always promised that we would go back. And I am going there with what I know of the next lifetime, and the knowledge that had changed me. And I am going there to see I suppose if I can... find out who I am now... and what sort of peace I can find in myself I suppose, to be truthful...

HRC: After living together for 38 years and now... you were on your own and looking for yourself... Can you tell me what prompted you to think that a journey like this would be a key to finding yourself?

Becky: I don't know, I think sometimes one... well, I behaved kind of instinctively and without necessarily any rational... I saw this... in the diocesan newsletter. I wanted it. I can do this. Maybe this is what I need to do... and I... it wasn't any more rational than that. Just a feeling. An emotional response, if you like.

HRC: Do you... Can you describe what your general emotional situation was just before you saw this advertizement?

Becky: Well I had been rebuilding a life... You have to do that. I... I had a very, very busy life. As one expects... I had been a teacher all my life and for eighteen years – the last eighteen years - I had actually been the head teacher of large comprehensive schools with all the challenges that that presented. And I was immediately faced with a lot of challenges, I had to find somewhere to live, I had to move house, I had to find how to function as one when for so long I had been one of two. And... what do I do with all this energy that I have?... And I suppose I... I wasn't angry with my husband, at having died, umm... but I was... I suppose I was a bit resentful of the way that life wasn't quite the way I had expected it to be... And there were times when I was extremely emotional and there were times when I felt totally numb. And when I was emotional I wished I was numb and when I was numb I wished I was emotional. And I think I was very volatile. And I had, you know, I have a family, I have two children and four grandchildren. And I didn't feel lonely and isolated. But I sometimes felt acutely alone. And I never felt at any time angry with God that this had happened to me, but I quite often felt that he was quite a long way off... and what should have been a sort comfort to me wasn't always... So... sometimes I felt I was in the valley of dry bones, and sometimes I felt very drained and sometimes I felt I was substituting activity for living.

HRC: When you saw this opportunity to the diocesan pilgrimage, do you remember what your first reaction to it... your first responses...

Becky: I can do this! And I read it and found out that I couldn't attend the first meeting. And I sat down immediately and wrote a letter. And I didn't throw it out and change my mind! [*Laughter*].

HRC: You travelled by plane obviously from London to Tel Aviv, and I know there was some kind of a coach service...

Becky: Yes there was...

HRC: Was there anything about the journey, that... the practicalities of the journey that you remember at this point as being memorable in any way.

Becky: Just to do with me... I don't know why, but I got it into my head that the flight was on Saturday. And I told my family and friends that I am off to the Holy Land on Saturday. Then I went to the last meeting that [*pastor's name*] had in Brentwood, and people kept saying, see you on Sunday! See you on Sunday! And... it was quite funny because in the course of the meetings, on the very first occasion when I went to one of the preliminary I met somebody else who was traveling alone, and didn't, you know... so we sort of joined up together and it was very fortunate that it turned out in fact that we had the same sense of humor and we got on

extremely well, but we didn't know that... I mean we were just two bits of flotsam, if you like, that just happened to come together. And [she] said to me, when I said why do they keep saying that, we'll see you on Sunday – we're going on Saturday... And she said well you might be going on Saturday but everyone else is going on Sunday! [Laughter]. And so... I don't know how I had done that. I had just got it into my head. All the arrangements I had made for getting to the coach station were completely washed up! So I had to call a taxi to get myself to Colchester Station. And that was the most angst-ridden bit of it...

HRC: Just getting to the station...

Becky: What I was going to do if the taxi didn't turn up so I could get to the coach on time... But my son who lives in South London was saying, well that's all right if the worst comes to the worst you will have to ring me up and I will come and take you! [Laughter]. So I had that kind of umm...

HRC: That was very generous on his part...

Becky: So I mean in terms of the trip... I think there was also... I mean we had to go to Colchester... And meet the coach and although we had met together in a group there was no way they knew who was going from where... And... so when we met outside of Colchester Station we were very wary of each other. Eyeing each other up and thinking who was going... And I met somebody on the coach who was going with her brother and sister-in-law but she was actually a single person as well... so I realized that we were... and then there was somebody else... so there were quite a lot of us that we hadn't originally identified you know that this person is going as a single person and umm... It really was quite exciting actually watching who would get on where... [Laughter].

HRC: By the time you were on the coach it was already in a sense part of the pilgrimage, that you knew there were people there but you didn't know them personally...

Becky: That's right...

HRC: ...Getting to know them. Do you remember... the ah... I mean were there conversations, obviously there were conversations going on between you, or did you more or less just sit on your own...

Becky: Oh no. I saw somebody who was in a seat by herself and said, May I sit here? And began to exchange bits of life story, and why we were going and, umm... So in fact by the time we got to the airport... this person and I, and oddly enough, although we did see each other there, the next time we were together, just together, was on the way back! [Laughter].

HRC: Now, once you got to the airport you were met by the organizers themselves...

Becky: Well they were... In fact when we got on the coach in Colchester, [*pastor's name*], who was to be the bishop's senior chaplain – he was there to make sure we

were all there, so in fact the leaders were... our leader was with us from... you know the ones that we met at Colchester Station.

HRC: When you say our leader... was [*pastor's name*] with you in your coach throughout the time...

Becky: Yes he happened to be... I was on the coach with [*pastor's name*] and Bishop [*bishop's name*]; they were the leaders...

HRC: How would you describe their role?

Becky: They were shepherds and teachers... and friends.

HRC: In what way were they teachers?

Becky: Well, throughout the... You mean at the very beginning or throughout...?

HRC: Yeah.

Becky: Well they were both extremely well informed... and were very good at balancing information without giving you information overload. And they were very pastoral in the way they looked after us. And they were also very prayerful. I don't know what happened on other coaches but on the coach I was on there were from time to time readings from the Bible... and we would have time to pray and thoughtfulness as we just went round. And I think the balance was... it was very finely judged... because you never felt, I want to switch off... and some of the information that they gave has really influenced how I listen to the Bible or how I read the Bible or how I listen to sermons. On one of the first days when we went to, umm... Herodion. And [*pastor's name*] was telling us how Herod who has such a bad press and did all those bad things was actually a great builder and employed people who were at the forefront of technology and then Bishop [*bishop's name*] said we should not actually think of Christ as a carpenter, because we use the word *technon* – he was Christ the technologist. That's given it a considerable ah... umm... extra dimension, so when we had the umm... the preacher on Sunday, who wasn't our usual priest, talking about Herod and I had in my head, yes, Herod was a really bad man but like all of us he was a mixture, you know... Because he had this... and I wouldn't have thought that if I didn't in my head have a picture of Herodion and listening to [*pastor's name*] talking about the employment and all these technologists, and Bishop [*bishop's name*] saying remember that *technon* means a technologist, very skilled... Don't think it's just...

Just it... And they were also very open to... Excited about learning things together, because when we went to Hazor, [*pastor's name*] said about the gates being where the people... where the men in Bible times actually met to conduct all the business... Now I'm... in the process of writing a play about Ruth for the harvest here, and of course you know, ... yes "in the gates". But in fact I said to [*pastor's name*] when he said that, That's very interesting because when I was a girl, they used to say you could tell your fortune by reading the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, which has 31 verses. And you have to look at the number of the verse... and find out what it is going to tell you about your future husband or your future life... Now,

my birthday happens to be the twenty-third. And it's the verse about "and her husband will be well known within the gates." And I said this to [*pastor's name*] and when we got back on the coach, he said, Thanks for drawing my attention to this fact, you know, I never knew that... And we were learning together...

HRC: I had never heard that, that there are 31 verses, so one for each day of the month...

Becky: So you look at the one that [*Laughter*]...

HRC: That corresponds to your day...

Becky: [*Laughter*]. [*Pastor's name*] did not approve of the fortune telling aspect. He thought it was very good fun. I had always known that, by chance, because... So I think there was a learning... There was a way in which we were making an intellectual a spiritual and a physical journey together.

HRC: What about the physical journey? How important is it and do you feel that the physical aspects of the journey were what you had expected... or you think were deserving of a pilgrimage. What was it like physically?

Becky: I'm not sure I know how to answer that question, because of course the geography of some of it was already known to me... And I had rather expected... I mean I went with a degree of apprehension because I thought I am not the person now that I was when I went. Because the person who went last time went as part of a united family, and now that family has expanded significantly, it is still very united, but a significant member of it is missing and I didn't know how I would react to the things that had been significant to me the last time... So I was a bit apprehensive about the journey. If you are asking in terms of pilgrimage I wouldn't want to discount the value of going to the holy sites. What I found was that different ones meant different things to me. The last time I had been to Bethlehem the most significant thing I remember was that there was a notice about... "By order of the Military Governor" which was absolutely wonderful! [*Laughter*]. And I hated the Church of the Nativity. We went to see a play in the Shepherds' Fields, which had a degree of authenticity... It was derelict, and it was scrub-land, you know, it felt right. And we discovered that although the play ended early we could not find a telephone directory which would give us the number of the Hotel Panorama because it was only Hebrew... You know, it was so interesting an experience. Now we went to... the Shepherds' Fields this time meant absolutely nothing to me, they were too manicured, you know, didn't mean anything to me at all. The Church of the Nativity, which I remembered as being crowded and un-welcoming and... awful... [*Laughter*] overwhelmed me this time.

HRC: Why? What happened?

Becky: It was emptier. And I just... I drank in I suppose the sort of the lamp light... [*Pastor's name*] told us about it being the oldest church, something very profound about that, and... so I wouldn't want to discount it but I think things become differently. I am sorry if I am too anecdotal but I can only tell you...

HRC: Please go on!

Becky: When we went the last time we went to the Pilate's Pavement and at that time they told me it was the authentic pavement and I desperately wanted to take off my shoes so I could put my bare feet where Christ's feet had been. But I was too embarrassed to do so. And I regretted it thereafter. And I always promised myself that the next time I went, I would take my shoes off, whatever, and put my feet there. But of course when we are going up the Via Dolorosa and [pastor's name] tells us that this is now dated to 170 AD so it's not the pavement! So all of that build up. And then... when I was there, I thought, it really doesn't matter, and it was a very emotional perhaps really rather silly thing to think, you know, that I would have got something from putting my bare feet where Christ had been... Because as a mature Christian I ought really to recognize that everywhere I put my feet is where his feet have been. So although I wouldn't discount the physical geography because I think it can have quite a... profound effect on you, I don't think it is the important thing.

HRC: Are there any.. While we are on physical geography... are there any physical aspects to geography – or not – outside of Jerusalem or at any other part of the journey that spring to mind... any places which were of special significance...?

Becky: One of them in terms of how it makes me think of the Bible, we didn't even stop, we just went past... We went past a hill, and [pastor's name] pointed out that Zarephat was on one side and Nain was on the other... And it had *never... really... hit me* that there might have been... You know if you were a Jew and you knew all about Elijah, and the actual widow of Nain – is to *remind* somebody of something profound, something absolutely profound. The last time we went we weren't allowed to go to umm... Caesarea Philippi, they told us it was considered to be too dangerous. And I had never realized it... that great shrine to Pan. So I think you know... Yes, there were... It seems to me that part of Christ's message is related to where things happened and just... without having been there and having that pointed out I wouldn't necessarily have made that connection. So in that sense, Yes, the physical geography was important but only in illuminating... a faith or a spirituality that is already held.

HRC: Did you do a lot of walking?

Becky: A fair amount.

HRC: Yeah. Was there anything about the physical exertion... Was it... Do you think it was a difficult experience all in all or was it fairly well buffered and taken care of physically?

Becky: I thought it was fairly well buffered because I actually have two damaged feet because I was in a serious road accident so my left foot's got metal things up and screws through it...

HRC: Right.

Becky: And I... So I have got metal in my left foot. And then I tore my Achilles tendon apart walking in France and it frayed rather than snapped, so I've got damp rot in the right one and metal in the left one...

HRC: Do you set off the alarms at the airports?

Becky: [*Laughter*] No, unfortunately, I wish I did. It's not like a pacemaker... it would be nice if it did... But no I didn't find it too strenuous. I also think that sometimes what is worth doing costs you, physically. I would say that rather than physically strenuous I thought some of it was emotionally strenuous. I hadn't been to Yad Vashem... and I found that fairly emotionally draining...

HRC: In what way... the grief, the historical aspect, or... how was it emotionally...

Becky: Well, I think that umm... I have in fact spent part of my life working with Jewish people... I knew and loved one in particular who was the sole survivor of her family. My husband's family was Jewish. And we often... I mean, he would have the right to emigrate to Israel... he couldn't have taken me or the children [*Laughter*]... But... it sort of... to me... I actually looked in the hall where they have the flame and the names of the concentration camps and I looked at the ones where people I knew... the members of the family I know had died... But the one that was most significant to me was Drancy, because it's too close for comfort. I spend a lot of time in France and I know a lot of French people, you know it's just the English Channel that prevented us from doing that... And I wanted to walk around that by myself and remember the people I knew that had lost so many people, and to remember that there must be unknown members of my children's family umm... that died there, and... I felt... Why it was draining was I think that... You always like to think that if it had happened here you would have been the person that hid the Jews and helped them but of course most of us would not, and I think it asks you to examine yourself...

HRC: If there was someone in the group who felt emotionally very moved and wanted to talk with... a spiritual director or pastor, would they have turned easily to either Bishop [*Bishop's name*] or [*pastor's name*]?

Becky: Oh, I think so...

HRC: Were you aware of that actually happening?

Becky: No I wasn't aware of it happening, but I know that um... Quite a... a number of... [*Pastor's name*] for instance often asked me how I was... And with, you know... So did [*another pastor's name*] actually. I didn't know... I don't know [*the other pastor's name*] very well, but I have just got to know him because he is now our priest in charge... so I had met him before, but not to know him. But I think there was a care... When I said they were shepherds, they were genuine pastors because they... looked out for us to see if we were all right and I am sure that if they did that for me they did that for other people.

HRC: You mentioned some meetings with some of the people in the group. Did you have any meetings with local people, people outside of the actual pilgrimage... that were significant?

Becky: Oh yes. The head teacher of the Freres School.

HRC: Oh yeah. Tell me about that.

Becky: Well I'm a... because it is my scene... and umm... and [*inaudible*]. Going to Bethlehem University was an amazing experience, if I can go back to that... It was... We made a mistake and we got there late. And it was the end of their day and they were a bit disoriented because we hadn't been there at the time. There had been a genuine misunderstanding. And they took us into a room. And it was furnished with the very minimum. And I thought: This is a University! And it was a university in which there was a preponderance of women, because many of the men either had gone away or they were in prison or they were in trouble. And because I had worked in a school in the East End of London which was by the time I left 84 percent Bangladeshi Muslim, I was quite interested in how these Muslim girls were actually – you know they seemed to me to be very free – I learnt in London that actually wearing the *chador* doesn't necessarily mean that you haven't got a free spirit inside ... And they seemed to be very liberated, they were talking to me that they were students without any difficulty although it was only the male students who spoke to us... And umm... listening to them... I mean, one of the things they said, how very generous the student authorities were because they had five thousand pounds to spend on student welfare... And I thought... My school budget used to be getting on to three million pounds... and they were talking about five thousand pounds... and then there was no irony when they were saying how well looked after they were... And I asked how much money, how much funding they got from the Israeli government, and they said: Nothing. And it was such a bare and un-stimulating environment and these were young men with a passion to learn and a profound sense of injustice. And I asked about the position of the female students, and one of them said you have to understand that what motivates us is not religion, it is politics... And... it was a very illuminating experience. We were sitting in a bare, functional room, on uncomfortable chairs with those things you know you swing round to write on... and these three young men whose grasp of English was not necessarily as good as it might have been... But they were an oppressed group of people and anxious to communicate, and I came out of there thinking, Well, look at that wonderful building at the Hebrew University up on the hill there... And, you see, the contrast was very acute.

And the next day we went to the secondary school. And it was almost a disaster because the first talk was in a room with such a terrible echo that we couldn't, unless you were the front row which I was not, you could not hear a word of what he said. And then Bishop [*bishop's name*] said, Well, there are some educationalists among us they might have some questions they would like to ask. And we didn't dare ask any questions because we didn't know whether he'd said so already... And then he took us up to the top of the building where we had a reception and met some of the students... And he took us down... and I said to him, just in a private conversation, because this is a Roman Catholic brother with a school that is principally Islamic and I know what that feels like, and I just wondered about it... I asked him what was the

biggest trouble that he faced. And he said, Oh, the discipline, the discipline. And I said, Why was that? And he said, Before the Intifada they had no problems with discipline, but from the Intifada, these students were out on the streets and they were throwing stones and battling against the Israeli soldiers, and for awhile they felt king of the streets... and back in the school they did not want to buckle down to the discipline... the discipline that they had been able to exercise before, almost without thinking, because you know Roman Catholics sort of tend to be like that...

HRC: Yes, indeed, I know that...

Becky: ...Just was not there. And he said... And he looked at the school and he looked at the boys - and they were doing all of these out of school activities and everything - one of the young men we met wasn't even a student at the school, but was allowed you know to come in... and he looked at them with such eyes of love and said, but we're learning, we're learning... And I thought, This is where I should be! [*Laughter*]. You know... because I... then, then... you know when you've been... and you've... and I was, If only I were twenty years younger! [*Laughter*]. And it was just... there were just such patience, such love and such devotion and such care in what he was doing. The students themselves were lovely, I mean... Two of them that I talked to... One, I said, Are you going to be a teacher? And he said, Oh, no way! I am going to be a businessman! And I said, Well, you know, in here, in Jerusalem, or elsewhere? He said, Oh, in Jerusalem. My father has the concession for Cadbury's chocolate! [*Laughter*]. And they were... and they spoke English extremely well, as you will know they learn four languages there! But... I felt that this brother was not running the kind of school that he had expected to run, nor indeed that he had been running ten years ago. But there was no sense of defeat, there was a sense of acceptance of the justice of what they were doing. And the need to learn how to cope with tension... I thought he was incredibly impressive...

HRC: Do you remember his name?

Becky: I'm afraid I don't... most things have got lost in the... you know just backwards and forwards... I remember him but I don't remember his name.

HRC: Did you meet any Israelis?

Becky: [*Pause*]. No. I mean other than the people who were in the hotel.

HRC: You stayed in hotels on the Israeli side... in Jerusalem?

Becky: In Jerusalem it was an Arab hotel...

HRC: That was the Seven Arches Hotel on the Mount of Olives...

Becky: Yes. When we went to Tiberias, it was a Jewish... ho... an Isr-..., you know, and umm... and I did, because there was something that went wrong with the arrangements when we got to Tiberias, and umm... [*A friend's name*] and I found ourselves sitting at a table with two Israeli coach drivers... not ours! And they said to us, We don't want to talk politics, so we talked football [*Laughter*]. Which was quite

strange having [*Laughter*] these two women, you know, talking Manchester United, but they were quite categorical, you know...

HRC: No politics.

Becky: No politics. While we were waiting for rooms to be allocated... I thought that was a pity. Then when we went to swim in the Hot Springs in Tiberias, I met a couple from Tel Aviv who came regularly because they liked the Hot Springs, and somebody else who had a relative living in the London area... so other than that I didn't meet any... I mean I must have met some Israeli citizens because I assume that some of the Arabs were Israeli citizens. And certainly in the hotel at the Seven Arches there were men in the shops for instance who would tell you about... tell you their life story [*Laughter*], you know... Actually... but I didn't meet any... everywhere we went we met... we didn't meet Jewish Israelis, we met the Arab population.

HRC: The visit to the school that you described was on a day when there were different options...?

Becky: Yes, different people did different things.

HRC: And you chose... this is something that you chose...?

Becky: No, the coach... it was the coach we were on... But it actually suited me very well because we went to Bethlehem University and then we went to the school and then we went to meet the Archbishop of the Coptic Church. And that was an experience. Because umm... we met a woman there who told us quite a lot about the history of the Coptic Church, and the practices, which was interesting... And then we went into this wonderful throne room which was all light and gold. He didn't sit on the throne, he sat along the... having had this experience with the boy whose father had the concession for Cadbury's chocolates, it was wonderful that they served us lemon juice and Cadbury's chocolate! [*Laughter*]... And he was...

HRC: This was in the Old City?

Becky: Yes. And it was interesting to me because he was linking the Coptic Church with the Celtic church in Britain... And I originally come from the north of England, you see... so Lindesfarne is not very far, and I have been to Lindesfarne lots of times. And we were talking about the Lindesfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells ... the links between the Coptic Church and the Celts. And he... it was a very interesting experience. And I said to Bishop [*bishop's name*] I can't imagine that there being anything like this for the Archbishop of Canterbury and he said, It's not unlike the room at Lambeth Palace [*Laughter*]... I haven't ever been to Lambeth Palace... [*Laughter*]. So... different people had different options you see... so, umm... and that's how it happened. But... the coaches went... the arrangement was, that unless you particularly asked to go somewhere else, so some people went to meet a Jewish settler, you stayed on your coach and you went on the itinerary that the coach was...

HRC: It's interesting that you have not mentioned your guide.

Becky: Oh! Dunno. Uh... he was in fact very umm... I thought he was very restrained, compared to the guide we had last time, about the number of shops he took us into. But there was a sort of free afternoon after we'd been to Christ Church, and the instruction was that women who were unaccompanied must not wander around Jerusalem [*Laughter*]... by themselves. Very irritating! And so... Jamal decided that he would take us into the *souk* and he would take us shopping... because [*pastor's name*] had a thing about shopping, we were not supposed to go shopping! Our coach had a sort of ... about the shopping. So Jamal did actually take us to a shop in which they locked us in... it had two doors and they made sure we went one and they locked them behind us and we couldn't get out. There were only two shops that he took us to. Now my experience last time with the guides was that [*Laughter*] you went from shop to shop.

HRC: Yes...

Becky: He was a man who gave you the impression of a great sadness... He was extremely well informed. There was a little bit of tension, if I'm honest, I think, between [*pastor's name*] and... Jamal, about who was going to give the information... Not aggressive you understand, but the guide obviously felt, well I've got to tell them absolutely everything I know, but [*pastor's name*] would tell us certain things and then we'd get it again, the next time... But he was extremely helpful, I've already mentioned that I don't walk all that well, and getting on and off the coach that was actually the worst, not the walking on the flat, not the walking up and down, not the walking all around anywhere... that was actually fine... but the steps! And umm... but the interesting thing was I was determined when we got to Hazor, that I was going down that well!

HRC: Ah! [*Laughter*].

Becky: And I managed that... So I think that was... You know... I thought... I was quite pleased with myself. I managed to do at least as well as some of the people who are younger than I and fitter... Umm... but he was extremely careful about helping us on and off the coach. Very sensitive. But there were times for instance when we went and we looked over at Jewish villages, in Arab... the settlements... and [*pastor's name*] would say, I'm not going to ask Jamal to tell you what he thinks about this because it might be too difficult... Very courteous. Very well informed. Umm... As I say I had the impression that he was a man... in whom there was some great sadness but I didn't actually find out what that was...

HRC: Yes, I was going to ask you, did you find out anything about him – his family situation, where he was from...

Becky: No. Only what we were told originally.

HRC: And who told you about him?

Becky: Umm... [*Pastor's name*].

HRC: Did [*pastor's name*] introduce him at the beginning?

Becky: Yes. He introduced him to us. Told us that he was the best... one of the best guides... and... That was actually very different from the last time. I hadn't thought about it until you said that. But... on the last occasion umm... it was interesting because my daughter was about to go read archaeology and umm... we wondered if we could get through Hezekiah's Tunnel and we asked the guide that we had and umm... and he said he would arrange it with some relative of his... I felt we were... I can't decide whether that was because there were such a lot of us on this pilgrimage... I hadn't thought about it until you mentioned it... But we were closer to the guides on that time, because there were only twenty of us... and that did make a difference. And also the fact that we spoke to him about arranging something for us especially... and he brought along on that occasion one of his nephews and he explained to us about, umm... the difficulties of getting the permit to be a guide and umm... you know, in fact it was kind of clandestine that we went you know through Hezekiah's Tunnel because we... we'd umm... And it... so we did know the guide better. I hadn't thought about it. It might be that having a bishop and a senior priest on the coach umm... rather eclipsed him...

HRC: Did you ever find out whether Jamal was Muslim or Christian...

Becky: We never knew that. He knew a great deal about Christianity, and in fact one of the things that members on the coach said, do you think he's a Christian or not?... But we didn't... when you raised it, you know, I'm asking myself, why was it that we didn't know that? And I'm trying to think what...

HRC: Does anything pop to mind as you ask that question?

Becky: I think because we assigned him a secondary place... It's totally racist of us isn't it...

HRC: Well, let's explore it a minute. What... If you were writing a job description for a guide on a pilgrimage what would you look for? What would be... What would you... What is the role of a guide?

Becky: [*Long pause*]. I find that a very difficult question to answer. It almost seems to me that maybe without knowing... without thinking about it, we reduced the role of our guide... because we had two spiritual leaders with us, and therefore we really perhaps only used him as a provider of additional information... I'm appalled by what I've said to you...

HRC: It just something you've discovered... it's a very important discovery.

Becky: Because... We were sad when he left us and wished that he were going with us to Galilee...

HRC: Ah... he didn't go with you to Galilee...

Becky: No, he didn't go with us to Galilee... [*Long pause*]. I'm horrified... I, I really am quite horrified by what I'm thinking... Because it's almost as if we had him in Jerusalem because we had to have him. Whereas when we went to Galilee, we

were sad that he wasn't there - because we had kind of got used to him. But we didn't miss his input.

HRC: Yeah. When you went to Galilee you must have been joined by another guide.

Becky: No. The only guides we had in Galilee were Bishop [*bishop's name*] and [*pastor's name*]. So we had no official guide. [*Pause*]. I think we understood that you can't go round Jerusalem without an official guide, because he is the person who smoothes your way into various things... I... You know I am genuinely horrified by what I'm saying...

HRC: Very, very interesting... a very intriguing discovery... Well, what about umm... if, if you were designing a pilgrimage and you wanted it to be as meaningful as possible, and you knew that it would be required to have a guide, a local guide, umm... when you reached the Holy Land, and you had to list, you know, three requirements and you were able to recruit whoever you want to, what would be the three requirements that you would ask for...

Becky: I would ask that they were... a person who had umm... some religious awe - but I wouldn't ask for a Christian. But that might be because I have worked a lot with Muslims and I actually consider that my Christianity has been illuminated and helped by the very devout Muslims that I have known. But I would want somebody with a sense of religious awe. I would want somebody who was extremely well informed about where we were going, and ah... Can I have four things? [*Laughter*].

HRC: Sure! [*Laughter*].

Becky: And... you know, had good social skills... and who was fluent in English. But I think you could... good social skills are important, they can overcome some deficiencies, and I think Jamal did have those... I mean... the uh... his English was heavily accented, but the personality that he was and his way of looking after us, overcame that.

HRC: Did he meet you at the airport when you arrived?

Becky: [*Pause*]. I really don't know the answer to that question.

HRC: Did you arrive very late?

Becky: We arrived there... The person that I remember most at the airport was Joe Aweida. Of the Aweida Brothers. Do you know the Aweida Brothers?

HRC: Ah... The Aweida Brothers. Uhuh.

Becky: And the reason that I remembered him was because he was the one who had... umm... shepherded us around the last time you see... so it was like seeing an old friend, an older old... you know, [*inaudible*] Joe Aweida is still here! [*Laughter*]. And my children regard him as... you know he portrayed himself as the chief fixer of Jerusalem. [*Laughter*]. He did the last time. [*Laughter*]. So, I really don't know...

HRC: Did he... Did Joe Aweida go with you to the airport at the end of the pilgrimage...

Becky: Yes. He was at the airport at the end...

HRC: So he represented the firm...

Becky: Yes. Yes.

HRC: Well... that's interesting. In retrospect what do you think was the goal of your pilgrimage?

Becky: Personally? Complex, really. I suppose... and this is in contradiction to something I earlier said... but I suppose I felt that if I were going to find peace and reconciliation for the conflict that I was in, I might find it there. And... I wanted... to prove to myself I suppose that I could be thankful for what I had and confident about going on.

HRC: What was it like coming home, coming back... the homecoming...

Becky: Very stressful... [*Laughter*]... You asked me, about, you know what were the hassles about... Umm... I think I felt flat when I came home, but I mean, that happened with the journey because we were coming back late... and I thought what if I get into Colchester station and the last train has come and it's after twelve o'clock and there won't be any taxis, you know, how am I going to get home... And we were late. You know and we were coming up to about quarter to midnight as we were coming into Colchester... and I thought, Oh God! [*Laughter*], I hope we can get a taxi... And when we got there, a farmer who lives down the road who had been there with his wife and sister and a friend said, we're not to let you go home in a taxi... you're going to come home with us, and I said, well... He had had a friend bring a station wagon, to the station, you know, for him to pick up and drive home. And I said well, you know, where are you going to put us all? And he actually sat in the boot, so... put in by all the luggage and everything, so that they could bring me home. And he insisted on bringing me into the house to see that everything was okay...

HRC: The house had stood empty..

Becky: The house had stood empty. There was just such love and care.. and you know people who had been strangers when we'd gone in the coach to the station, I didn't know who these people were... When we got... I'm a fairly independent person you know and I mean the fact, well I would have got a taxi, and ... You are not going to do that at all... you are coming with us! And the care with which he carried things in for me and said now I just want to make sure that it's all right. That was something about the fellowship that builds up... I think the worship that had been carefully planned by the diocese was a significant part of the pilgrimage. None of it was haphazard. You know... we had our worship book before we went. But in fact, everything we did was within the context of prayer. And that made it so different.

HRC: Who took responsibility for that once you were there?

Becky: Well, different people. We all took turns at reading at various places. I had what was for me... umm... a very great privilege. I hold the bishop's authority to administer the chalice, and so I happened to be one of the people who did it at the Church of Peter's Primacy. And when I do that here...

[*Short Interruption*]...

HRC: You were talking about the prayer and worship and the security.. [*inaudible*].

Becky: Well... surrounded by the strong walls of the familiar... Because, the worship, you know we had had all through the preparation we had had worship within a format that we understood... In a... strange... place. But there was a sense in which that was a security. One of the things I do is that I am a bishop's selector for ordinands. And that's always done within the framework of worship because it's... it's like being inside a strong tower, to remind you what you're there for, and that you are secure... even if many of your... preconceptions or your expectations are different from those that you've anticipated. I thought that was... It was beautifully done. And it wasn't in any sense precious. It was very down to earth and appropriate, and I think we felt bound together by the worship.

HRC: What would have happened... Actually I hadn't thought of that ... What do you suppose would have happened if there had not been any prepared worship structure that you had brought with you... Do you think that ... you would have prayed, or?... What would have happened do you think?

Becky: I am sure that there would have been prayer. As I said earlier, on the coach there were occasions where we had spontaneous, if you like, Bible readings and prayers and it seemed appropriate, because of our tour leaders... But I think... the structure was important in my view... because we knew what we were doing where, and there was a kind of progression to it... And... it was designed so that we had some worship inside a Lutheran Church, we had a Communion at Christ Church... we... on the shores of Galilee... and I felt that the worship was appropriate and had been considered... Spontaneous worship might be very elevating at the time but I don't think it would have had such a good cumulative effect.

HRC: Do you think that individuals umm... prayed by themselves?

Becky: Oh, I'm sure they did... I mean, I said I wanted to walk... at Yad Vashem because I wanted to pray in certain ways that I thought would be very personal to me. And I am sure that there were occasions when we went into places... as for instance at the Church of the Nativity, which for me the last time it meant nothing and was a profound experience this time... I took the opportunity when we had actually been round to go round again and to do what I did, and I'm sure that everybody – well I can't say everybody – but the majority of people would do that.

HRC: Did... I want to come back in a moment to the homecoming again... but... did the pilgrimage raise any specific religious issues or religious questions for you?

Becky: [*Long pause*]. Raised lots and lots and lots of questions. Do you mean theological issues?

HRC: Yes, if that's what springs to mind...

Becky: I suppose... one of the issues that... It is an issue for me about whether every Christian should go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and I'm a person who goes quite often on retreat. And... I think that it's necessary for people to withdraw from the hurley-burley of their everyday life to increase their spiritual awareness. One person that I met on the pilgrimage goes to the Holy Land about every two years... and I... I wondered a bit if that wasn't a "fix". So... that's one of the questions that I ask myself is... am I deluding myself... you know I go on retreat... Is this my... is this the "junkie's fix", you know, to umm... And whether it's a profounder degree of spirituality to be able to continue devoutly without this withdrawing or without this visiting or... I'm not putting that very well... but I...

HRC: No, no... that's very interesting... I'd like to pursue that for a moment. Before you went on this last pilgrimage had you ever... had it ever occurred to you to question your frequent retreats in that way?

Becky: No, because you see... [*Laughter*]. Well, I used to have very busy life. I mean, I needed the silence... to keep going. And I needed... I think when you're a... the wife of a priest, you know it's often assumed that you get your spirituality by osmosis. [*Laughter*]. And umm... but sometimes there's a necessity to find, you know, I am me and I have this time ... I think it's more readily acceptable than it was when I was a priest's wife... Umm... It hasn't stopped me going I have to say [*Laughter*]. But I think I would... I... reflect more about what my purpose is in doing this... I never really believed that you become more spiritual by withdrawing from the world... But... umm...it might be a little self-indulgent. I wrote a lot when I came back – you know, you asked about what happened when I came back – but umm... one of my outlets is I write things and I came back... to silence really, you know, because I came back from the bustle of being with 120 people on three coaches and very bustling... ah – to silence...

HRC: Do you remember when you came, it was quite late at night... it was almost midnight, it was midnight! When you came into the house, do you remember what it was like...

Becky: I went to bed! This is my home. And... [*Pause*] That's a good question! When does a house become home? This is the only place I have ever lived in on my own... I lived at home until I got married... and then you know... And umm... I found the silence enveloping, and I needed the silence... I needed the space... So that ... And as I say I wrote a lot, I really needed to write...

HRC: Did you start writing right away?

Becky: No.. but I was writing inside my head. [*Laughter*]. And, umm... It was just before Easter, you know we were back sort of ten days before... And I had quite a busy Easter, so there was the observation of Holy Week and then I had my family here for Easter and as soon as Easter was over I was to Glastonbury because I was

doing a selection conference in the church... So there were several weeks... so the minute I came through the door, and then the people went... I found an enveloping and comfortable context... and I went to bed, you know, I needed sleep, because I was very tired [*Laughter*], and I did sleep for quite a long time. And I was thinking in my head. And then after about four weeks I started to write it down.

HRC: Who were you writing for?

Becky: Me.

HRC: And you're still writing?

Becky: Yes.

HRC: Were you writing before you went on pilgrimage?

Becky: Oh yes, I've always... I, I mean, I... Umm... I don't write for publication [*Laughter*]. I just write.. I write for me, it's a means of expression...

HRC: But this is not something which began after the pilgrimage...

Becky: Oh, no. No.

HRC: You were keeping a journal before. At church, did the pilgrimage affect your communication with people who were there who were not on pilgrimage, or... What was the interface there?

Becky: That's very interesting, see you have to careful not to be so enthusiastic that you turn everyone off... And umm... I think I was helped by the fact that we were going into Holy Week and Easter, and, you know, the church was busy, we were doing all kinds of things... And people asked me about it... I suspect that most people thought about it as a holiday rather than a pilgrimage, who hadn't been... It has affected the quality of my relationships with other people, that I know – you know, I said there were five of us from this...

HRC: On the pilgrimage...

Becky: In this... not from this parish, from this deanery. But when we've met there is a feeling of fellowship that wasn't there before, even though we didn't spend an awful lot of time together when we were there. But I think the probability is that most people in this parish thought, Oh, Becky's just been on her holiday to the Holy Land, rather than a pilgrimage. Though various bits come out at various times. And I have shared bits of it... A fortnight ago I said... ten days ago... the readings were about Jacob's Well at Beersheba. Now I am one of the people that went to Beersheba. And...I will never think about Beersheba in the same way again. Because as we went into Beersheba... I...the photographs we took of umm... of... Abraham's Well – it's got Coca Cola signs coming out at the top... And as we went into Beersheba there was a MacDonald's on the corner. And it was beautiful because it had "MacDonald's" in English on this bit and then it had "MacDonald's" in Hebrew on the other, so it was perfectly symmetrical you know, because left to right

and right to left. And I did say to somebody in the congregation, When you were reading that bit about Beersheba, Ah, I'd like to tell you what modern Beersheba is like. Their response was: Did you manage to get pictures without the Coca Cola? And I said, Well in the end I didn't try. Because I felt when Abraham had gone to Beersheba... he'd gone... he was somebody importing a culture and a different kind of faith, so he was changing the place... In an odd kind of way the MacDonald's sign and the Coca Cola was an indication that that is a continuous process. It doesn't affect the reality of what is central to what we believe, but it shows us that this has to operate in a changing world.

HRC: What did they say to that?

Becky: Well, it happened that in the evening we had a special service and we had the same reading and she said to me: I could hardly keep a straight face... [Laughter]. But I... I mean... I have tried not to give people - you know, indigestion, by talking about it... Where it has come up naturally...

HRC: Very wise. Are there any other theological issues that spring to mind?

Becky: One is the very obvious one, it's about, you know, if you say, where is God? Not in the Holy Land, exclusively. And I think it's... umm... No, that's actually a part of Abraham too, isn't it, finding that God moved and was not rooted in a place. I think it would be dangerous if we thought, you know, as some people do, that we find God in the church, rather than in his world. I felt that God was... it was as likely... we were as likely to find God in MacDonald's in Beersheba as you... You might have a heightened degree when you ah... you know, I mean the Church of the Holy Sepulchre - I'm not personally, it's not a totally emotional thing for me that... but umm... I think that the theological question about "Where is God?" is... the answer to that in my view is where you are. Being in the Holy Land heightens my awareness of all sorts of things but I did not feel that God was more present in the Holy Land than he is in other places...

HRC: I would love to go on... But we shouldn't take more of your time. I'm just so thrilled at many of the things that you have said... So, thank you!

Interview B

Interview with "Dan" (I.j) and "Trudy" (I.k)

Interviewed by Henry R. Carse (HRC)

August 3, 1999

"DAN" AND "TRUDY" MADE THEIR PILGRIMAGE WITH A LARGE DIOCESAN GROUP FROM ESSEX IN MARCH 1999. HE WAS 68 AND SHE WAS 65, BOTH RETIRED. THEY HAVE FOUR CHILDREN AGED 33 TO 42.

HRC: So... Why don't you tell me a bit about yourselves and what motivated you to go on this pilgrimage in March...

Trudy: Well, I've always wanted to go to Israel. From about thirteen years of age. And... thought it was out of our range. A couple of times I did ask - when we were going on holiday with relatives, which we did on a yearly basis, to go abroad - I did ask them if they would come to Israel, because it was on my heart... But it was dangerous, you know, and they thought, No... there's no way we'll go... I'll go anywhere, but not Israel! And so... And then as the years went by, we thought, Well, we're never going to get there... And it's very costly, you know, the price was going up. And we just felt we were never going to make it. And then the opportunity came for this particular pilgrimage. And we prayed into it to see whether God wanted us to go. We felt he did, but we didn't think that we'd be able to raise the 2000 pounds that was needed... And we weren't... Dan had been made redundant and wasn't working, and he hadn't retired... and...we just thought that we weren't going to be able to do it... So we prayed into this again... and I really desperately wanted to go because I felt that it was like a last chance... And we asked God if he really wanted us to go would he help us to find the funding... And we left it in his hands. And we prayed this for about three months, didn't we... And ... Suddenly on Dan's birthday on the fifth of June last year, an envelope fell onto the mat... addressed to him. I took it up to him, he was in bed, and I was getting ready for work... I took it up to him, just with the other mail. And all of a sudden he got up real quickly, and I thought something was wrong with him and I ran up the stairs... [*Laughter*].

HRC: You don't want to scare your wife that way...

Trudy: And I ran upstairs and I said, What is it? And he said, Look at this. And then he burst into tears. And I kept looking... I didn't know whether to read the letter or look at him... And when I read, it was a check for some redundancy money which just covered... over covered it, with spending money and everything, and he looked at me and he said, God's answering our prayers, and it's a birthday present from the Lord, that we can now go. Immediately he rang, didn't you, and booked our flights... And from that day on we knew that God was... you know, great things were going to happen to us...

Dan: It was five years after I had been made redundant...

HRC: Five years after!

Trudy: That he got this redundancy money – which was something we weren't expecting...

HRC: And the pilgrimage was in March; and when did this check arrive?

Trudy: June. The fifth of June. Which gave us enough time... There were some vacancies... We didn't think there'd be any vacancies, and there were... And when we rang, [*pastor's name*] was delighted... You will be coming; I knew you'd be coming! And that was so good. And leading up to the time... At the time... You know, it was getting closer... Although I had desperately wanted to go, I had been ill a year previously, I had a gall bladder operation, had gall stones removed, and I still wasn't in top form you know... And I thought, What if this happens and what if that happens, while we are out there, you know. And then there were all the injections to have and I felt, I really don't want this, but I prayed again, and I became comfortable with that and felt that God was, you know... it was right... that he did want us to go. And we had the most amazing time... It was...you know... Now looking at it, I think it is not a "once in a lifetime"... We do have to go again, because there is, you know, walking in Jesus' footsteps... Actually the most amazing time for me was on the Sea of Galilee... We had been asked... People were asking us if we would like to read... Who would like to read? You know, do a reading or a Scripture of some sort. And I hadn't a great... You know I hadn't put my hand up or said I wanted to go, and then this particular day... it was a couple of days before this trip, and [*pastor's name*] called out, Right! I need two people, come on, who will do it? My hand just shot up and I said, Me! Me! Me! [*Laughter*]. And he looked at me and said, I've been waiting for you to say you would do it, but you didn't, you know... And I said, I don't know why I said it, but I will do it now that I've put my hand up... Anyway... When we got to the place where I was supposed to do it he came over to me and he said, umm... [*organizer's name*] has already chosen someone to do that reading... And I said it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter if I don't do it. The following day was the Galilee one and he came up and he said... just before we got onto the boat... I can't travel across the sea, and even going across to France, which is only a short trip you know, and I'm sick... We were on a cruise once, and we had to get off the cruise at Gibraltar because I was so ill... So when we knew we were going on a boat, I thought, Well, I'll go back by land... Then I thought, Well, I can't possibly do that because Jesus rowed across here, sailed across here, and I need to do it, you know... And so I prayed that God would give me strength to do it and I wouldn't be sick. And we were both quite concerned because Dan thought, Well, she's going to ... all the way up, and I'm going to lose out... [*Laughter*].

Dan: Trudy can't even go on the ferry at Woolwich... [*Laughter*]...

Trudy: Which is just a tiny ferry... Anyway, we got on the boat... and I just prayed for a little while on the boat, and [*pastor's name*] came up and said, Would you do the reading? And I said, Well, what do you want me to read? And I thought, How am I going to read? You know, I am just controlling myself! It's really windy, really windy! The boat was tossing from side to side... Yeah, and I hadn't a jacket, I'd only got a little jacket, and [*pilgrim's name*] one of our friends, gave me his big thick raincoat, because it was really blowing and the sea was really rough! And he [*i.e. the pastor*] said, You're going to read "Jesus Calms the Storm"! And I said, Well I need that, you know, I really need that! [*Laughter*]. Anyway, I wasn't sick,

and I stood up. And as I stood to read... [*pastor's name*] gave me the Bible, and I just placed it in my hands, and the sea stopped, it was immediately calm. Nothing happened. And I just read the reading, and it was so amazing... I didn't read it really; Jesus spoke through me... And at the end of the reading, I went to sit down, and the boat started to really go again... And it had been completely still... And everybody remarked on how peaceful that was for the reading...

Dan: Somebody sent us some photographs... Before you were reading... and when you were reading... One was all... whitecaps... and the other was all deadly calm.

Trudy: I'll have a look in a minute, I think I took it upstairs, but I must show you them because they are... They are umm... You know, really... It's really strange. It is definitely, you know, a miracle...

HRC: That's really something you remember, obviously...

Trudy: Absolutely. It wasn't just the things I remember, it's things I've been able to bring back, that I've been able to share with people, you know, the experiences that we had... And the *sacredness* of the place, the God-centered parts, you know, the times that Jesus was totally with us... In, umm... Dominus Flevit... Yeah. I was so close to Jesus there, I simply wept, the whole time... I just felt his tears... You know, umm... And I've been able to bring things back... Like the Bible! It's a picture book for me, and somebody said to me only recently... You've made the Bible not only come alive for yourself, but you've made the Bible come alive for me by the descriptions of the gates, and... And that is the main thing for me, that I've been able to share with people back home, and ... To me that's the best part... It was being able to... because I'm not the kind of person who usually can share... I'm quite introverted in that way... with Jesus... You know, he's in me, and I like to keep him to myself... [*Laughter*]. And although I try to be evangelical, I find it difficult... Not like my husband who can... And yet I've been able to do just that in a quiet way, you know, to bring it alive for other people, it's a wonderful thing for me... in my thoughts, you know... It's been an amazing experience and one that I'm glad to share.

HRC: I can tell. You have a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for it.

Trudy: Yes, I do.

HRC: Dan, what about you? What would you like to say about yourself and what motivated you for this pilgrimage?

Dan: Most specially I think it was my wife motivated me... Umm... Yes, it's not the place I would say that I've always wanted to go to all my life... It's a place... since I became a Christian that I've always wanted to visit... I found it... in many ways very, very stimulating... really terrific. Walking up the steps at Caiaphas' house... Walking down didn't mean much, but to turn around and look up and, thinking that these are the steps that Jesus walked up... Yes, I found that, you know, very, very moving... umm... almost in tears. Other places that maybe I *should* have felt the same way I didn't... Jesus' tomb... the Holy Sepulchre, I found, to me it was very, very gaudy, almost commercialized, I mean... The priest who stood at the door,

he charged you... twenty... something, I forget, what was it? – twenty shekels or something for a candle, which he put on the altar and he lit, and as you walked out the other end he blew it out and put it under the counter, and so on... you know [*Laughter*]. Umm... That sort of thing made me think that perhaps it wasn't as Jesus wanted it... umm... It made me wonder if it really was the place. I found more affinity with the Garden Tomb, and... that was very, very moving. I found that... mainly in the Holy Sepulcher you have the seven different churches. And of course the Ethiopian and the Syrian churches weren't working together. As a result, the Syrian part of the church was falling away, eliminated... and, that would make me cry, thinking that even in the most holy of holiest places, the Church can't work together, so what hope is there for the Church outside of Jerusalem?

HRC: A sobering thought.

Dan: It is.

HRC: Was there anything that was happening in your life before... Obviously, I have just heard a little bit about... something of the prelude at least from the point of view of what happened in June. Was there anything else that was going on in your life or in your lives which might have prompted you to make this pilgrimage?

Trudy: We had become Christians about ten... I've always believed, and I've had experiences with Jesus previously, as a child and growing up... We sort of stepped back in our faith when we had our children, umm... And I... And as the years have gone by, it's only now, about ten years, since we've really, really become Christians. Before, we were religious. And the Holy Spirit came upon us about six years ago. And it's from that time that I've really needed to see where Jesus was born... And my one desire... We hadn't been on holiday, for about ten years since our parents died. And my whole desire, my one desire was to be where Jesus was born, to see where he died for me, where my sins were forgiven, and that I could actually associate, when you've been, you know... Prompting us to go was also... umm... that a couple of friends of ours, they also... she had always wanted to go, and she wanted me to go with her, just the two of us. But I knew that this was not a God-given thing, just the two females to go, but that the men needed to be brought in on this, the husbands needed to be aware of our feelings, and to be part of where Jesus was. Not just so that we'd come back and talk to them, but they were with us and they actually sensed what we sensed... And I spoke to her about that.. and she... the same thing happened with her. We as a group, the four of us had prayed, that God when he wanted us to go, he would supply the funding, for they didn't have the money either, and God gave them the money as well.

HRC: So they also went?

Trudy: They came over...

Dan: They also went. They came with us, yeah. No, I think, yeah... I think... From '94 I spent most of my life talking to strangers about Jesus, and I was sure it was time that I went and saw the actual Holy Land. I hoped so many times to walk in the steps of Jesus and to continue... I never really thought it would be an actuality as it was...

HRC: Did you have a sense when you arrived and when you were there that you *were* walking in the steps of Jesus?

Dan: Yes. I won't say every day. There were days we definitely felt... the days at Dominus Flevit, at Caiaphas' house, at Mensa Christi, and around the Galilee area, at Capernaum, at the Mount of Beatitudes, that you really felt that you were walking in Jesus' footsteps...

Trudy: I just felt that I needed to have an intimate one-to-one relationship with him. And I had it here [*gestures toward heart*] but I needed to be where he had actually been, where he had walked, where he had actually rode across the sea... I needed to be so close to him, you know, in intimacy, that I needed to be where he had been.

HRC: And you had that feeling when you arrived there?

Trudy: Absolutely. When we arrived, and we went to the Mount of Olives hotel, that first night, it was very late, and [*pastor's name*] said, Would you like to look over Jerusalem? And he took us down, and I was just overwhelmed with his presence. To such an extent I felt that I could reach out and touch everything... because he was there. I felt he was there. And I actually saw him, umm... When we went to, umm, what's it called where the Muslim... where the Muslim church is? We went to the Wailing Wall, and I'm not a Jew, yet I felt the need to put a note in the Wall, and I did do that. There was only a few of us did this, of our party. I was at the Wailing Wall, and then we were going on to the Rock, the Dome of the Rock, yeah? And we went up there, and I didn't want to go into the Muslim place, so everybody else went in and I sat on the steps outside with my back to it and I was just praying... And suddenly I saw Jesus, I really saw him, he was there. And he had his hands out towards me and he was weeping. And I knew... you know... I was with him. He was so close. I could have touched him. And it was a most amazing time, a wonderful time. It wasn't imagination, he truly was there, no doubt... And so to me he was with me, you know? I didn't go in, but he still came to me.

HRC: You said that you didn't want to go into the Dome of the Rock. Would you say a little bit more about that ...

Trudy: I just don't... I just don't think that it is right that Christians should go into a place where... another god is worshipped. I believe that God is unhappy and I believe that is why he wept... Jesus wept. Because we turn our backs on... we just accept our faith... and he is the only God, and Jesus is part of him, they are Trinity. And he's not accepted in the Muslim faith, and I just felt that it was wrong for me, personally, I'm not talking about anyone else, but for me personally Jesus didn't want me to go in there, and be associated with somebody who didn't believe in him.

HRC: Dan, did you feel the same way, did you go in, or stay...

Dan: No, I went in.

HRC: What were your feelings about that?

Dan: Well, it's strange, everybody said, you must go in, it's such a beautiful building. Umm... And I didn't find it beautiful. Umm... I did go underneath the cave... where Abraham took Isaac... and of course that means something, because it is part of the Old Testament. I saw it... I don't think I have a desire to go see it again... I went in, I thought, you know, I need to see it...

HRC: Did you discuss this ahead of time?

Dan: No.

Trudy: Because I didn't know... You see... we went up and... It was awkward, we were all walking towards it, and I... was so silly... I said to [*pastor's name*]... he was beside me, and he said, You'll love this, it is beautiful, it's absolutely stunningly beautiful. It's the most beautiful Muslim church. And as he said it, I looked at him and I said, We're not going to a Muslim... temple, are we? And he said, Yes! He said, Of course we are, they're lovely people! And I said, They don't believe in Je... I could not *believe* I was walking with this man... I was... I just couldn't speak to him... and I was trying to say without crying, But you can't do this, and I said, We can't go in there, we can't go in there... It's not... They don't believe in Jesus. But he said, But they're lovely people, and I said... you know... He said, They just believe he's a prophet. I said, That's right! They don't believe he's a part of Jes... I couldn't get the words out. I was fumbling for words, and he said, It's okay, you'll love it, take your shoes off and... And I said, I could not take my shoes off in a Muslim... I was incensed, actually. And I looked at everybody, Dan had gone, everybody had gone. They had looked at me and they had gone. And I felt totally alone and I sat on the wall... and I just prayed, God show me, am I doing the right thing? Do you mind if I go in there? And I felt that he was saying, No, you know, not to go in there. And they all came out and I was still sitting on this wall, and everybody went, you know, they just left. And was still sitting there, and [*a friend's name*] came back and he said, Come on Trudy! And I said I can't go with you, [*friend's name*], I just can't, you go, but I can't. He said, Are we coming back this way? I said, I don't know, but I'll watch you, and when I see you, I'll run ... And he said, Please don't stay here on your own, come back with us. And I could see he was disturbed, you know. So I said, Okay, I'll walk with you. And I walked. And as we got to the other temple, the big one, [*pastor's name*] said, Trudy, you must come in here. And I said, I can't come in there, please don't ask me to, and I'm really sorry that I'm saying this to you but I can't do it. And that's when I went and sat on the steps with my back to it. And there were... And I just prayed. And he came. Jesus came in front of me and he was with me, and I believed at that time that he was with me because they had all gone in. I don't know, this is how I see it, you know... And I didn't mean... I did say, umm... I couldn't talk to Dan, I believed that those that were closest to me were unclean, and I was absolutely sick, sick to my heart... I couldn't eat when we got back to the hotel, I couldn't *bear* to be with... in their presence, and I just kept crying... I did talk to Dan that evening and he said, Well, it's you. You imagined you saw Jesus, or if you did he was weeping over you because you didn't go in. And I said, No, Dan, that's not how I see it. Anyway, in the end, I felt I've got to talk with somebody, you know... And when we got to Tiberias I just asked [*pastor's name*] if I could speak to him. And [*two friends' names*] were there, and Dan, and I said, Look, I have to tell you that I feel unclean

being with you, because they... apparently, you see they said, Well we've noticed you don't talk with us... What is it? And I...

HRC: How long had passed between the day...

Trudy: Three days. I just... I just couldn't do that...

HRC: Do you mind telling me about the conversation... Obviously anything that's personal, that, you know... I remind you, yes, that this is not for citation, this is confidential, and I am more interested in your responses to the situation than I am in the organizers or the people in charge, you don't need to name any names, but I would be interested, also from you, Dan, about the conversation. You were there... in that conversation?

[Note: In this paragraph my use of the word "citation" was a slip of the tongue; I intended to say "attribution". The consent form signed by all participants in these lengthy interviews specifically states that "materials recorded may be used for academic research, and/or for future publication." In a follow-up letter that these participants received, I further clarified that "if I use your words in citations in any form... I will not be attributing them to you." I am confident that all the pilgrims I interviewed knew what I meant by "citation" and what I meant by "attribution", and that I would cite some of their words in writing, while maintaining their anonymity. For the full text of the consent form and subsequent letter, see Appendix B.]

Dan: Yes, I was.

Trudy: Yeah, I just felt that I couldn't talk to you, didn't I, and I said...

HRC: For three days...

Trudy: You're unclean and I can't have you near me, and he was upset and he was incensed at the fact that I was saying this... And I prayed and prayed... I spent hours praying to Jesus to show me what to do... And in the end I felt that he was saying to me... Well, you've sort of made your point... You have to forgive and you have to repent of being unhappy with their presence... So I just said to him, Look I'm sorry for the way I've behaved, but I still believe that you are all wrong, all of you, that did that and I believe that Jesus is not happy with it... Umm... And he said, Well you must tell the others! And this... It was a God-given opportunity, because we'd moved into the hotel, the Holiday Inn, and we weren't given a room, Dan and I. And everybody had gotten their room apart from us and another couple, and I went up to the manager and I said, Look we've been here for three and a half hours, we've been travelling all day, it's now six o'clock at night and you still – no it was about seven – haven't given us a room... And he went away and he said, I'll find you one. And he came back and he said, This is your room, and he gave it us, and he apologized profusely. And when we got up there we got a suite of rooms, we got a lounge and a *huge* bedroom, we had the most wonderful place. And I thought, That can happen... They can all come in for a – this evening – for a coffee, and I can talk to them, you see... But the one stumbling block was [*girl's name*]. Young [*girl's name*], she's only fifteen, [*pastor's name*]'s daughter, whom I'm *very* close with... she's more like a grand-daughter than a... and a friend... and I thought, What are we going to do

with [*girl's name*]? Because I don't want her involved in this. She had said to me... When they all came of the Dome on the Rock, she came up to me, she said, Trudy, why didn't you go in? And I just said to her, I don't believe Jesus wanted me to, [*girl's name*], and that's why I didn't go in. And she put her arms around me, and said, Oh! and kissed my cheek, and that was it. Yeah. So I didn't want her involved in this. And I thought, What are we going to do? Well, God was really good, because that night, she was very tired, [*Laughter*], for some unknown reason she couldn't stay up, and [*pastor's name*] said, Well you're tired you can go to bed, we're just going up to Trudy's... And they came up, it was [*pastor's name*] and [*two friends' names*] and Dan and myself, and we sat down with our coffee, and he said, How have you found it this time, and I said, Look... He said, Are you happier now? And I said, I have to tell you... And I just went into it and said, you know, that I didn't come with you and I'm sorry if I've hurt your feelings but I do believe that God wanted you to be cleansed, and I didn't think you were clean, and I couldn't... And they said, Well we knew something was wrong, we knew because you definitely kept away from us... And I apologized for that, and at the end of it all, I said, Well, you can make your own decisions, and I don't know, I don't want to know what your decisions are, but I do believe that you need to repent and to ask Jesus to forgive you... Umm... because I believe you did something that he didn't want you to do. But unless you see it for yourself, you know, there is nothing you can do... I said to [*pastor's name*] I'm sorry, you're my ex-vicar, and I'm telling you... I don't know how you're feeling about me speaking to you about this.... And he just said, If that's what you saw, then I believe you. Because he knew that I'd seen things before, and he'd tested them, and they'd been right, and he said, If that's what you saw, I believe you. You know, we do what we feel... And I've never told anybody what I've just told you...

Dan: Yeah, that's right...

HRC: I'm very moved and very honored that you should feel secure enough to tell this story... I think it is a very important story, and a very important event... I'm obviously... I'm not here... I'm not here to act... Which is probably why you can tell the story... I am not here to act upon it... I'm not a member of the group or the organizers or anything, I'm only here to listen. And that's... That's the entire reason for my being here, that's my vocation at the moment. Dan, how would you reflect on what happened?

Dan: Well, I had sympathy with Trudy, and what happened to Trudy, and the stand that she took... But, I never saw it that way. I believed that to reach those people you've got to try to understand them... You can't understand them... it's very hard... It's even harder in this country. You're stopped in so many ways from trying to live with them... Somehow we're going to have to try to reach everybody, and get them to believe in the Trinity. I firmly believe that that is one of our duties, probably our main duty on earth, is to bring other people to Christ. And the only way we can achieve it is by trying to understand them, understand where they're coming from...

HRC: Were you aware of thinking that as you went into the Dome of the Rock, or is this reflection, thinking back on the event...?

Dan: No, I went in to see... And the building really impressed me as some... in some degree...

HRC: Were you very surprised afterwards to hear from Trudy what had happened and her feelings about this, or did you have a sense at the time...?

Dan: No, I had no sense at the time... And I was surprised, yes.

HRC: My... My feeling is that this was a *very* important event in your pilgrimage...

Dan: It was the *most* important event...

HRC: Yeah, very central.

Trudy: Yes, it was. And it's something that I haven't shared with anybody, because people don't understand.

HRC: I'm very glad you shared it...

Dan: I think one of the most important times for me, this is a strange one, is... [*pastor's name*] and I both had our bags ruined in the flight coming over... And we had to go, and... go to a place somewhere on the other side of Jerusalem somewhere... thirty-five minutes drive away... And we got a taxi driver, who was an Arab, a Christian Arab taxi driver, and I think, umm... he took us one way and brought us back in another, and he spoke to us all the time, and he showed us areas... he showed us areas of 1966, and told us about Hussein and how he... what he did for Jerusalem, what had happened since. Umm... And I think that was the important time, it showed me very, very much... umm... the strife, the terrible strife that is still going on. It's almost like South Africa's apartheid... And I felt very, very sorry for the indigenous people of that area, who are... who are not most of the Jews who are there, but who are the Christian Arabs and the Muslim Arabs. And I felt very, very sorry for those people.

HRC: Did you... This is an encounter with a taxi driver, whom you met by accident or by chance. Did you have any meetings which were part of the program which introduced you to the same themes, or the same questions?

Dan: [*Pause*] Yes, I think we did. I think when we visited the Caritas Hospital those questions came up again in my mind. And the fact that there were quite a number of hospitals around in Jerusalem, but not for the ... not for the Arabs, not for the indigenous people of the country. They had to do something different, and here was this man from Switzerland, and was doing a really wonderful job amongst the Arabs.

Trudy: And our guide, Sam, our guide. He was a Palestinian Christian, and he told us a little... We had to draw it from him, you know, about his life. And that was a... you know, it opened our eyes...

HRC: What did you learn from him?

Trudy: About the... Palestinians can only go into parts of Jerusalem, that their cars are different, their number plates are different, and they're not allowed to do... And there is no [*inaudible*] for them... so many little things... He never complained. He accepted that that was how things were. He doesn't live in Jerusalem, he's just now a guide, he goes all over the place, he went to Germany, speaks lots of languages. His father sold some land, didn't he, to put him and his brother through school. His father... He's not a poor Palestinian. And to see the little children, you know the little children that are asking for money – all the time? We have two grandchildren that are dark. They are not Arabs, but they're descended apparently, from an Arab... Our son-[*in-law*] is [*Middle Eastern name*], our son-in-law, and apparently from generations back in his... and I mean generations – great, great, great sort of thing - grandfather was an Arab. So we've got two grandchildren, one's blond, but the other one is dark. And he... there were little boys out there, weren't there, and they kept asking us for money and we were told not to give them money at all... And I was... you know, I wanted to give them, and Dan told me one day, I know why you want to give them, because they all look like [*grandson's name*], don't they. [*Laughter*]. It was just that they're dark. And I just have great sympathy for the Palestinians, I mean... But I just... I didn't realize until I went, that there was that dividing line between the Palestinians and the Jews. I just want so much to bring them together, because... and yet in the Bible...

Dan: It was Sam, he said that... his badge he wore as a guide allowed him into places, that if he took that badge off, he wouldn't be able to go in, he could be shot for being in there. Which seemed so wrong, because why shouldn't he go and worship his God in the same place as anybody else... And it's very... very sad...

Trudy: But then we've got that sort of all over the place, haven't we... I just didn't realize how poverty-stricken the Palestinians were compared to the Jewish people. I just wish desperately that they could... could be as one. That they could share... You know, the God-given place, because it was given by the Lord, and if only they could share it together, and not... just because one's a Jew...

HRC: It'll come. Give us some time.

Dan: I thought we were going to have a change this time, because there was an Arab put up for government, but backed down at the last moment. It was very, very sad... That is the way it has got to go, and then... it will be one country. My fear at the moment is that umm... there will be a State of Palestine, it's beginning to emerge now, and more land will go to them... And I can see them saying, exactly as the Jews have done, You can't come in here!

Trudy: You know the houses, that have Palestinian lettering on them, but now Jews live in...

Dan: It amazed me. The Jews have... the Jews have been downtrodden and they have been forced into ghettos, and so many bad things have been done to them for so many years... And yet, the moment they've got a bit of freedom, they start to hit the other people...

HRC: Yeah. It's that old cycle again...

Dan: It's retaliation. We've seen it between Albania and Serbia at the moment...

HRC: It goes around... Your very powerful descriptions of this pilgrimage, which was your first pilgrimage for both of you... Umm... Have been very much focused on encounters... with in one case Islam, and with the Palestinians and so on... This was obviously a very important part of the journey. Do you feel that... Let's put this a different way... What was the feeling like, what was the atmosphere like, in the group of pilgrims that you were with... Now I realize it was a very large group, and so you were divided into three groups, and you probably grew closer to the group that you spent every day with... What kind of feeling was there in the group, in general?

Trudy: I think we gelled... I was amazed, that we all became so friendly immediately. Even with the other two groups, you know, the whole lot, the hundred and twenty of us became great friends... there was no animosity whatsoever... We just gelled, didn't we...

Dan: Yes, and it was quite strange, because we gelled as a large group, and three coaches gelled as small groups. And there was a friendly rivalry between coaches...

HRC: What kind of rivalry?

Dan: Well, you would say, Gotta watch what you say today, fellows, because we've got a couple of the "blues" in today... you know... [*Laughter*]. Things like that. We went into two coaches one day instead of three, because one coach was going off somewhere else. So we were all saying, Well you'd better wear a tie today, the "greens" are coming today, and that's Bishop [*bishop's name*]'s people... [*Laughter*]. Just friendly jesting with one another. It was lovely, because it was a feeling of being brothers and sisters together, relationships together, and so you... If you really want to insult somebody you start with your best friend, because you can insult him and he won't take offence, and we were...

HRC: Do you have any idea what sparked that kind of friendship among people who had never met before... Well, some people had, but there were many people whom you'd never met before...

Trudy: I think we all went out to meet with Jesus. I think each and every one of us went with the idea that we were going to meet with Jesus. We were going to God's own Land, and I think that we were all excited about that one fact, and so we... we were all of one mind, we were like-minded Christians... That's how I found it anyway, you know, that whatever happened we would be together, because we all believed in Jesus. Ha! I know that maybe seems very naïve, but that's how we saw it... [*Laughter*].

Dan: That was a question for me as well... Because, everybody accepts that Jesus is a Jew, or was a Jew, when he was on earth, but he descended from Abraham, and Abraham was obviously a bedouin. So Abraham was an Arab... So... Are Jews and Arabs?... You know? You get the feeling... that their looks are almost the same, as if they're part of the same nation...

HRC: What kind of question did this raise for you?

Dan: Well it was a wonderment to me that here was a nation that was really one people that had split apart... They were fighting!

HRC: Were there any religious questions that were raised for either of you by this pilgrimage, anything you hadn't thought of before... any new insights..

Dan: [*Pause*]. I don't think so...

HRC: What about you, Trudy... In a sense you've already described one I think very powerfully, your description of the Dome of the Rock experience obviously raised some questions. But was there anything else or anything related to that...

Trudy: I just umm... At the time, I just wondered why the leaders... I just felt that I had been abandoned by the leaders, because why didn't they question whether they should take a group of believers into a place like that, and I felt as if they had let me down, and not just me but they had let Jesus down. And I didn't talk to them about it, I didn't tell them anything about how I felt on that particular day. I just said I didn't want to go in and as far as I was aware they didn't know anything; I didn't think that [*pastor's name*] would repeat anything I had said, but umm... I just felt, Where was their allegiance? It caused a lot of problems for me for a long time... I just wondered where their allegiance was, was it really with Jesus, were they really feeling this, you know... And I know that we all have to work together, and... But I just feel that we shouldn't... Whilst the established church accepts other religions... I just don't think it's right to do that. And yet, I questioned their religion, which... well, I won't repeat it... Yes, it did cause a lot of pain, from the time that this all happened. I've had to go through a lot of pain and a lot of looking at Jesus to see whether or not... you know, what he wants from me... Whether he wants me to talk about this or... And I have kept quiet, because I don't believe that the time is right. And, and really the time is past, there is not much I can do about this now, you know? It's too late. If I were going to do anything about it I should have done it at the actual time... I should have said that, umm... No, I... You know... I don't think there was any other question... I just had a wonderful time...

HRC: Would you like to come back?

Trudy: Yes, we do want to go back! [*There follows a short discussion of an informal evening pilgrimage reflection session at St. George's College*]. It was a lovely time. I felt refreshed having come to you that evening, it was a wonderful time. And then we went into that service which was very traditional... chanting... and I thought... what have we here! [*Laughter*]. It was total, you know, from being totally refreshed, I was sort of dropped down...

HRC: That raises some questions in itself, doesn't it, the contrast there...

Trudy: Yes... It does, you know... Where are we at?

HRC: Well, Dan... I know you've already responded to this, but I'd like, if you can, to ask you to respond again, because these are questions which are important and

they've been raised here... What kind of questions were raised for you, and how do you respond to what Trudy just said...

Dan: [*Pause*] I really don't know... Umm... Yes, I hear what Trudy's saying... I don't think the time is right... I think there will be a time to say something about that. It was obviously not right for Trudy to go into the mosque, most definitely not. Umm... Somehow we need to bring these people into Christianity, I was going to say religion, but religion and Christianity are not necessarily the same thing. But we... got to find a way to make all these people Christian. It will probably have to start in Jerusalem, because that's where the Muslims and the Jews and the Christians started from... So to go back to the beginning it's going to have to come to Israel. If I ever do go back, I don't think there will be a desire to go into a mosque again; I've seen it and it didn't do nothing for me. Whereas churches like the Mount of Beatitudes, Christa Mensi and Dominus Flevit, those churches, they really did do something. I think the Church of the Nations did as well... Umm... Gethsemane was very powerful. To think that those trees stood there when Christ was alive. Jesus could have sat under one of those olive trees... And when we get back to Jerusalem, what we will do, is not go on a pilgrimage, but we will go off on our own, and we will spend a day, two days sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane...

Trudy: The sort of thing I long to do is just to meditate...

Dan: And just to meditate...

HRC: I notice you say "when" you go back to Jerusalem, not "if" you back...

Dan: When we go back.

Trudy: I would love to live there actually...

Dan: You know... And to spend a week there. And we only need to go to Dominus Flevit and to the Garden of Gethsemane... That's all we need to go to.

HRC: I certainly hope you do come back!

Interview C

Interview with "Pat" (I.a)
Interviewed by Henry R. Carse (HRC)
July 26, 1999

"PAT" WAS 49 WHEN SHE MADE HER PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM IN MARCH, 1999. SHE IS MARRIED, WITH THREE CHILDREN (21, 18 AND 12).

HRC: Pat, you made a journey to Jerusalem in March. It was March, wasn't it? What was significant about the journey – that you think I should know about?

Pat: First of all, I absolutely hated it. The first few days I really, really hated it. I have never ever been on any kind of organized trip like that before in my life. We're going on a holiday, this weekend, and we're doing our usual and we're going camping. So what I ... Do you know Myers Briggs?

HRC: Very slightly, but enough to...

Pat: Well I am a real true "J". I am judgmental. Organized. So... By Thursday I shall want to know from my husband exactly what time we are getting to the campsite. Almost what time we'll have the tent up, etc. etc. Once that is done, that's it... I can... I would then like to be totally spontaneous and let it all flow... You know?

HRC: And that didn't happen in Jerusalem?

Pat: No. [*Laughter*]. My fault. I mean, I should have actually expected that. Dashing from place to place. Back on the coach... On the coach at 8 o'clock, well that's fine, I am an early riser anyway... Umm... You know, it was literally: Today is Bethlehem... Today is Monday so it's Bethlehem... and it's this and it's that and the other... with *very little time* for any kind of quiet reflection in between that. I did manage to make time for myself, by being a little bit unorthodox. The first hotel that we stayed in was on the Mount of Olives - right at the top... Lovely. I would go for a walk about 6 o'clock in the morning... surrounded by the Jewish cemetery... So that was quite fascinating... so I would go and sit there. And then... I think we went to Dominus Flevit on the Tuesday... Well that was just wonderful, I absolutely love that place ... There was a little sort of garden/smaller grave plot just beneath that... with a gate, well it was not a gate but a hole in the wall that was permanently open... So I would tend to go there for my morning meditation... which was wonderful. Or wander down to the Church of All Nations – which you couldn't get into but there was somewhere to sit... So I made that time for myself and that was very important. And one morning I got lost and ended up about half way down the Kidron Valley. In the middle of a rubbish dump. Sort of scrappy old olive trees, and cats and dogs...

HRC: The real thing.

Pat: The real thing. Absolutely.

HRC: Did that sense of hating it carry right through the whole experience?

Pat: No it changed. It changed. Yes.

HRC: What was it that motivated you to go at that particular time.

Pat: [*Pause*]. A variety of factors I think. I think I felt that I was ready to go. I liked the idea of the trip because it wasn't just an ordinary pilgrimage... we were for example... we were going to meet you. We had the chance to do other things. I went to the Peace Village – Neve Shalom – I opted to go there. And I really wanted to go there. Umm... Because I had read about it in one of [*inaudible*] books... and other places. Umm... And there was therefore a lot more... It was balanced with a more theological input for me as well and I thought that would be good.

HRC: Was it your first visit?

Pat: Yes. Yes. Yes. I think I got into it. I appreciated the archeology of the place. There are just so many layers and so much to see. It was very difficult to take all that in. Very difficult.

HRC: But your first experience for the first four or five days at least was pretty negative, and then you said that things changed? What happened?

Pat: Yes, depending on where we were I think. I mean the day we went to umm... the day we went to the Garden of Gethsemane. I took one look at it and burst into tears. Because it was not what I expected. I didn't expect a formal garden. You know? I expected it to be just an open space – a big open space – with olive trees, where we would sit and perhaps pray around a tree. And you can't do that.

HRC: You can't do that. There's a big fence.

Pat: That's right – Oof! I was absolutely distraught - so distraught that the bishop was sort of consoling me, so it was really ... you know!. Well, the Church of All Nations I loved. Some parts of it that I really loved – umm... and you know, meant something for me, like *Dominus Fleuit*, was very special...

HRC: You must have gone with very powerful expectations.

Pat: I did. I went with far too much baggage both physically and emotionally.

HRC: What kind of baggage did you bring – if you don't mind my asking...?

Pat: I wanted... I wanted to be able to meet Jesus as a real person in the real place. So I wanted to walk around an olive tree; I wanted to walk on the limestone terraces; I wanted to walk in the hills. I wanted to walk on the streets of Jerusalem. I didn't necessarily want to be taken anywhere by coach, thank you very much. You know? Umm... I wanted to be able to walk along the Sea of Galilee, which I did, but it wasn't in the trip – I did that by myself when we got back, you know. And I wanted to have time to reflect on what I had seen and what for me the place meant. And that never happened. I didn't actually find... I didn't find this Christ that I was looking for - at all. I had... And until... until this recent retreat I would say... I had great problems in visualizing Christ when I enter into any kind of imaginative prayer.

Because the picture that I got – I didn't like! Because there was this Victorian guy all dressed in white straight out of a Victorian painting, you know...

HRC: Long blond hair...

Pat: That's right, exactly, exactly, and the beard and the white gown and all the rest of it. And I didn't want my Christ to be like that, thank you very much! I now know that actually that doesn't matter, but at that time that was very important to me. I wanted this guy with a sort of Middle Eastern colored skin... You know, umm... Although the very first time I did this prayer - it was an exercise that we were doing as part of the Christian Sunday school – and umm... you could choose obviously which figure you wanted to choose, so I chose to go for a walk with Jesus. But I couldn't actually, in my imagination, I couldn't have him right by my side. So I worked out that he would be at this favorite scene where we go on holiday – up the hill. Well, yes he was there... so off I went up the hill. But when I got there I saw and wasn't it this guy in this white gown! What I wanted was someone in a track suit because that's what people wear when they go up that hill... And it wasn't like that. It was horrific. I haven't actually tried it again since, not properly, not really tried it... Which is strange, because I've taught other people how to do it but I can't do it myself. [*Laughter*].

HRC: This journey which was – was it ten days? Yes. This journey was a spiritual exercise for you – or you wanted it to be that way...

Pat: I wanted it to be that way.

HRC: And you were disappointed in that... I hear you saying that you were disappointed in that, at least in the beginning. Did that change at all... was there any redemption?

[Short interruption as Pat's son... comes in and goes to get lunch]

HRC: Did that change, that very deep disappointment of that particular expectation, was there any change in that during the journey?

Pat: During the actual trip? No.

HRC: So that was pretty consistent. Was there... was there anything that happened during the time that you were there, any kind of meeting or encounter or... or moment, which... - obviously, positive or negative or neutral – which expresses the essence of the journey to you? Any particular event that sticks out as being important?

Pat: [*Long Pause*]. One in particular. I think for me it's got to be the day we went to Tabgha. And I was really, really looking forward to going to that and spending some time there, because I felt that it was going to be my kind of place, after we had left this very busy... Jerusalem – trying to get so much in.... But something happened there that was totally beyond my control. One of our party was very ill, collapsed on the steps. And she and her husband... they're not, you know... they wouldn't mind me saying this – they are not very bright. And... Instead of having

this Tabgha experience that I was really, really looking forward to, I spent the day with them at the hospital and the rest of it. And... I could not ever ever... I couldn't have done anything else, you know because it was a difficult situation, you know... So I am still reeling from that. And I don't feel bitter about it. And every time I see this particular person, I don't feel bitter towards her in any way whatsoever, but what I feel is... you know, I am still grieving for this Tabgha experience, that I missed out on, you know? And two of us did the prayers at the service that we had at Tabgha... and that was quite important... But I didn't even get a chance to look around it!

HRC: Did you get down to the lake at all?

Pat: No, not really. [*Laughter*].

HRC: It was the steps... was this the steps going down from the road...?

Pat: It was the steps going down into the church.

HRC: Down into the church itself. That was the chapel of the Franciscans...

Pat: The chapel, that's right, we had our service in there – a hundred and twenty of us crowded in there...

HRC: That little tiny chapel – around the rock – there's a rock...

Pat: Yes, that's right.

HRC: Okay. Wow... What an experience.

Pat: I know. But I mean the one thing that did occur to me... and I was sitting there with her husband as I was waiting for the ambulance. Umm... was that I knew this place was going to be about reconciliation, and to me there was a certain element in that... for a particular person reading. But in that day somehow it turned into... there were other surprises in it. Because I had to go from the hospital back to the hotel. And the taxi guy chose a different way. We went all around these hills in Galilee. And I had a chance to talk to him. And he was... umm... he was Jewish. The chap at the gate at Tabgha was Muslim. And he offered us coffee. I had a real chance to actually get to know some real people.

HRC: Were those the only encounters that you had...

Pat: Well, because I made others for myself. In my morning walks, back at the hotel... met a chap who works at the hotel, and we would walk back together for the last few yards, and have a chat... And I think some of our leaders would have been absolutely totally horrified at this English person walking around...

HRC: Were there any encounters with Jews and Muslims or... other Christians, built into the program?

Pat: Yes, umm... on the options afternoon where you could choose to go to Neve Shalom... That's right, well I went there and I found that... yes, and I did talk to the

chap there and I talked to people... And I mean actually what I realized towards the end of that week in Jerusalem, was the fact that I was in a sense looking for the wrong Christ anyway...

HRC: What do you mean?

Pat: Because... I don't think you can find Christ... the Christ of yesterday, the Christ of the Gospels... until you can see the Christ of today there... And you can't do that on a pilgrimage unless you have the opportunity to meet with the people who live there, you know?

HRC: That's a very powerful thing to say.

Pat: We went to Bethlehem University. And it just... That's where I think the conflict really began to resonate... Because it was there, and you could almost feel it. As you almost could in Nazareth as well, it is almost tangible, you know. The fact that some of these students sometimes were held at the roadblocks for you know two or three hours, and by that time they had missed their lectures. And their tutors. And the same on the way home. They were kept at the road blocks deliberately, and because they missed the curfews they were thrown into prison. You know? I mean it's horrific isn't it? And... I didn't know about that. I didn't know any of that. I mean, you can call that ignorance, but I didn't. And, so... so at some point I realized that in a sense I was looking for the wrong Christ. And that I would like to go back and actually get to know these people and talk to them.

HRC: You mentioned being... about a pilgrimage looking for Christ. When you set out on the journey – when you became interested in it - did you think of yourself as a pilgrim?

Pat: Yes.

HRC: It was definitely a pilgrimage. You were on a pilgrimage.

Pat: Yes.

HRC: What was, if you remember, at the time... or maybe in retrospect, what was the goal, what was the purpose?

Pat: Of the pilgrimage? I think, yes, I have said that before, to actually find this real person of Christ... in – as you said - the same geography, in the context where he lived and worked...

HRC: When you reached those places, how did you feel about the various churches or shrines that you visited?

Pat: [*Loud Laughter*].

HRC: I almost don't need to ask the question... It is pro forma...

Pat: Umm... Some of them yes, I really loved, they had a peaceful umm... aura about them, particularly places like Dominus Flevit, Tabgha, the Upper Room... some of the little chapels on the Via Dolorosa – and that was an experience I wasn't particularly looking forward to... But then others, for example like the Church of the Nativity... with that awful star and oil lamps dripping all over the place... [Laughter]... And the Church of the Holy Sepulchre – Well!...

HRC: Was it very crowded when you were there!

Pat: Yes. Yes. The only thing I really liked was the fact that you have all these denominations represented. I thought that was wonderful!

HRC: That didn't shock you?

Pat: No, I thought that was absolutely wonderful. You know? Because I have this thing about... I totally agree with the universality of God. And that it actually doesn't matter in a sense what religion you are, God covers, for me, God covers it all. The Upper Room I was very taken with... And there it is, and it's a Muslim mosque... And there it is, you know? And I thought that was just wonderful. And there is this wonderful statue in there... And I wish that... [Pastor's name] hadn't seen that before...

HRC: Yeah, the new... olive tree... it's very new... I wonder if it's made of bronze; it's made of some kind of metal...

Pat: Yes. The tree... That's the best photograph that I've got... I thought it was... Yeah. But it's a little bit too dull for bronze... but it might be, mightn't it?

HRC: Did you meet any local Christians?

Pat: On one coach, the chap who was their guide umm... was a Christian.

HRC: Did you get a chance to talk with him?

Pat: I spoke to him at Neve Shalom, because he came in there...

HRC: What were your impressions?

Pat: Umm... That for him his Christian faith was very real. But that it had to be worked at. Whereas I think we in the West take so much for granted. I don't know if it is the same in the States.

HRC: Ah... yes, definitely. Probably more so than here...

Pat: Yes. And I had heard that before from Christians from Russia and places like that - where it is a struggle, where it is a *real* struggle to be a Christian. Whereas here, in this country, if we *made* it a struggle, it would actually be stronger... Yes, and we wouldn't probably get... the church probably wouldn't be criticized therefore for being wishy-washy and all the rest of it...

HRC: It might not be so “successful” – in quotation marks...

Pat: Yes, but that’s a totally different matter... Yes.

HRC: If you... You said something a little while ago about wanting to go back. If you did go back what would be different, what would you want to be different?

Pat: I would take my tent, thank you... [*Laughter*].

HRC: Aha! Can I interest you in a desert program? [*Laughter*]. I’m not supposed to be advertizing; I will try to behave myself [*Laughter*].

Pat: No, I would want to do... I would want to do my own thing.

HRC: Yeah. And if you had a chance, if you were free to do your own thing, what would it be... what would you actually do?

Pat: I would go to Galilee, and stay at Tabgha... I would actually go to Capernaum... and I would focus on that. And it would be more... there would be more of a balance, there would be more of a spiritual balance, I think....

HRC: What would be the way of providing that balance, do you think. How would you make sure that balance was there?

Pat: I don’t know. I don’t know. But I would see - obviously the spiritual side I think would probably come from... within me... that’s fine, I can cope with that... But going to visit places that I hadn’t visited I am not sure how that would work... whether I would have a guide or whatever... [*inaudible*] And... there are retreat houses. I mean there are the Casa Novas aren’t there... And there’s somewhere in Tiberias. And there’s St. George’s and there’s Christ Church, and... you know.... And I would want to... And I would want actually to be a bit of a tourist. I think we got to Thursday on this trip and I am sure that [*pilgrim’s name*] won’t mind if I say this, and she said, Oh, I wish we could just do ordinary things for once, you know?

HRC: That’s interesting, because you started by talking about a more spiritual experience and ways in which you could ensure that the spirituality of it would be there, would be assured... and how would being a tourist enhance that?

Pat: Well, one thing I know, from when I was there, and from something that Bishop Laurie said... made my totally rethink what spirituality means. And that, yes, spirituality is out there, in the people in the street, but it’s not just this very contemplative thing that I thought it was... I think one night half a dozen of us we went to a bar on the weekend, and the barman, you know, he came and sat down with us and was chatting and ... that’s what spirituality is...

HRC: Where was this?

Pat: That was in Galilee, I think. Yeah. We were a bit of a... the sort who sat at the back of the blue coach – we were a bit of the rebels, as it were. You know what it is like at the back of the coach! [*Laughter*].

HRC: Absolutely, yes, it is a very dangerous part of the coach! [*Laughter*]. That's where the real things are happening! [*Laughter*].

Pat: Yes. That's right. So when [*pilgrim's name*] said... on this Thursday, when [*she*] said, "Oh I wish we could do ordinary things." And we all felt exactly the same. You know. Umm... Now when you go on holiday, I don't know what you do with your family, we tend to sort of go into town. If it is a new place, we go to the tourist place, get some information, look and see what we want to do, you know, cruise round the shops, maybe buy some bread, whatever. And that's what we really could have done with, it was a day when we could have just been, just ourselves, just not... with any particular focus, just doing things in Jerusalem or Tiberias or wherever... You know? Having that free space.

HRC: That would have been part, an important part of the pilgrimage... experience?

Pat: Yes.

HRC: That's very powerful... Umm... Is there anything about the travel itself that you would change or that you thought was significant... You did mention at the very beginning that you didn't appreciate going around by coach everywhere. Is there anything about... is there anything you think important, having to do with pilgrimage, about the mode of travel, something which could be improved or changed there?

Pat: I think it's very difficult because it does depend on the nature of the group, and I think that in that particular pilgrimage with 120 people spread around three coaches... And *such* a wide range of interests and ages. And I think that's where the problem comes, because a lot of people were older, and would probably... it was thought that that would be their last trip I understand... [*Inaudible*]. And some of them perhaps couldn't walk as... you know... as well as others...

HRC: You wanted to walk by yourself. And you said you found ways to walk...

Pat: Yes. Yes. And I would have appreciated, for example... When we went... when we went to Bethlehem... along the side of the road [*pastor's name*] pointed out a cave... and that's what the... you know, that's more like the real thing, what it would have been like. But the coach didn't stop. You know, I would have actually liked to have stopped, got out and walked around a bit. And again we saw, you know, shepherds on the limestone terraces. It would have been nice to have stopped the coach, and just go and have a walk around. And maybe not to be quite so... oh – it's very difficult when organizing a trip like that... and to be far more flexible, you know. So that if the group found something that interested the majority of the group, to stay with it... For example, when we were at the Church of All Nations there was a Mass that was just about to start, and I think the majority of people who would have liked to stay for that, but no – on we go to the next thing. And that's a shame.

HRC: Yeah... Do you feel that there was someone who was with the group whose job it was to be spiritual director, to be a pastor in a spiritual sense?

Pat: That... that was offered, I think, on the first night... if people wanted that... and... but I think generally on our coach it would have been [*bishop's name*]... who acted almost as that anyway all the time. And he would walk at the back wherever we went, you know, not gently hurrying us on, but you knew that he was at the back and he was, you know, gently guiding. Wonderful guy, [*bishop's name*], absolutely wonderful.

HRC: And so he was obviously helping to guide the group, in the physical sense. Was he also there in a pastoral sense, if anyone needed to talk with somebody, was that the person... And did that work, do you think, from your point of view, did that work to have someone there...

Pat: Yes. Yes it did. After the first two days, you know, I actually wanted my own spiritual director there. [*Laughter*]. And then I had Father [*priest's name*] anyway, had I needed to talk to him. But then mostly if I was talking I was talking with [*bishop's name*].

HRC: So what was the role of the guide?

Pat: Well, the one we had was Muslim. And the places that we went to - if they were particular Christian places, he did maintain this very objective umm... presentation, about them. He obviously knew a lot, he was very knowledgeable. He would also... he also talked to us about his own people several times. He talked to us about the fact that the Jews had, umm... showed us the things that the Jews had taken over... from the Muslims... And we learned a lot about the water issue...

HRC: Aha! Yes.

Pat: Yes. Which is obviously very important. Which again I didn't know. The other thing was he didn't appear to have a sense of humor. [*Laughter*]. That was all... But he was a... Yes, he was a nice... he was a very nice chap... I think.

HRC: How would you... If you had to... in a job description if you had to define this role, if you were looking for such a person, what would you advertise for?

Pat: [*Pause*] Umm... [*Pause*]. I think somebody who had an interest obviously in... in the Holy sites. Somebody who also *perhaps* had... had some idea of the Christian faith. I'm not convinced that Jamil did, actually. Umm... So I think he did a very good job at being an objective guide. But I think perhaps there are places where a fundamental understanding of the Christian faith would have caused him to perhaps do things differently.

HRC: Can you think of any examples?

Pat: Umm... Yes. When we went to Lazarus' tomb... and he was sort of hurrying us to and fro from that ... And there was no reason to do so, that was our last visit of the day. Umm... and again when we did the Via Dolorosa... but I understand in one group, I mean, the guide wouldn't let them... wouldn't let them have any time at all... I'm not sure which coach that was, but that doesn't matter... But I don't feel,

on that, that he had any particular... - and there was no reason why he should really! - that he had any particular understanding of what it was really about...

HRC: When you visited the Via Dolorosa did you ... was that a devotional... a prayerful devotional visit, or was it just a visit to see...

Pat: It was prayerful, devotional. I was very apprehensive even before I went about doing the Via Dolorosa.

HRC: Why?

Pat: Because it's one of my... one of my favorite services. I have written and done a service in church for adults, and I've written one for little children... And I wanted... That was very important for me. And... everybody said, Oh it's absolutely awful, it's busy, it's awful - you know. So I actually spoke to [*pastor's name*] the night before, and said, but - you know - are we going to have time to stop? And he made time. And we did stop.

HRC: So you did stop.

Pat: Yes. And after every one he came up to me and said, was that alright, or whatever... And I was very grateful for that.

HRC: Were there prayers said at each place?

Pat: Not at each place but there was time for private prayer. Yes, we did do some... We didn't do sort of the set services. But actually and I was thinking again, because... because... If you think about the Stations of the Cross, there were only about three or four of them that are Scripture-related. And in fact if it's a symbolic journey that has to do with the Passion what I would like to do is go back further, is to actually start the Passion narrative with the Anointing or with umm... the resurrection of Lazarus, and I would like to take in... to have Dominus Flevit in that as well... and make it... make it, make it somehow more biblical, more real, and take people on the journey right the way from Bethany... you know... because I think you are missing out on an awful lot there...

HRC: Yes. That's a very powerful alternative... If you are in Jerusalem you can do that...

Pat: So I have sort of got that in the back of my mind... for next year...

HRC: For next year, in what context?

Pat: I thought I would write a book about it, for a service...

HRC: Right... And then use that journey... the Bethany, Mount of Olives, Jerusalem journey - use it in your church as a service...

Pat: Yes.

HRC: Aha! Could I have a copy? [*Laughter*]. That's really very intriguing.

Pat: But it might take more than... Yes, I can see it taking a long time to do actually...

HRC: Yes, it could be... hard work...

Pat: It wants pictures to go with it, and things.

HRC: A little earlier you... you hinted that since coming back from the Holy Land – on returning from your pilgrimage - there have been some changes in your life and in your life in the church. Can you tell me about that?

Pat: It has taken me a long while – it took me a long while to start when we came back, to start reflecting... But once I did I almost couldn't stop for about three days solid at the computer... All this stuff coming out. But umm... The first immediate problem I had umm... was ... was that we have a small Eucharist at the end of term, we came back just before the last week of term... and I was down to do the chalice. And I had great problems actually physically doing it... and emotionally doing it. And I didn't know why. And it's only recently that I have actually worked out what the problem is. And what the problem is does have direct relationship to, umm... places like the Holy Sepulchre... But you know... full of oil lamps and razzmatazz and dirt and lint and all the rest of it... and that's...that's fine... You can look at that all objectively, as ... [*inaudible*] and say, Yes it's very beautiful... On one level that's fine. But at the same time one's also been to places like Tabgha... which are relatively simple, and the Upper Room where there is nothing apart from this wonderful statue, and the windows in the niches... where it's just all plain isn't it... And... The two don't match up. They don't match up... because I... I have problems thinking that this Christ who was wandering around the Mount of Olives and going into this Upper Room, would have wanted... or expected... or needed all of this strange razzmatazz.... You know... the incense, the gold, the [*inaudible*]. Umm... And it's the same in our particular church service. We quite often have incense and bells and so on... So that's the moment... I know what the problem is now... it is exactly that. It's that it is difficult for me to come to see the Eucharist in that light and go through it... there is so much protocol attached to it... and all the rest of it. So for the moment I have withdrawn from that particular ministry. Until I can... you know... umm... And I really found that on Sunday services I could cope with them... I could just about cope, but what I really wanted to do was just to be there as part of the congregation, but to be in the Lady Chapel away from everybody else. Because it was just so... just all these people... You know? And I think in a sense I was still looking for this quiet Tabgha experience.

HRC: Yeah. The experience which... which you had missed because one of the pilgrims had fallen...

Pat: Yes. But having said that you see... Even if it hadn't happened to [*name*], we wouldn't have had more than ten minutes at Tabgha anyway. You know... on a practical... So it's really just a fantasy, it's a bit of umm... spiritual fantasy that I am looking for. [*Laughter*].

HRC: Aha. [Laughter].

Pat: [Laughter]. You know? Once you start to analyze it...

HRC: Yeah... Umm... I am very, very struck by this and I would like to pursue it a little bit further. Because what I hear... I want to make sure I understand what I am hearing you say here – is that, is that, your quest... umm... you realized as the days of pilgrimage went on that you were on what you have just described as a kind of fantasy quest, and reality was very, very different. And when you came home, you found some kind of a conflict or clash between the reality of church life as it was being lived liturgically and... what you had been looking for in the Holy Land...? Is that... is that what...?

Pat: Mmm... Not exactly

HRC: It is a very subtle message that I am trying to understand... what it is that you are saying.

Pat: It definitely has to do with the kind of places like the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity.

HRC: That you experienced as *not* representing reality or... authenticity.

Pat: That's right, yes. And then you transfer back to present day liturgy... and the protocol within that liturgy. Yeah. That does not match up to what I would consider the real experience of the Last Supper.

HRC: Okay. Just to make sure... I think I understand that, umm... when you got back to your church context you experienced it as a kind of a repeat or an echo of the experience that you had in the Church of the Nativity or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which had been an artificial experience for you... Is that correct?

Pat: Yes...

HRC: So that there was *something essential* missing from both of those which you were looking for when you were in the Holy Land and you didn't really find but you knew was there somewhere... And so... I am probably right in saying that you hadn't felt that about the liturgical context before you went to the Holy Land? You were comfortable in it before you went? It hadn't...?

Pat: That's... Yes... Yes... Yes.

HRC: So that was a radical change... That was a radical change in your attitude towards church life.

Pat: Yes. So I'm still having... I'm having to come to terms with it.

HRC: You're obviously struggling with it. You just said that you are coming to terms with it. Do you have any idea how the people in your church feel about that, or

what they know about it, or relate to it in any way? Is there any communication about that?

Pat: The only person I have really spoken about it with is [*name*]... But to be absolutely honest... The... I have been searching for the problem, I have been searching and looking to see exactly what this problem is... and until I know what the problem is I can't sort it out... And it wasn't until I went on retreat the other week that I actually realized that that was exactly what it is. So I hadn't actually seen him to discuss the problem and then to decide, you know, how I am going to work it through...But it was very, very real.

HRC: What do you think will be the outcome of this problem? [*Laughter*]. I hope you don't mind me asking, but it's... it's... you have expressed it so beautifully...

Pat: I think I need a balance. I think I need a balance. I think I need the balance of... of umm... having more time... I don't know... I don't know. Umm... It's very strange because we also have services at our church such as Corpus Christi and the Easter vigil. And I wouldn't miss them for the world. And yet, they are full, absolutely full of protocol. And "mumbo jumbo", you know, in quotes. Yeah. And yet I absolutely love them and wouldn't miss them. So there is a place for this very kind of – oh what would you call it – institutionalized, you know, liturgy and all the rest of it. There is a place for that and it is very meaningful... But at the same time... Let's put it differently, and then, you know, if you put them into life, they're a bit like... umm... the last night of the Proms. Yeah? Umm... the Queen's birthday parade, you know, not that I have ever been to that, you know, but one can imagine... They are the special bits in the church year for me. I mean, there are other things as well. Umm... Whereas during the ordinary time, or during the ordinary sort of services, maybe I need to be a little... need to be on a slightly lower key... It may be that I am in the wrong church ... and that's maybe something that, you know, I'll discuss with the proper [*inaudible*]. It may be that I will end up going to the quieter service on the Sunday at 8 o'clock... They're in the Lady Chapel, it's much smaller, not so many people, there's no smells and bells, there's no protocol – well, limited protocol I suppose one might say... The trouble is that once I got by actually omitting doing this chalice, it could turn into a vicious circle, because then every time I did it, I couldn't do it. You know? People said, Oh, you know, that sometimes that they had heard that people coming back from the Holy Land had difficulty doing that sort of ministry, because they had found that now this chalice and this sacrament were very, very special... And I can see that, but that for me wasn't the problem.

HRC: That's a very interesting experience. It will be intriguing to see how that works out. Umm... You obviously brought back with you a... you know... a question. Is there anything ... is there anything else you brought back from Jerusalem, from the journey... anything that you can think of...?

Pat: Yes, the spirituality thing. This is really born out of something that... You have met [*pastor's name*]?

HRC: Yes, yes...

Pat: Oh, right. Well on the last night he said to me... he thanked me for being there, and thanked me for my sense of humor... and this was a compliment. And I stood there almost open-mouthed. Because, here I was aiming to be this very spiritual contemplative person, and he obviously didn't see it like that. And it made me totally rethink therefore what my spirituality is... You know?

HRC: How did you see yourself and how did he see you? What was the contrast?

Pat: He obviously saw me as very bubbly person, you know...

HRC: Extroverted?

Pat: ...and spirituality was, you know, connected with a sense of humor.

HRC: Yes, I see.

Pat: But what I wanted people to see was me as this contemplative, meditative spiritual person - which I am at times but... you know? It's - two contrasts there which didn't match up... And I was in tears that night, oh [Laughter] - don't tell him this, because, you know, it wouldn't be fair... because what he has actually done is do me a great favor, because since then what I have been doing is to re-look at spirituality and be able to see it in different ways.

HRC: That happened in, obviously in the context of the pilgrimage... and you don't... you don't think... well, that might have happened back at home at some point...

Pat: Oh yes, I think it could have done. Yes. Yes. It could have done. But... It's the way that we see ourselves isn't it, and the way that we like to see ourselves and the way that we think other people see us... you know, umm... That was what was painful... once I'd thought about it.

HRC: But... But you also just said that there was something very positive about that...

Pat: Mmm... Yes, yes. That, you know, to work it through and to see that God is in all things, so he is in my sense of humor - whatever that is. He is also in that quiet place where I meet him... Umm... He is also... You know... I can't now confine it... It is now much wider than it was before. Simply because of that very...

HRC: That one insight...

Pat: Yeah. Yeah. I wonder... It's not... You know... I think I've got spirituality boxed up in a little box, you know... That spirituality was you know all about Julian of Norwich and Eckhart and all the rest of it and [inaudible] it was all very quiet... and... That's not it, that's not it at all...

HRC: Interesting that you should use the image of being boxed up in a box, especially if you're talking about Julian of Norwich... [Laughter]

Pat: Yes. Absolutely, yes. The two go together, don't they? Yes. You've been there have you, you've been to her cell...?

HRC: Yes, I have, yes... just to visit. Is there anything else that you feel that you have come back with?... Did you bring anything back – anything physical?

Pat: [*Showing an olive wood statue*] I bought this in, umm... in the mangy manger shop...

HRC: Oh, yes – the mangy manger shop... That's nice... This is Joseph and Mary and the child, olive wood – that's very nice...

Pat: Lovely isn't it... I think it was the only one...

HRC: And these chalices... olive wood... Photographs?

Pat: Yes, photographs. Map of the Cardo for my husband.

HRC: Ah yes, the Madeba Map.

Pat: Which is quite a nice one. More pictures. A few books. Presents for the kids. Skullcap and things, and one of those shepherd pipes. Yes, quite a few things.

HRC: Did you ever think of anything that you brought back as a relic...

Pat: No.

HRC: What is your association with the word "relic"?

Pat: "Tickle me nose" [*Inaudible*]... [*Laughter*]... and dark corners and [*inaudible*]... [*Laughter*]

HRC: Would you like to go back? When?

Pat: I don't know. When the time is right.

HRC: This has really been quite an adventure, thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

Pat: [*Long Pause*]. I think if I were ever sort of leading a trip I think I would try and put in far more balance into it. But I know on that particular one it was difficult.

HRC: Specifically balance of reflection time...

Pat: And quiet... And give people sort of... tourist time, free time, you know... I think setting up meetings with people with different faiths... or Christian Jews or whatever, I think there is obviously going to be a certain amount of falsity about it...

HRC: Is that your experience of what actually did happen during the encounter meetings that were arranged?

Pat: To a slight extent I think... The chap at Neve Shalom was, umm... He may have just been shy, so I don't want to assume things, but he was especially at the beginning very reticent to talk to us... He sort of, kind of warmed up, so he may have been quite a shy guy... you know, you can't tell, can you?

There were some funny bits on that trip. There were some hilarious bits really. The day we went to Neve Shalom, and then [*pastor's name*] said we are going to this convent – Latrun? Very good because they've got this wine shop. So if anyone would like to bring back some wine or some oil for the Maunday Thursday service that we have... then please do. I happened to be walking in with this lady... and both of us were standing and looking at these small bottles of green murky oil, and she said, you know, "Well, you couldn't have that, it's not Extra Virgin!" [*Laughter*]. Well I had to go outside because she was just such a proper lady. And I just creased up, you know, it was so funny. [*Laughter*]. Oh, dear! There were some funny lines like that.

I would go back but I would sort of try to plan my own thing... I mean, you can, can't you? This friend or mine from the course has got a friend who lives just outside of Bethlehem and she goes over every three years...and more or less does exactly that.

HRC: Anything is possible, when you know what you want... Well, thank you very very much...

Interview D

Group Interview Session (Group II) Interviewed by Henry R. Carse (HRC) in July 1998

THE PARTICIPANTS, FROM AN ECUMENICAL MINISTERIAL TRAINING COURSE
IN NORTH-EAST ENGLAND, WENT TOGETHER ON A PILGRIMAGE TO THE
HOLY LAND IN AUGUST 1997.

HRC: I am simply going to ask each person what was significant about the journey we made together, and, if possible, in what way it changed you. I am not asking complicated questions, because only you really know what you want to say.

“Frances” (II.p): Being in the Land of the Holy One has informed everything I have said and done since, as I am aware of standing in a living tradition, that’s not just Jewish but also Palestinian, and I am not quite sure what you would call the other ethnic and religious groups there. But we’re really aware when I read in the Old Testament that it is about people of faith that are still there. And it makes more sense not just to study the western tradition, but Christianity in other parts of the world, the orthodox tradition and all sorts of other traditions.

“Stan” (II.t): I think the biggest significant change for me was when I came back... I was faced with the problem of - How on earth can I communicate what I have experienced deep down within me to people back home who have no experience of travel abroad, let alone to the Holy Land?

I found that not only was it possible, to tell the right spiritual things, no snapshots, just “This is how I felt, this is what I saw, what happened”. Not only was it possible, but people were almost desperate. There was a real yearning to hear, understand, get to grips with the kinds of things I felt I was trying to tell them. So I had some very positive experiences. In a sense, it is an ongoing experience still.

“Monica” (II.d): The thing that stands out in my mind, is standing at Amsterdam airport, on the way home, in tears, because we had to leave, had to leave. My mind just wouldn’t accept it. This is the person who didn’t want to go. Who couldn’t see the point of making a pilgrimage to Israel. My thing was, if God isn’t with us here, then he is nowhere. And that there were many forms of pilgrimage for me. Walking through cornfields, remembering the stories. So I think I learned to let go in a sense. There is a sudden letting go and then a gradual letting go afterwards.

“Pauline” (II.b): I think this is the first time I have been able to speak about the whole thing. The processing I have done has been about getting well, rather than about reflection on it.

For me there was a dynamic about coming along as a “hanger on”. It’s not an inappropriate phrase. What we really joined was a living community which had a language and a process already engaged. So not only was I taking on a new environment but a new community, and I had underestimated the difficulty of that.

What actually happened of course is that I managed the desert and nothing else and lived in the desert for the following months. Quite a lot of the time I was on morphine. I found myself back in the desert. And that wonderful guy who made us all tea... [*Laughter*]. There is a sense in which I revisited the Desert, which was not inappropriate. But I underestimated the power of the place. I will never ever forget getting on the back of that bus leaving St George's and you were saying "I wept when I saw Jerusalem" and I did from the back of the bus, and that's all I saw.

I knew I had to go back, and I've booked to go back in May. That was quite important. But I think I underestimated the power of it. Something about standing in someone else's sandals. Which was very powerful for me. And standing of course is something... And of course the fact that these complete strangers, suddenly they had to look after this woman whom they did not know.

So my visit to the Land of the Holy One was being visited by people who were behaving as the Holy One. That was quite powerful. But I couldn't write it, I knew I needed to write but it was too early to do that. I guess that time will come now.

HRC: What you say validates my intuition that there is a large part of the experience which needs to wait before being verbalized. What that means is that of the millions of people who make pilgrimage we know very little of the true story, because almost never do they get a chance to tell their story in a conscious way a year, or two years, later.

"Karen" (II.o): There are so many things of course. One is recognizing that I needed the help of other people, that it was no good just being determined to get through, that I needed the help of many men, and of my women friends as well, in order to be able to cope with the physical hardness in the condition in which I was...

Another wonderful experience, of being on the Mount of Transfiguration, which seemed to me to be such a holy place where we could be and where we could feel through to that holiness.

"Pete" (II.j): I too had apprehensions about going on the pilgrimage in the first place. You know: God's with us, he's here now, so why do I have to go Israel, to the Land of the Holy One. Having said that, once I've experienced the whole pilgrimage I feel changed in some way I can't quite put my finger on. And I am sure that place where that change took place was in the desert. I remember the early morning walk, when it just got light, I looked up into the mountains and thought: What could possibly live here, and who would want to live here?

I thought: What is there? I came out of the desert thinking: I've had an experience with God. A really profound experience. I can't verbalize or describe what that is. It's something in here. When we went to the bedouin camp I went out for a walk with "Rex"... Something that struck a note: We saw the stars overhead, millions of them, stretching across. Straightaway I thought of the promises of God to Abraham and that struck a chord. It was as if we were reaching into the past and bringing it to where we were.

“Dorothy” (II.d): Like “Pete” and “Monica” I was a skeptic before we went, not really sure why we should go to a holy place. No desire. And I went to a place which was truly amazing. I suppose that I have always found the text very important. The desert experience breathed life into the text in a way that it hadn’t quite lived in that way for me before.

The desert was a very important experience and if I went back that is primarily where I would want to go.

My secondary response was that the most important thing to me were people, the people I shared my journey with... The Eucharist at Shepherds’ Fields, many of us have talked about that. An incredibly moving experience, through the gifts of someone who came from outside. An alien among us who became one of us. And we love him for that.

When I got to the Church of the Resurrection I discovered: Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen. So I came home again. Because that is where Jesus is.

“Melissa” (II.f): I am speaking from a completely different perspective, because I am a “spice” (*i.e. spouse*). I didn’t want to go to Israel. I could not really understand what “John” found so attractive about it. But I am one of the ones who wants to go back.

There were two places that really meant a lot to me. One of them has already been mentioned ... The Shepherds’ Fields was exactly what I expected it to be. When we were driving along the road in the bus and saw the bedouin with the tents and the sheep, I thought: We’ve gone back in time, it’s a time warp! But it was exactly how I expected it to be. The Eucharist at Shepherd’s Fields was something I had not experienced before, it was absolutely wonderful...

The other place that was special to me was sitting on the hills with the olive trees (Mount of Beatitudes) looking down. The peace and everything about it was wonderful.

On reflection I think that the Desert has got to be the place. Because I went to Israel at a time in my life when I was in the wilderness. Because “John” was at the end of his second year on this course, and I was at home being the dutiful wife... [Laughter]. Supporting “John”... thinking where do I fit in on this? Divorcing myself from the church situation at home because we weren’t going to be worshipping there when “John” finished his ministerial training. So I didn’t have a spiritual home, and I didn’t know where I belong, and I was totally in the wilderness.

And I went to the wilderness. And it answered so many questions for me that were in my head at the time and as a result of that experience brought me through the wilderness. It has been a bit of a wilderness until the point where I am now and I can actually begin a little bit to see the way out.

I think that I've begun to realize that all of life is a pilgrimage, that was quite a difficult thing to get a hold of. It's not just going off to the Holy Land and coming back, it's everything you do. And it's living that. Does that make sense?

"John" (II.e): I had been to Israel once before, so maybe going back was slightly different because I had a passion even before I went the first time. Going the second time was almost unbelievable to have the opportunity. But to go in a different way, because the first time was very much the organized holiday type "pilgrimage"... It was a real pilgrimage.

One thing I found so important... There were hundreds, but one... To be in the place, reading the words, but then going back into history, then that of course gave new meaning to the words... Then trying to move that into the now, 1997 as it was then, and saying that meant that then, with all that history behind it, the sort of thing like the mill stone, maybe to an Anglo-Saxon that doesn't mean much, but now it means so much more.

"Maxine" (II.n): Before I came to this weekend I decided to get my journal out and went through it. And after your telephone call I have been reflecting on my journey and pilgrimage. I did in fact smile... because I was to read from Exodus 2:11-22. And you took us from the comfort of a hotel into a coach at some unearthly hour, and Margaret and I looked and thought, Oh dear, there's nowhere to put my hair drier here... [*Laughter*]. And I actually looked and said, how am I going to tell people about my reflection on Exodus 2 in the dark?

I was apprehensive about going. About how fit I was to go into the Desert. For me it was my weaknesses that I came to terms with in the desert. The dance, the joys, the sacred spaces that I had when I reflected on my own. The times of prayer. For me I continue on that pilgrimage. The stones are not always smooth. Sometimes I fall off them. But for me, I feel that I continue to build on my weaknesses that I discovered of myself in the wilderness.

"Will" (II.m): As we left the airport, I was a little apprehensive being an outsider, in many ways. But the whole group opened up and drew us in to be part of that group. It was very, very nourishing, the caring and the sharing ... all along the road. It was everyone working ...

Two things which come to my mind. I was surprised how strongly I felt about leaving Jerusalem. We got on the bus. And for a long time I couldn't speak to Maxine. I had a big lump in my throat. And my eyes were filling up, and I just didn't want to go.

Even more surprising to me, two weeks after we got home, and I was driving to work. There was a report of a bomb exploding in Jerusalem and I found myself driving along with tears running down my face. And I am not an emotional person.

Another thing which comes to mind for me is, I probably went with a slightly different agenda. I had a problem with Jesus, and I went hoping that I would find Jesus there. And that didn't happen. And that negative sort of turned (around) and

it has strengthened and confirmed my own faith in myself, that this is right for me. And that's the lasting effect this has.

HRC: I hope you don't mind if I say that the last thing you said hits me on a very deep level. I would love to explore this further. Because, we are all non-pilgrims as well as pilgrims. If we aren't all taking some kind of basic denial with us then we are not really there. It has taken me a long time to recognize that this exists in myself. Fortunately with people like yourself I am encouraged to actually say it. "Not only did I not have Jesus with me when I came, but I did not find him there when I left". And the negativity of the experience was strong and more powerful than all the positive stuff.

"Ronald" (II.g): I think that I am really talking about myself. Because the journey, the pilgrimage outward, was for me principally a journey inward. If I am going to find any kind of focus for that kind of thought, it would be the evening we went to the Valley of the Shadow and watched the sunset. Again, in a paradoxical sense, it was not from darkness into light but from light into darkness. It was that kind of paradoxical sense that I came with from the Holy Land... A particular experience that served for me as a very strong experience of what I call the numinous. It was that very personal sense of the holy - of entering into something and being part of something - that for me exemplified and is what the pilgrimage ultimately was about.

HRC: I've asked this before: Can you identify a change, specifically in yourself.

"Ronald" (II.g): The experience left me with a profound sense of the other, of the experience of reality beyond myself, of someone reaching out to me, of my aloneness, of all those kind of things, which may take me a lifetime to come to terms with, and in another paradoxical sense sets me off on yet other pilgrimages.

"Rex" (II.q): My initial overall impression of the Holy Land or the Land of the Holy One is: What an unholy place it is! Struggle and tension and division and separation and political discomfort, wondering what's around the corner, it's a very scary place I think to live in... Road blocks, searches when going to the Wailing Wall, would we get into Bethlehem, would we not go to Bethlehem. Certainly the whole experience was one of tension. And of realizing that this land is not holy and we romanticize the whole notion of a biblical understanding, because it's not really like that at all.

That's sad. It was brought out in the Jewish Rabbi's lecture of the struggle for an informed religion that wants to move on and be broadened and it's all stereotyped and stuck in the past somehow in hatred and division. That was the overall impression that I got from being on the pilgrimage. That we leave one divisive culture to enter another even more divisive and separate culture.

It's informed me since I came back. I pray for the Palestinians verbally in Church. We remember the Holy One in prayers in Church. It's informed my understanding of Scripture and theological understanding too. I suppose I bored people for awhile when I first came back because I kept talking about the Holy Land in sermons... Capernaum where Matthew was the tax man, and the basalt rocks and so on....

I didn't like Jerusalem at all. I think it was a rather negative experience. And so, I think the more rural parts of the pilgrimage were better, and of course the desert, which was quite fabulous really.

And Emmaus, that was quite special I think. I was just looking for those curbstones I think... Wondering why on earth we were going up this road, what historical, theological... we just passed this sort of cavern or cistern I think and all the rubbish and debris of human life, you know, sort of dumped in there. And walking further up the road, I thought this is more my cup of tea, I can relate to this, because this is where Jesus appeared to his disciples. I thought that was real. There wasn't so much real in the Tomb of the Resurrection. Kissing the cross and going down into the depths of the tombs. Because so much war has been fought over these places. It was all so nasty and I didn't want to be there.

“Gary” (II.h): The first thing is very simple and has been alluded to before. I preach a lot. It's part of my job. But more than that, it's part of me. When I am preparing a sermon, being able to visualize... Just visualizing around Jerusalem. So many times in scripture it says going up to Jerusalem. I hadn't realized really that it was really right up there. That's helpful, being able to visualize.

I was particularly fascinated and I would have liked to explore the whole Palestinian issue. I have tried to get it onto the agenda of the people I work for. I've also become slightly involved in Sabeel – and had an invitation to the Conference. But I couldn't get to that. The whole justice issue. And I have a Sabeel calendar on my wall which tells the story of some of those Palestinian villages which were just... wiped out really, that's all there is to say. That's fascinated me and given me another bit of agenda.

A final thing I suppose: I didn't want to go, but not for the reasons that some of the other people cited... I don't want to explore that now. But the fact I went was a major triumph.

“John” (II.e): Just something I was reminded of when Rex was talking. I was the opposite to Rex, absolutely in love with Jerusalem. Just a few weeks ago something I read reminded me of Jerusalem when we were there and I am sure still is: all the tension and people from different lands, and the rubbish that's there and the terrible things there, it actually made me think that at the time of Christ it was possibly like that as well. They were an occupied nation, there were soldiers there, foreigners there, there were tensions and murders. Lots of things going on.

Strip away the architecture because the city would have looked very different, but in a lot of ways I wonder how similar it was, now to then.

“Rose” (II.i): Most of it was a nightmare, as far as I'm concerned. I felt very alone. I felt a terrible sense of responsibility. Not in terms of having to take care of anyone, but in terms of: Golly these people and this place, and I cannot do anything. What that actually did was... with the people and everything, I don't remember anything after the desert. At all. Nothing whatsoever. But I do have inside me... a people..

I was telling" Melissa", I look at her, and I laugh. Because I have two memories: one was that lippy tent. And the other was: well, we peed together in the desert. How basic can you get! [*Lots of Laughter*].

I ended up with the people space inside me. I felt like I was carrying everyone inside me. The strangest feeling. That's what I... In terms of pilgrimage, I guess I learned a lot about me, and about my capacity to carry people inside me.

HRC: You've been very active, training teaching, ministering. Is there anything about your teaching or your ministry has changed?

"Rose" (II.i): I'm aware of a profound sadness. It was always there but I feel it is more profound. Sadness about life. About the things that happen. It's not a miserable thing. That's what struck me about the accident with "Pauline". In an instant, there's a whole new scenario. And we have to live with this, and adjust. And how do we do that?

[*There follows discussion of "Pauline"'s accident – in which she broke her ankle badly in a fall on the Mount of Beatitudes and spent the rest of the pilgrimage in the hospital. "Rose" took over the leadership of the group as the group leader stayed with "Pauline" in the hospital and making the necessary emergency arrangements*].

HRC: If there is one thing I would like to continue to explore, over the years, it would be this phenomenon of the crisis event around which an experience anchors itself and grows. Almost like the old metaphor of the grain of sand in the oyster shell. Which is an irritant. What we are describing here is a real serious crisis. A serious breakage, a shattering.

"Rose"(II.i): One of the strangest things: the most difficult decision that I had to make, as we walked back from that hospital, was: Where the hell was I going to sit on the bus? Because I wasn't going to sit in [*the group leader's*] seat. Because I didn't belong there.

HRC: That's interesting. You knew that you had to ritualize your leadership in a physical way, so you had to figure out some change, a change in seating, a change of position. What did you finally do?

"Rose" (II.i): I went to where I had always been sitting.

[*Discussion of other aspects of leadership*]

HRC: This whole thing is such a mystery to me. I have been reading about the pilgrimage dynamic. That the growth of the pilgrimage community includes a crisis. And interestingly the crisis in pilgrimage occurs near the beginning of the journey. My quest now is for those kind of pilgrimage experiences which are not contingent on a particular place. I would like to pursue that with all of you further.

APPENDIX B

THESIS RESEARCH CORRESPONDENCE

1.
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE
AND CONSENT FORM

2.
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Documents pertaining to participant consent
and confidentiality assurances.

Holy Land Pilgrimage Interviews

Participant Questionnaire and Consent Form

Dear Pilgrim

As you are aware, I am collecting oral narrative material for a post-graduate research project on Holy Land Pilgrimage. Your participation involves as audiotaped or videotaped interview session. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free not to participate or to withdraw from the project at any time. You will not receive any remuneration for your participation. Materials recorded may be used for academic research, and/or for future publication. Your name will not be used – all contributions will be presented and used anonymously.

If you have any questions about your participation please contact me at [telephone number] or [email address].

Sincerely,

Henry R. Carse, Researcher

The University of Kent at Canterbury, Theology and Religious Studies Department



Name of participant _____

Address, telephone, email _____

Female ___ Male ___ Single ___ Married ___ Divorced ___

Age _____

Occupation _____

Children (with ages) _____

Date of Pilgrimage to the Holy Land _____

Did you attend a church before your pilgrimage? Yes ___ No ___

If so – what denomination? _____

Do you now attend a church after your pilgrimage? Yes ___ No ___

If so, what denomination? _____

I the undersigned wish to participate in the interviewing project described above. I understand that I will receive no remuneration for my participation, that I may withdraw at any time, and that my name will not be used in any academic reports of subsequent publications based on the interviews.

Signature

Date

August 5, 1999

Dear _____

I am writing to thank you for meeting with me recently to talk about your March 1999 Holy Land pilgrimage recollections and reflections. It was an opportunity to enliven the memory of a great adventure, and I am grateful for that. I was glad to have a small part in your journey as I was invited to meet some of you in England before the pilgrimage, and at St. George's College during the time the group was in Jerusalem.

I know that there are many nuances and details of such a journey which are difficult to describe in words, and I appreciate the way in which you strove to give voice to sometimes very personal experiences. As I mentioned when we met, these "interviews" are part of a project I am working on with the Revd. Professor Robin Gill of the University of Kent at Canterbury, a project designed to provide a context in which to listen to the tales contemporary pilgrims tell. My goal is to listen carefully and to evaluate these present-day pilgrimage experiences in a theological light. I hope that this study will bear fruit in a more theologically informed process of preparation for pilgrimage to Jerusalem in particular.

Your reflections as you shared them with me are confidential and anonymous; if I use your words in citations in any form during the course of my PhD research I will not be attributing them to you. As we agreed at the time of the interview, if I need to cite you by name at any stage in the research, I will contact you for your written permission to do so. I think that it is important for the quality of our reflection together that everyone understand the personal nature of these experiences, and honor the confidentiality implicit in the pilgrim's story.

I look forward very much to meeting with you again and continuing our conversation on this subject of mutual interest... Enclosed you will find my card with details of how to reach me in Jerusalem. If you have any additions or changes to make to your narrative, or if any new insight occurs to you, please do not hesitate to contact me!

Sincerely,

Henry R. Carse

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A PARABOLIC PILGRIM POSTSCRIPT

The Rev. K. Somi, a Baptist minister from Nagaland, made his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1995. On his return home, he wrote a reflective account¹ of his pilgrimage, ending with the following passage:

An Anecdote

I have been using hair dyes of various products for *the last* about 20 years before going to Jerusalem... With prices of daily commodities raising higher... I could not afford to maintain my hair dyed any longer. In fact, I am now over 55 years and I do not need to be looked younger. So I stopped dying my hair.

People started querying what happen to my hair! Desiring not to explain personal hardship I told them – “I have washed my hair with the holy water of Jerusalem and I do not want to make it black again.” Some people could not understand it. They surely feel that Jerusalem water bleaches hair and wanted to see it, rather than the City.

Many friends and relatives including my father-in-law could not recognize me quickly when I met them after six months from Jerusalem trip.

The end



¹ Revd. K. Somi, A Trip to Jerusalem (Dimapur, Nagaland: Western Printing Press 1996) 26.