Monday 26 August 2002

A Holy Land Blessing (tile in my room)

May the Babe of Bethlehem bring you peace;
May the child of Nazareth bring you joy;
May the man of Galilee bring you strength;
May the Christ of Calvary bring you strength;
May the Risen Jesus bring you hope
and the Ascended Christ a foretaste of his glory.

Flight BA 163 left and arrived on time, 0535 local time (0335 BST!!). The Nesher 'sherut' (minibus taxi) waited for its complement of eight passengers of whom I was number three. I talked to the first two, man and wife: he had left Romania for Israel 50+ years ago, and was now living off the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road. After all the other drop-offs, I was last. The driver explained about the new electric railway being built around Jerusalem - much disruption to the traffic. It was the lack of Palestinian leadership which was causing the security problem, he thought: given 'better' leaders, there would be peace.

A disturbance on the plane as we were landing: an English-sounding Israeli family with three very small children, the oldest a boy of four or five. When awoken, this boy cried hysterically. His parents were unable to pacify him, not that they tried very hard. I wondered if the boy was exhibiting the tension of their situation?

Despite the tension (the driver called it 'the terror'), there were no sign of troops or police at all on the road to Jerusalem after the security cordon of Ben Gurion Airport. In fact, all I saw in my walks around St George's College today were a couple of security guards (one a woman) outside the Ministry of Justice next door. There were also police outside their station opposite Herod's Gate at the end of the road.

St George's College is in a security precinct with the Anglican Cathedral (its separate tower directly opposite my balcony) and its Guesthouse. Outside, and across Nablus Road, is St George's School, at this time on holiday. Doormen inhibit entry. Inside there is a very pleasant educative garden, planted with biblical plants and bushes. Outside the college end is Salah Eddin Road, constantly busy and noisy. There is no driving here without blasts of the horn, and much dropping off of passengers at awkward corners. In the shops nearer the old city, the road is very busy with pedestrians. From the strange array of shops in the souk, some lacking any displays, others high chic, there are blasts of loud Arab pop music. The souk is bustling with people almost any time the shops are open, mainly Arab and Muslim, a very few Jewish, men and women, all ages, and children play and wander in the road.

Late afternoon. I went to the Garden Tomb, about five minutes walk away from St George's, up the alley from a hectic Nablus Road (now the Arab coach park) and into a gentle world. There is one tour group around, which makes its presence felt after a quarter of an hour: a few other tourist-pilgrims, singly or in pairs. The lady at reception mistook me for a local and greeted me warmly. I explained that I had been there once before, six years ago: some impact! (On the whole, otherwise, I seem to have been almost invisible: only raising a few greetings from opportunist sellers and children.)

Rather pleasant reflections came in the Garden, sitting looking down at the Tomb. The *Rough Guide* (p354) notes a Protestant minister saying of the Garden Tomb: "We don't worship a place." Well this is not the place, but a place, an example to stimulate faithful reflection, and worth revisiting. They have designed a flowing knot of shady pathways and interesting worship places: grottos hidden at different levels, small theatres under the trees. The old bus station between the Garden and the Pilgrims' Palace Hotel seems to have been closed, but it is not easy to guess what is being built from the small beginnings below.

Contrasts: looking up from the Tomb area, tranquil from visitors to the top of the wall/cliff above, ringed with barbed wire. Anything which might have religious significance here is vulnerable. But I wondered who would attack this place? As I sat in reverie and prayer, suddenly two calls to prayer started in delayed stereophony, very beautiful, but incongruous to my thoughts of resurrection. I shall go there again, I hope, as a good way to end a busy and tense day in the city. It gives a lot, not because of its supposed authenticity, but its sense of place. Three cheers for Gordon of Khartoum who discovered it. On archaeological and rational grounds, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor rather mauls the General's fantasies (pp146ff)!

Earlier in the afternoon, I had tried to visit the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, but it had closed at 3.00pm (pace the *Rough Guide's* 5.00pm). When I went to the Cathedral for the advertised 1800 Evensong, I found it closed, and the doorkeeper suggested I join the Peace Prayers at the Dominicans down the road. I arrived there breathless a few moments after six, facing locked gates. Unable to summon anyone outside, I left disappointed again.

The *Rough Guide* reminded me (p.355) of Orient House, the non-headquarters of 'the non-capital of a non-state', on Obeid Ibn Jarrah Street, just up beyond the College. I remembered that the IDF had seized the place last August and expelled the Palestinian Authority, but was not prepared for what I now found. The road had been closed with concrete barriers and Hebrew notices. Orient House had been turned into a non-place.

But Jerusalem is a furiously incongruous place. Neat modern estates: Jewish; rubbish-strewn, semi-derelict: Arab. Of all the modern estates I had seen on my taxi ride, the most luxurious was an Orthodox development, the HQ of a sort of rabbi-politician, according to the driver: clearly a man with money and influence.

Every society needs an extensive source of people who will actually do what needs doing - building, waiting at table, sweeping rubbish, door-keeping, 'cutters of wood and carriers of water', a 'working class'. (One of the books I brought with me, Jeremy Seabrook's *Class, Caste and Hierarchies*, draws a parallel with the largely nineteenth century migration of rural labourers into the industrialising cities in England.) This was touched on by Elias Chacour in his autobiographical *Blood Brothers*. He writes movingly of how his father, expelled from his village and olive groves, humbly offers to work for their new Jewish owner as a hired worker. He was so concerned for what he had planted and tended over so many years. The Arabs fulfil this function here: but, of course, the country could not function without them. (I later read of schemes to bring in many thousands of labourers from Thailand on temporary contracts and visas to avoid the troublesome Arabs.)

I had dinner with the Dean of St George's Cathedral, Fr Michael Sellors, and David, a music teacher from Norwich, who had come during the last few summers to act as cathedral verger. Fr Michael told many stories of the systematic and arbitrary humiliation of the Arab people, and indeed of himself in trying to take a stand for justice. An Arab girl aged five to six hides on the floor of the car she is travelling in when she sees it is to be stopped by an Israeli policeman ... Teargas thrown into a peaceful crowd, including children, at a checkpoint - a prank of a bored soldier ... the shot fired over the Dean when he was walking with explicit permission through a checkpoint. This recent incident was reported to the British consul ... requests to see a bullying soldier's superior officer ... arbitrary road closures forcing long detours, a 10 minute journey made into a 45 minute one ... Israeli tanks' show of force around a peace march ... Jerusalem as a village, where local people (Arab) notice what the clergy do, what is important to them, their priorities ... in the Arab culture, the wearing of sunglasses is suspect, quite apart from being the usual wear of Israeli security force members: "If we can see your eyes, we know your soul." David said that he had come to Jerusalem strongly pro-Israeli, but what he saw and experienced in three days changed his mind.

We will see. Underlying everything here is the Holocaust, which I shall need to face at some point in my time here.

Part of the problem here is that <u>everyone</u> comes from somewhere else, noone is actually at home, and those that were at home here have lost it.

Tuesday 27 August

Fragments of last night's dinner conversation came into my mind ... the Dean's taxi driver, a qualified teacher, wondering if he could get back into teaching, getting the offer of a job, at half what he can earn driving ... the fellowship across denominations (Eastern and Western) which had been generated through the series of ecumenical evening Peace Prayers which had been running during the past fortnight and were just coming to their end.

Excited news this morning that Rabbi Jonathan Sacks had condemned Israeli brutality against the Palestinians (this was apparently misreported, as Rabbi Sacks firmly protested his complete loyalty to the Israeli regime and what they were doing later in the British press .)

The Holy Sepulchre. The Old City which, when we last came in 1996, had been bursting with vitality and crowds, was *very* quiet. There were very few tourists or pilgrims around. Some shop owners were predatory on the few visitors. Others sat resigned, talking, playing backgammon. Business was reportedly very bad indeed in the souk. The Holy Sepulchre itself was quieter, with fewer visitors than Winchester Cathedral on a Monday morning in November. I only saw two small groups, who quickly went on their way as I stayed and prayed and reflected in this very strange building. I found it growing on me in its gift of everything which is most central and holy for Christians. I am fascinated by the idea of the Chapel of Adam being directly under the Greek Orthodox Calvary, the finding of Adam's skull in the rock fault which stretches down from where our redemption was won at such a price. It is St Paul's Adam and New Adam theology tangibly in place. Mind you, the Chapel of Adam was being used as a storage room and had a strong smell of glass-fibre resin. In the Calvary above, a Greek Orthodox Priest on a pair of steps was housekeeping, replenishing the oil in the many hanging lamps; for some this is a place of work. You can get used to it. There were many devout prayers, kneelings and kissings of the rock by the sporadic succession of individual worshippers, lighting of votive candles, nuns and priests of different orders, East and West. Here, everything that really matters for Christians seems to be contained: it is important enough to fight over. The Anglican compromise was to go elsewhere and build something which is more evocative to our imagination of the 'real thing'. The Holy Sepulchre 'improves' in my experience with a sympathetic reading, and I was much blessed by not having to face the human stream of pilgrim-tourists. Today, only those who really wanted to be there were in the building, which I am sure gave it a much more prayerful and devoted feel. I went round the back and down into the Armenian Crypt of St Helena. Further steps took me down into the cistern in which St Helena is reputed to have found fragments of the True Cross, later disbursed around Europe into churches of St Helen. The whole disparate and infuriating setup seeks to distil the essence of our salvation. The faces of the devout praying people who come here need to be seen in the wider context of Christian response to every place: Gregory of Nyssa's suggestion, "Everywhere is Jerusalem". Well, perhaps, but only because there is an actual Jerusalem which is unique. There is value in coming to the true place, but it does not reveal itself easily, nor without prayer and the working of the Spirit. But the greater wonder, as perhaps St Gregory was suggesting, is the working outwards from here of our salvation in the uneasy world.

There are soldiers and police at every gate of the Old City, idle but scrutinising everyone who enters. It is meant to be reassuring, but also succeeds in being worrying. In one narrow alley, I just missed a squad of soldiers with a 'going off duty' feel. On the rooftops, a few groups of Jewish young people walked in animated discussion, avoiding the Arab souk below. Outside the Old City, just up from the Jaffa Gate, there is part of the extensive building for the new railway, a tall steel fence making the noisy workings invisible to those passing.

Peace Prayers, 6.00pm at the Syrian Orthodox St Mark's Convent, near the Jaffa Gate. It is a small ornate church, with golden carvings. While we await the beginning of the service, a tapestry curtain which divides the nave from the sanctuary is pulled back. The congregation soon swells to more than the church could comfortably hold, but the doors are open and some stand in the courtyard outside. Heads of churches slip in, including three archbishops who give the blessing at the end. Aramaic, Arabic, English, German, Coptic, Amharic, Armenian, Syriac were the languages used during the half-hour service. We said the Lord's Prayer each in our own language. The 'kiss of peace' was followed by a Syriac hymn about sharing that kiss. It is an inclusive service, with the text (including the sermon) in the original languages and English. Afterwards, the verger showed us the famous icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary written by St Luke (it is over the font in which she was baptised). Underneath the church is the upper room (much changing of levels in the city over the

centuries), in the house of Mary the mother of Mark, to which St Peter went when released from prison (Acts 12.12). But also, they say it is the room where the last supper was shared and the Spirit descended at Pentecost - all in a wonderfully economic 'syntopicity' - locating of significant events in the same place. Murphy O'Connor says there was a church here in the fourth century, and signs in the church claim its rebuilding after the sack of Jerusalem by Titus in AD70. Again, I find such a bringing together of significant places very powerful. But so was the bringing together of traditions into prayer for peace. In the crypt/upper room on the altar is one of the Coventry reconciliation crosses.

The idea for Peace Prayers seems to have been that of Father Michael, the Dean of St George's Cathedral. The heads of churches meet bi-monthly, with Fr Michael as secretary (the Anglicans are surprisingly warmly accepted here). Last year, for the first time the fortnight of Peace Prayer was put together very quickly in response to current events. The series seems to have been widely appreciated, even beyond the Christian community. In the Arab village that is Jerusalem such positive initiatives are seen and valued.

Earlier, I had gone to the Garden Tomb again, trying to make it my 'reference point'. It was a little later this afternoon, heavier shadows and the wistful sound of a flute being played by a woman in the garden. Presumably this was her response to this place and her feelings. What a sad and strange city. I think even when all is done, it will somehow resolutely refuse to be completely Jewish. It has too many layers and is too complex.

Wednesday 28 August

The Feast day of St Augustine of Hippo, as celebrated in the early Eucharist in the Cathedral. Augustine has such a powerful continuing influence on the church, according to the homily of the celebrant, Ross Jones, Dean of St George's College, especially Protestant theology of the Atonement. But we actually live as Aristotelians: and it was through medieval Islamic scholarship that the philosophy of Aristotle was preserved for us.

St Augustine's great vision of the city of God: a new Jerusalem? But which of the many versions of the City, raised to heavenly proportions and qualities? The division of the Old City into Quarters - Armenian, Christian, Muslim and Jewish - reflects the hospitable nature of the place in receiving migrants. It is capable of immense generosity, on the one hand. But there is something about it which deforms what it takes in. Everything is plural and non-uniform. People of the different traditions pass in the street (though I don't think an Orthodox Jew would walk through a souk), but they live in the separate quarters and in the segregated areas outside in the new City. My impression so far is that moderates of each of the major religions in fact get on well enough, if they try, and with more warm than simply toleration. There can be respect, but it has to be earned by righteous action, not words. Christians should certainly contribute positively to such harmony, following Jesus' directions to 'love your enemy' and 'love your neighbour as yourself'. The dissonant factor is the 'fundamentalist' element of each religion. I would define such fundamentalism not so much by belief and 'conservative' interpretations of the scriptures and the tradition. It is through *exclusive* behaviour towards others that fundamentalists declare themselves: a life-denying attitude towards them and an inability or unwillingness to see that their enemies are fully as human as themselves. Not everyone who has strong beliefs acts in an exclusive way: conversely some who promote liberal beliefs are fundamentalists in their intolerance. The State of Israel is a gigantic act of the will to exist against others: that this might involve erasing and rewriting the 'facts on the ground', and the lives, traditions and memories of others cannot be allowed to matter. Yet something essentially human is lost in practising this. Christianity, as I understand it, is precisely the exercise of the power of the will for others. In this it draws upon a substantial thread of Old Testament teaching. Another problem here is the power of the memory united to the will, the attempt to recreate what was presumed (but not known) to have been here before, *Eretz Israel*, a dangerously remembered future. The false memory of the future (and Christians have to be very careful here about interpretations of the apocalyptic literature) joined with the will and power to make that future come about, seems to have brought together American evangelicals and certain interpretations of Zionism in an outworking which is, in the least emotive way of putting it, inhospitable to other people.

I'm wondering about mental health in the different communities here: are some of the extreme religious disciples actually 'mad'? Are there surges of mental ill-health in times of instability? This place is bound to be unstable, as almost everyone is an exile here. Is the incidence of psychiatric illness higher among Israeli or Palestinian populations? What sorts of religion help or hinder mental health amid these tensions?

It was already getting very hot when I walked up the Mount of Olives this morning. I wondered again at how much of the Old City facing hillside is filled with arid cemeteries, remembrance pebbles on angular monuments on the rocky and dusty slopes. (I think Robert Maxwell is buried in one.) The Church of 'Dominus Flevit' was devoid of visitors: a German voice echoed through an open door of the office at the back of the chapel, on the phone. A good place to weep modern tears over Jerusalem, and all it represents, its shadow side. The chalice and Host, suspended in the window against the bright blue sky, was not as telling as the spare wrought iron Pope's crucifix beneath it, in silhouette against the dusty golden Dome of the Rock. On this side of Wadi Kidron, the most spectacular scene by far is the shimmering golden onion domes of the Russian Orthodox Church of St Mary Magdalene.

I walked down to the bottom of the hill and left into the enclosure of the Garden of Gethsemane and of Jesus' agony of will. As I sat in the Garden, I read the three Gospel accounts, noting the very strong emotions in the verbs; Matthew 26.37 "sorrowful and troubled"; Mark 14.32 "greatly distressed and troubled"; Luke 22.44 "in an agony ... his sweat became like great drops of blood". Most of the Greek verbs are to do with being 'out' or 'not' (ἐκ-, ἀ-) and the derivation of ἀδημονέω (Matthew and Mark) 'not to be at home', 'ill at ease', 'exiled from home' suggests a mental state of being 'out of one's mind' under the pressure of choosing. We Westerners tend to interpret it psychologically and individualistically, but clearly something was also happening to the disciples. Jesus was also taking on the weight of their deciding what to do. What does it mean to do the will of God: 'Your will, not mine'? There are other, lesser Gethsemanes for each of us as we try to convert our

apprehension of his will into such action which honours God. Jesus did not prescribe what but how: with love for enemies, prayer, guided by the Spirit.

From the Garden into the darkness of the Church of the Agony (All Nations). I had not really noticed, when we visited last time, the Rock of the Agony in front of the altar, surrounded by the wrought iron crown of thorns. As the mosaic shows, with its ministering angels, it is the Lucan version which guides the imagination, with the textually doubtful verse 43: *Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength*.

After all these shrines empty of tourists and pilgrims, it was a shock to go down the 44 steps of the Tomb of Mary over the road, trying to pick a safe way between all the votive candles propped on the stairs on both sides, into the crowds down below. As I drew myself together in the stuffy heat after changing a film in the transept at the bottom, gradually three services started simultaneously, all within 50 metres of each other, one on my right, two around the tomb on my left. The most spectacular involved a group of Armenian seminary students dressed a bit like a gospel choir. The effect was cacophonous, but moving. In the circumstances, it was difficult to press through to the tomb itself, which would have involved going past the seminarians, and past their celebrant, a bishop now wearing a jewelled crown, through the popular service on the left with people standing around and chanting, through the press around the reclining icon figure of Mary draped in a shawl, which people were touching with bunches of herbs. At the other end of the Church, a much smaller group, without any others in attendance, were independently wafting incense in their smaller section of the cave, with occasional forays to the middle. As I was leaving the seminarians suddenly went on a short circular procession with their Bishop, also claiming the centre ground. This was a very Middle Eastern place and form of celebration. Muslims come here too in their veneration of Mary: an idea which is moving in itself, Mary, the Mother of Reconciliation.

After that stuffy excitement, it was pleasant to surface into the courtyard and walk back up to the Old City Lion Gate and to the Crusader Church of St Anne, which was beautiful and empty. In it is the crypt cave where Mary was born to Anne and Joachim. The understatement here was in strong contrast to the vibrant visual and auditory disorder of the Tomb of Mary. It was possible to breathe deeply: the air was cool. The jumble of stones in the complicated excavation next to the church brought those elusive footsteps of Jesus into clearer view. Here is the Pool of Bethesda/ Beth-zatha and the healing of the paralytic of John chapter 5. The place seems to have ancient associations with Asclepios and, so, healing. On this ground, the story brings Jesus into contact with the fading power of the old pagan religions, the old gods.

On the way back, I dropped into the Rockefeller Museum of Archaeology. This was the first time I had to show my passport. “Can I ask you,” said the armed security officer, “is it better in English to say, ‘May I see your passport?’ or ‘Can I see your passport?’” The museum itself was very old-fashioned and felt rather neglected. But the numbers of cars parked around the building showed that many people were working in the Israeli Department of Antiquities (one sign tucked away in a doorway still said ‘Palestinian Antiquities’). In the displays, there was no mention, that I could see, of the Philistines, just an allusion to the ‘Sea Peoples’. ‘Palestine’ (a difficult word for Israelis) of course comes from ‘Philistine’.

In the evening, the last in the series of Peace Prayers took place at the Maronite Vicariate in the Old City near the Jaffa Gate. The service was basically a Maronite liturgy with hymns in Arabic, with occasional sections read in English and French, capped by a blessing which we all said together in English. Having arrived rather too early, I walked down the Armenian Patriarchate Street and round past the Zion Gate into the Jewish Quarter. From the walls here there were good views of the Mount of Olives in the full evening sunshine, and down into the Hinnom Valley (Gehenna). Along the Armenian Road there were many posters, maps showing the numbers of Armenians massacred in Turkey in the early twentieth century, totalling some two million - forgotten, perhaps because they were not Europeans killed by Europeans?

28 August 2002 Fatalities reported by B’Tselem *(The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories)*

Ruweida al-Hajin, age 42, from Gaza City, killed by IDF tank fire while sleeping in her family's vineyard, in Gaza City, The Gaza Strip

Ashraf al-Hajin, age 23, from Gaza City, killed by IDF tank fire while sleeping in his family's vineyard, in

Gaza City, The Gaza Strip

Muhammad al-Hajin, age 18, from Gaza City, killed by IDF tank fire while sleeping in his family's vineyard, in Gaza City, The Gaza Strip

Nihad al-Hajin, age 19, from Gaza City, killed by IDF tank fire while sleeping in his family's vineyard, in Gaza City, The Gaza Strip

Muhammad al-'Amouri, age 33, from Jenin, killed by IDF gunfire , during fire exchanges in which he was not involved, while at his home, in Jenin, The West Bank

Muhammad Baraka, age 27, from Deir al-Balah, killed by IDF soldiers gunfire, after having thrown stones at the tank in which the soldiers were travelling.

Thursday 29 August 2002

'Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides for ever ... Peace be in Israel!' Psalm 125. After visiting the very informative Christian Education Centre near the Jaffa Gate, I went back outside the walls and round to Mount Zion and the landmark domed Dormition Abbey. This was very well organised (German), with a coffee shop and gift shop adjoining the two storey church. A feature I have already remarked on is the contribution of many nations to the modern churches. In this Catholic church, the side altars around the rotunda of the nave had mosaics provided by different dioceses, orders, countries. This, at ground level, is the congregational meeting place and I was unlucky to see it filled with chairs after a recent concert, covering the floor mosaic. Down the steps on the left is a crypt and a more powerful place of prayer, again with altars around the circular walls. In the centre is a baldachin, with a life-size statue of the sleeping Virgin in the centre. On the periphery are more chapels, one fenced off by railings for contemplation of the Blessed Sacrament. There was noone around, so it was good again to pause and pray; to remember and celebrate the hidden life of Mary in the early Church. I liked the idea of the secrets being hidden here below: Bachelard's intrigue of a cellar. As a Protestant, I would want to say that the congregating place was more holy. As a Catholic also, I want to journey deeper into the imaginative spiritual life of God, the mysteries attending the incarnation. It was good to go deep below, but also come out into 'life'. In Jerusalem, where later ages built on former, rather than erasing all traces, where levels above the base rock are very variable, there can also be a sense as you go down below of getting closer to the footprints of Jesus.

The nearby Cenaculum, or Upper Room, is not easy to find, and as the least convincing of all the claimed holy sites, less worth the effort. The crypt of St Mark's Syrian Orthodox Church felt more authentic (even though you go down steps into it). The fact that you have to go up stairs to the Cenaculum is correct, but all those crusader columns and upswept lighting rather undermine the identification, and its conversion into a mosque makes it feel less like a church, with its mihrab and Islamic stained glass. Cyril of Jerusalem, writing before 348, said that the Last Supper and Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost both took place in an upper room on Mount Zion. I went outside and down to the Tomb of David, the worryingly long sarcophagus covered with a velvet cloth, and directly below the Cenaculum. This visit rather disturbed me, as it had in 1996: there were groups of Jewish pupils and visitors in the anteroom, some singing, others nodding their prayers near the Tomb. I love and am consistently nourished by the Psalms of 'David' and was reading about his flawed genius in my Bible readings for that day. The Old Testament remembers so realistically this spiritual and sinful figure. I tried to pray in front of the Tomb but couldn't find the concentration and left soon. The building brings together the three Jerusalem religions, with the Christian and Muslim shrines blending into each other (as in the Tomb of Mary), and the Jewish maintaining its distance and religious integrity. David had the vision of what Jerusalem could be for his people, as a capital, as the centre of the cult. Both of these would also support his version of kingship. But could he guess at its fallenness, its capacity for evil? (Psalm 55 is distinctly ambivalent about city life.) Here in Jerusalem, you can but admire Jesus' coming in prophetic judgement of the city. Just understanding it in political terms, what an achievement it was to enter it in triumph on Palm Sunday, taking on the city and all it stood for, the powerful establishment which ran the place.

Down the side of Mount Zion are Christian cemeteries. After a search, I found on the lowest terrace the grave of Oskar Schindler, who had died in 1974. Many had found it before me and left their pebble surrounding the inscription. The powerful ending of the film *'Schindler's List'* was not filmed here. His was an outstanding story of bravery against evil, of a very moving act of redemption. In Christian terms, redemption feels very close in this City. I was reminded of the prayer of St Francis on entering a church: "We adore you, our Lord Jesus Christ, here and in every church throughout the world, and we bless you, because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world." In their guardianship of the holy sites, the Franciscans of the Holy Land have grasped this sense of the immediacy of the redemption and continue to make it available to visitors. We are much in their debt.

The hillside falls away steeply. Further down is the church of St Peter in Gallicantu. This is another well-planned arrangement, with space for coaches to park and turn. There were none. I was the only visitor. When we came in 1996 I can remember that the construction was not yet finished. Today it had a clean and efficient feel, and inside the Church there was much attention to detail and design, which had been beautifully finished. There are depths to explore here: you go down further than seems possible. It is suggested that this is the site of

High Priest Caiaphas' house. The road level upper church has a mosaic of Jesus on trial before Caiaphas. Below is another church, with the rough rock of the hill at the back and mosaics of Peter's denial, weeping and rehabilitation around the altar. Stairs towards the back on the right lead up to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, on a half floor. Steps down again take you into a landing with a statue of Christ in chains facing further steps down to cellars and cisterns, one of which might have been a dungeon. Up from the floor of the lowest level cell is a shaft, which gives out on to the floor of the second level church: through this a prisoner could have been lifted up by rope to the place of trial. (Jeremiah was imprisoned in a cistern, as vividly described in Jeremiah chapter 38.) In this lowest cell, in a corner stands a podium with multi-lingual translations of Psalm 86 [85], "In the day of my trouble, I call on thee." outside the church are magnificent panoramas of the Mount of Olives, Ophel (Silwan/Siloam), Kidron, the Tyropoean Valley and the monastery enclosure of Akeldama (Field of Blood).

I walked down the very steep hill, along increasingly shabby and rubbish-strewn roads and houses to the road junction at the bottom. Below the level of this road on the other side was a minaret and what appeared to be a play group. Tucked away behind and below this was the Pool of Siloam and one end of Hezekiah's Tunnel. The water was flowing slowly along the channel to a grill at the other end. I was offered the opportunity to walk along the tunnel, with water above the knee, but declined. As I was leaving, I noticed a tanker parked on the very rough ground outside, and a pipe being run down into the pool and its murky water, presumably to pump some out for use elsewhere.

The walk along the Kidron Valley became less and less promising. The tarmac and housing gave out not much beyond the Gihon Spring (at the other end of the tunnel, now a water treatment works). The rough road became just a dusty track along the wadi. In the distance were the ancient tombs cut out of the hillside, above, on the left, the steeply rising wall of the Temple Mount. On the corner was the pinnacle of Jesus' temptation. (Murphy-O'Connor p112 writes, "... in the late Byzantine period the piety of pilgrims ... sought to localise every detail mentioned in the gospels.") Just beyond the Tomb of Absalom, the Church of the Agony came into view above: a bit of relief, because the early afternoon sun was very hot indeed. I paused for a breath and a drink along Derekh Jericho, on the steps of St Stephen's Church, near the Lion/St Stephen's Gate. Murphy O'Connor is amusing on the gate (p23): the earlier St Stephen's Gate was on the north of the City, near St George's; in 1187, Christian pilgrims were no longer permitted near the north wall, so "The local guides simply moved to the Kidron Valley certain holy places, notably the Church of St Stephen, which in reality were north of the city, and business went on as before". So much for an authentic sense of place.

The visual contrast between Jewish west Jerusalem and Arab Silwan could not be greater. The latter is sprawling high density, low quality and low rise; the former, chic, well designed and built, neat high rise. Both are always in motion, as in any city, but Silwan felt listless and lacking energy. West Jerusalem is obviously newer, with vast funding underpinning it. It is a statement which is political and affirmation of confidence. It says: "We are a western nation at heart, with your western values and self-confidence." Silwan, east Jerusalem, is a political statement too: leftovers, has-beens, the past gradually suffocating under the rubbish that is half-heartedly collected, if at all; sub-standard places for people to shelter in, temporary workers' dwellings. The gap in standard of living is palpable. From the little that I have seen, I don't understand whether it is the Arab way to live as they do, or whether it is forced upon them. (The *Rough Guide* suggests that the Arab areas have a sixth of the funding of the Jewish municipalities.) I read of Israeli government approval for the import of another 6,000 foreign agricultural labourers from Thailand (Associated Christian Press Bulletin, July-September 2002, p6), when unemployment among Palestinians is so high. A truly modern concept: we need the job done, economically, without trouble, so bring people from half-way across the world to do it, rather than give the work to our troublesome but desperate neighbour. Perhaps there is something in "the Arab psyche" about needing close supervision to work well (a subject of our conversation over our evening meal). In this dysfunctional society, there is also bound to be trouble in labour relations. I suspect that Arabs, and Thais come to that, are seen as 'underclass', which might help understand how the former are treated as they are.

29 August 2002 Fatality reported by B'Tselem

'Abd al-Hadi al-Hamaida, **age 13**, from Rafah, killed by IDF gunfire in Rafah, in the South of The Gaza Strip

Friday 30 August 2002

An excursion today into (Jewish) west Jerusalem, through leafy suburbs, shady in the hot sun, quality cars, spruce buildings. It could have been anywhere in Europe - except for the armed guards searching everyone coming into the supermarket. My destination, the Israel Museum is a national showpiece, brilliantly set out and explicated. The archaeological section which I visited first pointed up something about the Canaanites which I had not appreciated before, because of the 'tabloid treatment' they receive in the Old Testament (to quote from today's *Bible Reading Fellowship Notes*): the Canaanites had a sophisticated art and culture. Their myths and gods were, of course, a challenge to the Hebrews. The latter's ban on images, a kind of puritanism, can be understood in the context of reaction to Canaanite civilisation. The rivals to YHWH were palpable, visible and alluring, especially on the female side. As in the Rockefeller Museum, there was not much on the Philistines. But there was plenty of evidence for Israel as a mediating or meeting place for various exporting cultures. It has always been open to the prevailing pluralisms, or conquerors.

The centrepiece of the whole museum is the 'Shrine of the Book', the museum of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Against the straight lines of the other museum buildings, the conical roof of the shrine is stunning, shaped like the lid of one of the scroll containers. This white roof has fountains playing on it. The entrance is along a cave-like corridor into the darkened circular chamber, which has the main displays of the scrolls around the outside, the full scroll of Isaiah up some stairs and around the central spindle, and artifacts found by the archaeologist Yigal Yadin downstairs. Down there were domestic finds like woven bags, a woollen blanket, incense scoops and sandals. Around the shrine - an interesting name in itself for what is in fact a museum - there were a number of groups of Jewish visitors in earnest discussion. Why is it called a 'shrine'? The display transports the visitor into the Qumran caves where the scrolls were found. It does this in a sophisticated manner. The Essenes (if that is who the community were) were an extreme, puritanical, separatist group, misunderstood and persecuted. Perhaps their existence, proved by these remarkable finds, legitimates something in the modern Jewish psyche, including the extremist, puritanical, separatist groups of modern Judaism, who also feel misunderstood and persecuted, but know they are doctrinally right. There was undoubtedly a sense that this was a national shrine. It rather contrasts with the prophetic view, which surfaces a number of times in the Old Testament, that the Jewish people are the people of God for the benefit of the nations, implying their responsibility for others. This is not very evident in the present politics and current practice of Zionism. In terms of real politik, such an outward-looking concern does not make much sense. Nationalist politics suggests that the interests of one's own nation are paramount, even should claiming those interests be at the expense of causing suffering to others. In every way, Israel is 'different', a special case among the nations.

When I talked about my plan to stay at St George's, someone who had been here for some time a few years ago rather deplored the present politicization of the cathedral, suggesting a wrong turn had been taken at some point and a wrong direction pursued. To talk about justice is political. In some Christian discourse this is contrasted with the true task of the church, which is spiritual. But in this country, everything is a political act, every statement political: to do nothing is political, to do something is too. There is no safe place of spiritual neutrality: the expression of one's prayers is charged one way or another. For the Christian, the prayer must be to view the whole situation with the mind of Christ. This must lead into the prayerful and active seeking of peace and justice.

This is a place of very difficult choices. There is a vast amount of abusive behaviour, discrimination and humiliation. The Pilgrim Guest House cook, Moussa, and cathedral doorkeeper (Arabs from near Hebron and Jenin, respectively) told me that God sees what is going on and will not allow it to continue as it is. They are Muslims, but I can agree with what they suggest. God stands in judgement of our politics, as well as our refusal to takes sides or stand against the unjust use of power. Even from the little that I have personally observed, I can see that it is the Arabs who are under suspicion. They have to produce their IDs, present their papers, satisfy the sullen scepticism of police or paramilitaries. It is a sort of logical positivism, a resolute distrust, which will not accept anything unless it is immediately provable. Yes, of course, the Israeli people have a right to live secure from indiscriminate bombing. But this is not the only right which needs to be exercised in this land. I have seen no Arabs with submachine guns or pistols, only people who appear to be trying to live ordinary lives, walking down the street, shopping, bringing up their children. I wonder if continual suspicion is not so eroding of the human spirit that it makes life impossible: at worst it is paranoia, a psychiatric condition. (I am reminded of a

small news story a few weeks ago about three separate incidents in America where special forces soldiers just returned from Afghanistan had killed their wives. The waging of war etches deeply into ordinary personal life, but not so as to improve it.) How can the amount of brutality in every direction which prevails here be redeemed by love? the Christian asks. I'm soon going off to follow the Via Dolorosa with the Franciscan Friday afternoon procession. I hope this might help to begin unravelling these tangled thoughts.

Question: why was there a man wearing a dark suit, red fez, with a curled leather whip accompanying the Franciscan brothers on the Via Dolorosa procession? As we started off, a group mainly composed of religious, in all some 30-40 people, the muezzin was booming out from the Dome of the Rock above us. The prayers at each Station were in Latin, with readings in Italian, English (a Japanese-American Franciscan) and Arabic. For the first two Stations, the rather threatening voice of the muezzin drowned our prayers: its sheer volume saturated our minds. It was difficult to get into any sort of prayerful mode, and feel what was being spoken. But I think the 'effect' mainly comes from walking through the souk, past indifferent adults, children already learning how to ridicule young as they were, past distractions of every sort in the open shop fronts and the sense of menace in the Friday air. The brothers walked quickly. There was a warm welcome for some of the religious from an Orthodox priest at the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre. It became moving at stations 10-13 up the very steep steps to the RC/Orthodox Calvary. I faltered a couple of steps up and could hardly find the strength to continue, for some reason. It was also so good to celebrate stations 14 and 15 at the Tomb of Christ. What an extraordinary privilege! I was surprised that there was no wooden cross being carried with us, nor did I find out why: perhaps in these times of heightened tension it was thought too offensive? The procession lost some immediacy through its absence. And should not the cross be an offence? In the Israel Museum there was a display of a crucifixion and an ankle bone with a bent nail in it from an ossuary. Apparently it is the only example yet found of a crucified body, surprising in view of the many thousands were reportedly crucified. The nail went through the side of the ankle into the side of the upright beam of the cross, a shocking detail.

At each station we said: "Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicamus tibi: Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum." (The Franciscan prayer quoted above on page 15.) You have redeemed the world. The willing victim of God gave his life for the world. Jerusalem in every level of its complexity, now and through the centuries, brings home to the Christian visitor the 'intelligence of the victim'(James Alison) which was the mind of Christ. Jesus' aligning of himself with the victims was a challenge to the politicians, the powerbrokers, the crowds and to popular opinion. All of these he undermined with his love and forgiveness, the gift of the victim. So he speaks to all the victims of Jerusalem, of the Holy Land, the Palestinian Territories. Victims can so easy hate their oppressor. There is a cycle of victimhood here. This is a State which was created out of the victimisation of the Jewish people, which in turn has victimised another people. It is caught in an apparently endless self-definition as victim. The Atonement brought by Jesus Christ offers a theological hope of escape from the destructive cycle. Perhaps this is what Christians can most bring to the dialogue of reconciliation which must one day begin.

Words from one of the evening psalms (147.12): "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! ... He makes peace in your borders ..." A very appropriate prayer for this place. At home it has little force, a pious hope, the 'language of Zion'. But here words suddenly take you by surprise with their immediacy and direct application.

Saturday 31 August 2002

No-one really knows exactly which route Jesus would have taken to and from Bethany when he came to Jerusalem (Mark 11.11, Matthew 21.17). But for the modern pilgrim this walk has a special resonance, thinking of his preparation for his passion in the context of his love for Mary, Martha and Lazarus and their domestic care of him. With his narrative of the raising of Lazarus, St John places Jesus' teaching about resurrection and life in Bethany. The walk to Bethany is a walk to find the source of life, it is a journey for life. From St George's it is also a demanding walk down Wadi Kidron, up and over the Mount of Olives, down to Bethphage, and along and down steeply into Bethany: something like an hour's walk at a steady pace (John 11.18 '15 stadia', RSV 'two miles'). It was a journey to life, but also, for Jesus, a journey to passion and death. For him, there were the contrasts: village and city, hospitality and friendship versus rejection and hatred. With this in mind, I set out to walk in his steps, in a close way that cannot really be found in the city itself now. There everything is changed, and much has been deliberately erased by those who, for one reason or another, wished the little Galilean had neither been here, nor been remembered.

Down the hill first and past the waiting postcard sellers and taxi drivers outside the Garden of Gethsemane. The beggar boy I met earlier in the week, plaintively repeating "No father, no mother, no money" has a dangerously set look of misery as he tries to give out sprigs of olive leaves for money. But leaving him behind, there is no-one else on the steep climb up the Mount of Olives, with its occasional lengths of shallow steps. The view over the Temple Mount is cut off on this path, which emerges from beside houses onto a dilapidated sort of roundabout outside the Church of Pater Noster. The road along its precinct wall leads deeper into an Arab suburb on the east of the Mount of Olives. There are many unfinished houses, concrete beams, much rubbish tipped down into the small ravines on the right hand side. But, in general, the houses are of a generous size, and have a panoramic view down to Bethphage, and beyond to Bethany and the distant misty hills (I thought I could just see the mountains of Moab beyond Jericho, or imagined I could). Further down the road, the Church of Bethphage came into view just round a corner in the road, and below its level. I rang the bell at the church courtyard gate for a time but noone answered and, just as I was on the point of continuing on my walk, a man appeared and nervously let me in, and made a point of locking the gate behind me. "The Musselmen," he said in broken English, by way of explanation. Inside the pleasant church is a block of stone supposed, since Crusader times, to have been the mounting block for Jesus' riding of the donkey into Jerusalem. It was beautifully coloured in places with restored pictures of the triumphal entry. The Franciscan guardian gave a sense of being under siege from the Muslims. "Pray for us," he pleaded as I left. It seemed that he was the only person there. Around the corner, following the precinct wall of the church, there is a great pile of building refuse with huge concrete blocks on top, to the height of 8-10 ft. In the corners by the wall, people had already beaten a track way along to three similar heaps. I discovered later that this had been an Israeli Army checkpoint, relinquished but ready for reuse. There had been no attempt to remove any of the spoil to ease the way for any pedestrians, let alone vehicles. In fact, I thought that this could not possibly be the way to Bethany, and tried another route up past the Greek Orthodox monastery: I quickly discovered it led nowhere and went back down to clamber over the obstacles along what was the path to Bethany. On the top of the last heap of rubble was a burnt-out car. In the wadi to the left beyond all this, at the staggered crossroads, was a skeletal minibus and more rubble. Down the steep hill, with its panoramic views to the Judaean wilderness and Jordan, I almost tumbled into the small town of Bethany. The main road through the town is the Jerusalem to Jericho road, Good Samaritan country. On this road, the lower part of the modern St Lazarus' Church is tomb-like and deeply shaded. Above, shimmering with the light streaming in through the central window disk, the golden mosaics of the dome proclaim resurrection and life . The church is another by the Italian architect, Barluzzi ('Dominus Flevit' and others in the Holy Land), but it cannot escape the archaeology of the place, with grills in the floor and a courtyard outside of ancient Christian mosaics and foundations of the earlier churches on the site. Everything we now see is always on top of something more original. But while it is possible to peel away the newer layers, the archaeological remains are fragmentary and impressionistic. You have to react to what you actually do see and read from the hints of the earlier narrative. In the pleasant garden of the Church there is a covered walk with hanging clusters of grapes, almost ripe, evocative also of St John and the True Vine, the disciple growing organically out of his master (John 15). Inside the church, the great Latin declaration EGO SUM RESURRECTIO ET VITA speaks first to the incoming visitor. The crispness of this message is the utterly distinctive essence of the Christian story, resurrection. I'm clearer now that it is this which I have come to be renewed in. It is this story I want to

grow into and tell.

The guardian of the Tomb of Lazarus just up the road was on two crutches. On closer meeting, he was not as old as he had appeared. He opened the door and allowed me down the alarming flight of steps, first into the vestibule which tradition has as where Jesus stood when he called: “Lazarus, come out!” You now have to crawl down through an impossibly low entrance to the tomb chamber itself: it must have been easier for the dazed Lazarus (flooring levels have changed significantly). It is intriguing that St John is the only Gospel writer to tell this story. In the narrative, it is wonderfully placed in the context of hospitality and Jesus’ love for this family (John 11.5). But it is also firmly located in Bethany, with accurate information about how far it is from Jerusalem. The theme of resurrection and life finds its first tangible expression in the raising of Lazarus. “Unbind him, let him go!” is the word of redeemed and abounding life given to the long dead friend of Jesus. What better picture of the coming-to-life of the believer do we have in the gospels?

On my emergence up to the road, the doorkeeper plied me with questions about how he could get free medical treatment in England, and university education. He had left St George’s School in 1997, but now seemed stuck in every way. His chances of getting a hip operation had been seriously diminished by the Intifada. His present work seems to have been in his family since his grandfather, but he wants more from life. He wanted me to do what I could to help. But in England he would not be welcomed. Yet he hinted about the humanitarian crisis in which he lived, dependent upon UN food aid. People should not have to live like that. This encounter disturbed me: of course I would like to help, and I would like our country to help this one young man. Holding the heart open is hard. He needed to hear the old voice of authority: “Unbind him, let him go!” I did not have the faith to utter them, in the face of his need. I stumbled even with thinking about pragmatic answers to his many problems.

I had started the morning feeling the accumulating tiredness and loss of energy in the heat and intensity of the situation in Jerusalem. Somehow, experiencing the light of resurrection and the walk back, made me feel quite hopeful. A spring came back into my step, a bounce of resurrection: the Lord’s gift, I am sure.

After a good nap, later in the afternoon I went to my favourite site, the Garden Tomb, to put the experiences of the day together. It had been a day of resurrection, a spiritual projection forward into tomorrow (Sunday). I was thinking about the great I AM sayings of Jesus in St John, from the morning’s experience of St Lazarus’ Church and Tomb. My meditation was about the metaphors of true vine, bread, good shepherd, the way and so on. We each need to get our metaphors sorted out, as they contain the secret of an individual’s spiritual journey, and also what we are, spiritually, to others. (My colleague, Nona, is nourished by the metaphor of the true vine: I thought of her when I was standing under the almost ripe fruit.) The sharing of these metaphors by Jesus in the Johannine I AM sayings is an aspect of his gift of abundant life to his disciples. They are not just clever words, but what Jesus actually becomes for us . The I AM of God’s revelation of himself in the Old Testament underlies each of these metaphors of life, in their poetry and the pictured image, in the interplay between the words and the image, the metaphor and its spiritual reality. Perhaps we each need to apprehend just one of these sayings, because for us it will then gradually reveal Christ’s whole being, because all the images are one in him. It is not just a matter of words, but of Murray Cox’s ‘mutative metaphors’, metaphors which gradually release a hidden blockage and signal or stimulate a new phase of life. That is something of R S Thomas’ poetic gift to us, vivid metaphors which expand the spirit and mind. So our spiritual task is to find our own personal key: the metaphors which open up for us what the Church is, what our Christian lives are, what our spiritual being is for others.

9.00pm: sounds of constant traffic, snatches of Arab song, in the distance a siren, echoing louder then softer. The is the occasional blast of a harsh claxon as a jeep of the military police rushes on some call, edging other traffic out of the way.

31 August 2002 Fatalities reported by B’Tselem

Bahira Daraghmeh, **age 6**, killed by IDF Helicopter missile fire, during an assassination attempt, directed at a senior Hamas official, In Tubas, Jenin District

Osama Daraghmeh, **age 12**, killed by IDF Helicopter missile fire, during an assassination attempt, directed at a senior Hamas official, In Tubas, Jenin District

Sari Subeh, **age 16**, killed by IDF Helicopter missile fire, during an assassination attempt, directed at a senior Hamas official, In Tubas, Jenin District

Yazid Daraghmeh, **age 17**, killed by IDF Helicopter missile fire, during an assassination attempt, directed at a senior Hamas official, In Tubas, Jenin District

Rafat 'Akab Daraghmeh, age 28, killed by IDF Helicopter missile fire, during an assassination attempt, directed at a senior Hamas official, in Tubas, Jenin.

A person for whom B'Tselem has no details, killed by gunfire in the settlement of Har Bracha, Nablus district, by members of settlement's civil patrol group, after he entered the settlement, open fire, and injured two Israeli civilians.

Sunday 1 September 2002

Three very different Services. I started with the 9.30am Morning Service with Communion at the Anglican Christchurch, Jaffa Gate. It is a church with a Jewish 'feel', and, to my surprise, there was no cross I could see in central vision. The altar was under the chancel arch, with Jesus' words of Institution in Hebrew: on the tasselled table cover stood a menorah, two chalices, a ram's horn and prayer book. To the right of the altar was a grand piano, with OHP screen above, to the left a lectern. In the south transept, a music group was playing and singing, with a microphone each. A church in the evangelical tradition, with a Hebrew flavour. In what was sung and said, Jesus was mostly referred to as Messiah rather than Christ. We sang choruses more than once, in Hebrew and English. The worship began with 'Crown him with many crowns'. The minister blew the ram's horn to signal the theme of the service, Friday's Feast of the Trumpets/Ros Hashanah. The basic structure was 'Rite A', but with a very long drawn out singing of praise choruses and hymns instead of the Gloria (two of the hymns were repeated in their entirety). We were given two prophecies: first, the foundations are being shaken, to remove all that is unnecessary, but my Kingdom is unshaken; second, my people are suffering and must suffer more, these are days of sensitivity, stay close to my heart, protect my purposes in these strategic days. Thus we did not even get to the readings until an hour and ten minutes into the service: first, a Torah reading, from Deuteronomy; next from Isaiah, a prophet; then 1 Corinthians, no Gospel reading. The sermon, by a visiting preacher, was a description and explanation of Ros Hashanah, challenging us to see in the blowing of the horn remembrance, coronation and judgement. The story of Isaac, which is in the synagogue lectionary of the feast, resonates with the Messiah: they both bore wood, for example. For the Jew celebrating the feast there are prophetic references to Jesus at so many points. The preacher criticised the Western churches for their reliance on programmes and organisations, busyness (good works): we should ask instead: "Lord, what have you told me to do that will bear fruit?" (Now the service had been running for two hours.) There was a recognisable Eucharistic prayer, with the "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation ..." integrated into the consecration in Hebrew, then English. Up to the altar rail to kneel to receive. There was no Blessing at the end; the prayer, "Father of all, we give you thanks and praise ..."; more praise choruses, then off at 12.05pm, 2 hours 35 minutes after we began. As I went out, the Rector asked where I was from: as I replied, "Near Andover, England", he tapped something into his hand-held organiser. All in all this was a thought-provoking experience, especially as I was seeing so much of Jerusalem from an east Jerusalem viewpoint. It felt both American and foreign at the same time, an actively Jewish approach to the Christian tradition. Their leaflet says they believe "that it is not only possible for a Jew to remain Jewish and believe in Jesus, but essential and natural". There were also intercessions for the Jewish people, without political reference, and for 'the sons of Ishmael, in bondage to Islam'.

3.00pm Vespers in the Armenian Cathedral of St James. Being slightly early, we few foreigners had to wait in the courtyard. Much tolling of bells, and suddenly the seminarians emerged, dressed in blazers, filed across the yard diagonally, into a changing room, from which they emerged in ones and twos still putting on their robes (like a Gospel choir). We were then allowed behind the heavy curtain and into the darkness of the cathedral, inside which it seemed safest to stay near the back wall, where there were picnic chairs to unfold and sit on. Just a few of the innumerable lamps hanging within the four main columns under the dome were lighted. They hung in the air like stars and planets in the night sky. A shaft of sunlight fell into the sanctuary, and gentle waves of sunlight shone whenever anyone opened the curtain and entered. Only the visitors were on time! The service began with a reading from the balcony on the left, a priest and two students came and stood in front of the altar singing antiphonally: it was a quiet start, with solo voices. Suddenly, these few began to sing together, with the whole group of seminarians now entering from the left, kissing the hand of the Patriarch, who was standing on the right of the entrance to the sanctuary. They split into two antiphonal choirs, and the singing gradually gathered momentum and emphasis as they sang in dialogue with each other from the two chapels on either side of the sanctuary. A few minutes of this and a student from each choir carried a lectern stand to points between the east and west pillars. Each choir gathered around these, led by a priest cantor, and they sang hymns and readings to each other (the north choir rather less successfully - term had just started and the boys were not yet confident of what they were singing). There was a barely perceptible gathering of pace and emphasis, and they finished joyfully and loudly. The censers had been around the columns, around the choirs, around the priests, and the Patriarch who had come to stand between the western columns facing east. The Patriarch and priests came into the service dressed in black. Before they left the sanctuary, they were clothed in golden cloaks which

beamed as they crossed the shaft of sunlight, and when the entry curtain was lifted and sunlight picked out the gold in their robes. The lining of these cloaks was a gorgeous shot pink-purple. More censing, this time of those of us around the walls. A priest carried the silver icon and stood holding it with a white cloth. The priests lit their candles, bowed to the Patriarch and went and kissed the icon and returned to stand by the Patriarch. The latter signalled his permission for each movement with a silver cross in his right hand. The choral singing stopped. The priests, now relieved of their cloaks, went and stood in front of the high altar singing. Students carried the lecterns back to the two side chapels, the young men and boys processed out, priests and patriarchs following. A priest rolled up the mat the patriarch had been standing on. The service was over and we visitors were ushered out, noticing the khatchkars (crosses carved in relief and donated by pilgrims) high on the wall opposite the entrance to the cathedral. It had been a gently accumulating reading, singing, processing, venerating, displaying of the icon. Even without knowing a word of what was said, we knew that something timeless and dignified, mysterious, and profound had been taking place. Yet the whole service and ancient setting were a unity of performance and place, with a sensitivity to both aspects which is not always shown in Protestant churches. Like the many dark paintings hanging high and low on the walls, as the eye acclimatised to the darkness of the church parts of the Christian story gradually revealed themselves, through a service which emphasised presence rather than word. Most of us have lost the sense of the rising flow and architecture of our services.

6.00pm Evensong in St George's Anglican Cathedral. Book of Common Prayer, a home from home, with an office hymn after the bidding litany, another hymn after the end of the office, a sermon and intercessions, hymn and blessing. There was a small international group of us in the choir. Fr Yazeed, the Arabic assistant priest, was faced with difficult readings, when he is so good a reader with more straightforward prose. The Psalms were read in course in the BCP daily sections for the first evening. Dean Michael gave the homily on John the Baptist, the feast of whose death was on Friday. How essentially Anglican it all was, and therefore reassuring in this unnerving city. The inside of the cathedral, which from the outside would look at home in any English city, has just a touch of local vernacular, apart from the necessary fan cooling us from the side.

Working away at my thoughts about 'sense of place and of the sacred', I was thinking of how modern life with its mobility erases our sensitivity to holy place, as it suggests that all places are equivalent. The guiding metaphors for the Christian are pilgrim and resident alien (παροικός), both living away from home. For the pilgrim, the holy place is the sign of the goodness and action of God, and a sacrament of his presence (cf John of Damascus: "We venerate all the Holy Sites, not for their nature, but because they are vessels of God's action.") Every church is a sign of the redemption by the cross, the gift of love and hope, and in existence to impel us towards thankfulness for the grace of God. For the pilgrim, the spiritual relationship between himself and the holy place and the memory of the holy person, the 'syntopicity' which gathers into one place aspects of the incarnation and redemption, and builds them on top of one another, are all part of his sense of place and of the holy. For the resident alien, his apprehension of his present place is always in the context of being an exile from his real home. But he knows that *this* place, if loved, may represent aspects of that spiritual home, though it can never fill his longing for its fulness. He knows that it is a part of the revelation of God for him.

1 September 2002 Fatalities reported by B'Tselem

Hisham Na'im Dhib al-Hala'iqa, age 33, from a- Shuyukh, Hebron district, killed by IDF gunfire near the factory in which he worked, in Bani Na'im, Hebron district, The West Bank. Was unarmed.

Hussam Na'im Dhib Hala'iqa, age 33, from a- Shuyukh, Hebron district, killed by IDF gunfire near the factory in which he worked, in Bani Na'im, Hebron district, The West Bank. Was unarmed.

'Atiye al-Hala'iqa, age 21, from a- Shuyukh, Hebron district, killed by IDF gunfire near the factory in which he worked, in Bani Na'im, Hebron district, The West Bank. Was unarmed.

'Alaa 'Atef 'abd al-Yasin 'Abayde, age 21, a- Shuyukh, Hebron district, killed by IDF gunfire near the factory in which he worked, in Bani Na'im, Hebron district, The West Bank. Was unarmed.

Monday 2 September 2002

The walk to Yad VaShem. From here, the Arab east Jerusalem suburb dissolves into Jewish areas of west Jerusalem across a dual carriageway, Shivtei Yisrael, which seems to mark the boundary between the two. Along HaNevi'im, crossing Yafo (Jaffa) Road at its end, then cutting into Herut Square and along Agrippas onto the dual carriageway, Zalman Shazar, then left into the long sweep of Sderot Herzl. The suburbs I passed through could have been in any city, but for the armed police at the entrances to the covered market on Agrippas. There seems to have been a lot of redevelopment south of Herzl, with new blocks of flats and major roads, new suburbs of Begin North and South, and more signs of work on the railway. It's a long, hot pull down Herzl, walking for some time without seeming to make much distance because of the scale of things around here. Then the foothills of the Mount of Remembrance rise up on the right. I might have gone into the park containing Herzl's and other leaders' graves, but there seemed to be rather too many armed young soldiers around. But I was also feeling very ambivalent about their achievement of the past leaders of Israel which have led into the present situation. The repressive policies of the present government have developed out of the past honoured here. So I followed the road round the hill to Har HaZikaran, the Mount of Remembrance. The road leads to Yad VaShem, down the hillside. This last part of the walk was through Mediterranean pines reminiscent of a pine shaded road in Greece, and certainly as hot. The site of Yad VaShem, it turned out, was being redesigned and rebuilt. It was not much as I had been expecting it. The main buildings were surrounded by a 'keep out' corrugated metal fence, with concrete mixer lorries lumbering up the hill, dust everywhere, the twisted skeleton of metal reinforcement and tall cranes. Having missed the diversion signs, and following old directions, I found I was on the exit side of where I wanted to go. This road led along the Way of the Righteous, past an old Swedish Red Cross ambulance, which had been used to rescue some from concentration camps. There was a large monument to Jewish resistance fighters, on the edge of the hillside, near the path down to the Valley of Destroyed Communities. Here was a superb panorama across the hills to the north, white areas of settlement in patches against the predominant scorched brown rock. In the extreme distance billowed a compact black cloud of smoke, which seemed to have its source just beyond the hills on the horizon. I had heard jets scream past as I stood by the Jewish resistance monument. I don't know what the smoke on the horizon was, and I did not find out in the news what was going on. I suspected this was some sort of a raid, but would it have been in daylight?

Eventually, retracing my steps, I found the temporary new entrance to the memorial buildings. It led across a metal bridge, a sapper construction, over the foundations of the new buildings, and into the Hall of Remembrance. It took time to adjust to the sombre and suggestive darkness and to begin to be able to read the names of the concentration camps cast into the floor. The eternal flame was burning in the corner, but did not seem to be providing light. As an introduction to what is to follow, it creates a heavy mood. Despite previous searches of my rucksack, the guard at the museum, 'Warning and Witness' looked again into the bag and said threateningly as he frisked it electronically: "Telephone? Off! Camera? No flash!" There was a meanness about him. So you walk into the story of the Holocaust: through exhibits of the warning signs, the ghettoisation, the evil intent of a relatively small number of people being converted through the acquiescence of many into bullying, oppression, discrimination, execution, starving, and finally into the merciless industrial apparatus of death running flat out in the most 'efficient' camps. Alongside that utter cheapening of human life, the doctors' medical experiments on unaesthetised women. You can only achieve this level of cruelty if you have persuaded yourself that your victims are less than human, *untermensch*, or vermin to be eradicated. How could the ordinary operators of this death machine, soldiers with their own families, fathers, husbands, have been persuaded to do their work? There was Himmler's chilling speech to these soldiers, recognising how they, despite their very hard and draining 'work', nevertheless were still keeping their essential moral values - they were still decent men. This is dangerously unhinged from truth. All the images in these dark corridors were black and white. W G Sebald said: "A black-and-white photograph is a document of absence, and is curiously metaphysical". The lack of colour adds wistfulness to this documentary of cruelty. Why did no country save the Jews? This disturbing question was raised near the end of the exhibition. The Americans knew what was going on as early as 1942, but the decision was taken not to bomb the camps, nor their supply routes, for reasons of strategy. The British stopped and turned back a ship of Jewish refugees from landing in Palestine. The Palestinian Grand Mufti met Himmler. These photographs and documents contributed to the message: everyone was against us; no government was prepared to help us when we were victims, only a few righteous people. So

the guilt is that of the whole world, countries failing to act independently or together. The accusation is against the world, especially the Western nations, who knowingly allowed the Holocaust to happen, and even contributed to it by their anti-Semitism in not taking in Jewish refugees. What can ever expiate such guilt? And so the line is extended into the Zionist claiming of *Eretz-Israel*. Yes, we must always remember. Because we must remember the Holocaust, we must remember these contributory wrongs.

But, and, of course, the exhibition does not go along this line, we must also remember the wrongs which have been done subsequently in a different anti-Semitism to the indigenous peoples in this country. 'Semitic' means both the Jewish and Arab peoples: anti-Semitic therefore could also mean 'anti-Arab'. I like the parable in David Hare's monologue "*Via Dolorosa*". A man jumps out of a burning building onto another man who happened to be passing, breaking his neck. "Hey, you've broken my neck", he says. "Sorry, it's because of the fire." And when the man says: "Yes, but my neck's broken", they just break his arm in order to try to shut him up. And when he doesn't shut up, they break his other arm. Then they break his leg. Then his other leg. All in the hope that one day he'll shut up (p31). The State of Israel is not yet a fitting memorial to the Holocaust. It will need a very strong sense of moral and spiritual leadership to become what it hopes to be. There are ironic events taking place, bearing in mind the story of the Holocaust. Palestinian towns have been surrounded and sealed. The Palestinians are being ghettoised and suffering debilitating curfews. The refugee camps are concentrations of hopeless people. A mainly unarmed civilian population is being restrained by lethal military force. The parallels are morally filled with danger for the Jewish people. Nor do the dominant world nations particularly wish to know what is going on. As during the War they are not prepared to intervene in the catastrophe which is now unfolding.

It is also worth reflecting on "Yad VaShem" as a name. "I will give in my house and within my walls, *a monument and a name* [in Hebrew: yad vashem] better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the lord and to be his servants ... these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer ... for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." (Isaiah 56.5-7) It is worth quoting the whole prophecy into the situation: Israel does indeed have a special place among the nations, but this is a spiritual trust.

Can the international guilt for the Holocaust ever be atoned for? Israel has a powerful hold over the bad consciences of the nations: but it is a hold which must not be abused. There always seems to be great danger and death attendant upon the '-isms' which we devise and then try to live out. Their record over the last 200 years is particularly depressing. Unlike the ancient religions, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Confucianism, the modern '-isms' have not been demonstrably balanced enough to have a principle of restraint, a powerful moral direction, within their belief pattern. Some of them have been profoundly anti-human in their inhospitality, or active hostility, to others. They have been even more sinister when they gained their energy by being intolerant and creating sacrificial victims for the supposed 'good' of the '-ism'. Sacrifice is a very powerful action, whether inside or outside religions. The death of the victim creates an exchange of vital energy, which requires great moral restraint and spiritual maturity not to misuse. The death of the victim appears to authenticate, at the very deepest level, the 'truth' of the '-ism'. All of the modern forms seem to have a dense inhospitality to 'the other' at their heart and are profoundly anti-human, and anti-Christian. Christ affirms the life of 'the other' in relation to our own.

James Alison writes of Jesus' "intelligence of the victim". The One who was The Victim, and on the side of all victims, offered up his life as victim of state and establishment ideologies of the time. He died in the same way as the victims of the twentieth century. Yet, and here Jerusalem cries out to us all, Jesus rose again from the dead. In his Resurrection he gathers all victims into the life of God, in an atonement for all the evil ideologies which caused their torture and deaths. Because the resurrection is to eternal life, his death is for all future victims too. The one who himself lived and died a victim leads us all into the resurrection. In him is also the atonement for the Armenian massacres, the gypsies, the 'deviants' and criminals in their Holocaust. And because victimisers are victims too, for them. How was Hitler able to inflict his death-will upon the German people? What was there in the mentality of ordinary Germans which was so manipulable? Why do people need so little encouragement to bully others, to bring the question into our own workplaces, even our churches?

As I walked back, the other lane of Herzl Road was blocked by police in a display of alert security. A

caterpillar-tracked bomb disposal robot was running down a ramp from a police van at the centre of it all: a small crowd of onlookers was standing around. But technology cannot deal with the threat of the bomb and the insecurity within the mind. How can the Israelis not see that?

In the east Jerusalem streets, on this first day of the new term, many school children are walking back from school in the early afternoon. Their uniforms are neat; some children look so tiny in them. It is wonderful to see such a witness to ordinary life and hope, children being educated in peace. What a responsibility to be a teacher in such a situation: even to talk about 'the situation' to the young. Objectivity and neutrality are regarded as precious qualities in Western eyes. When you are caught up in such a passionate history and are living in its continuing unfolding, is it possible, or indeed human, to hold them?

Tuesday 3 September 2002

The West Bank. I spent the morning with Fr Michael Sellors, Dean of St George's Cathedral, at his invitation. We travelled with Fr Michael's usual taxi driver from St George's to Beit Jala. There was a long queue of vehicles at the main Bethlehem checkpoint, so we drove on through a new road tunnel and then up through some back streets to a deserted checkpoint-cum-rubbish tip. Having clambered over this, we walked along a dusty path, and down the hill into the *Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation Centre*. This was a new building, and seemed well equipped by international government and charity donations listed on plaques. (My recollection is of much help from Italy, a little from Britain.) We were shown round by Mary Mattan, personal assistant to the Director, Edmund Shehadeh, the man with the visionary drive for this place, but unfortunately away today. Basically, it is an orthopaedic rehabilitation centre reacting to Intifada injuries. I suppose that some of the young men we saw being treated might have been 'terrorists' or 'freedom fighters'. There were women and babies, and older men there too. But the director has recently started an ophthalmology department and hopes to continue diversifying to become, if possible, a small hospital. (There is also a state hospital elsewhere in Beit Jala, but the facilities here are of a high standard.) There was a warm welcome in whichever ward we entered. The Centre seemed to be working far below capacity, with wards echoing with unused space.

A driver from the Centre took us down and along the wide sweep of the valley rim right into Manger Square. Fr Michael took me into 'Il Bambino' woodcarvers and I bought a crib set, which was marked down to the price of the smaller size because of poor trade. The shop owner was sad and perplexed: few tourists now reach Bethlehem: there is no local trade and some of the international importers whom they have been depending on have been very slow to pay. The manager also said that he had got up at 4.30 that morning to water his trees and crossed Manger Square to discover a tank prowling around. "The soldiers were very polite when they challenged me, but they should not have been there", he said. The Israeli occupation was supposed to have ended, but they were making a point.

We had a snack in St George's Restaurant in the corner of the Square: a large space with many seats but no other customers. After lunch we walked across to the Peace Centre. This had a deserted and empty feel to it also, with the auditorium and two out of the three galleries empty after the occupation. The third gallery was still filled with an odd *Anglican Communion* display of international crib figures, some great fun, but with a few empty cabinets where a donors had reclaimed their crib sets. The building was conceived as a cultural centre, but the local 'culture' had been trashed during the siege. It seems as if it was IDF policy to erase Palestinian cultural emblems, destroy computers by removing hard disks, destroy the contents of offices and so undermine any traces of the Palestinian Authority (see the article by William Dalrymple noted below).

We walked back across the Square and through the almost empty courtyard of the Church of the Nativity. Fr Michael, who was given honorary citizenship of Bethlehem because of his work in the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations, was greeted by the Palestinian Authority police outside the church. The low doorway enforces humility on those who enter. Then we were inside the place which had been the epicentre of the recent siege. It was empty of visitors from abroad, just a few vergers. A man said we were the first visitors today (this was 1.45pm). We walked down the steps to the Grotto, and because it was so free of the press of tourists and pilgrims pushing us onward which I remembered from last time, it was possible to pray and spend time there. I was very moved by the incarnation, the precious gift of God in his Son and the ordinariness of the cave. The place does not look at all like the Christmas cards, but everything about this time and place were special for me. I felt I had to touch and pray, regretting only the oily deposit on the silver star of the nativity and the floor around it. We came up and past the Armenian and Coptic altars near the left stairway up from the Grotto, and went into St Catherine's. It had been locked because there were no visitors, but the doorkeeper was kind enough to open for us. We went down into the caves on the right which link up with the Grotto. St Jerome had made this his room: in the complex is the Chapel of St Jerome, his tomb (the body having been taken to St Maria Maggiore in Rome), The Innocents, St Joseph (all the latter Murphy-O'Connor dismisses as without any historical foundation, only the imperative mentioned above to find a place for everything mentioned in the Gospel narratives). Outside the Church, in the cloistered courtyard of St Jerome, is a pillar stature of the saint carrying his visual aid, a skull: it was here that the IDF had maintained a sniper, and where a Franciscan was shot.

I remembered the news photos of Palestinian fighters running along past the wall of the courtyard in front of the

Church of the Nativity, round past the corner, to seek refuge in the Church and precipitate the siege. They should not have been allowed into the Church with their weapons. But this is a country where principles are compromised to keep going.

We now had to get out of the West Bank and back into Jerusalem. A passing taxi driver recognised the Dean and gave us a lift to the checkpoint. One hotel we passed had been substantially damaged, windows broken, the marble cladding almost completely removed. Traffic lights had been flattened. Close to the checkpoint, an area on both sides of the road had been cleared of all buildings, probably houses and shops. There was a queue of vehicles, and on the right hand side, where the pavement had been torn up and ground left rough, was a covered walkway with a sign halfway down - STOP, twenty metres from the guard post. A small group of Arabs was waiting, including two girls in tartan gym slips and jeans, aged around 10 and 12, on their way back home from school. Nothing was happening. A lorry was called forward on the road to the waiting soldier, documents scrutinised and then the driver was forced to turn back. The queue ahead of us was dealt with very slowly indeed by the single soldier ahead of us. A few people emerged from the other direction along the same walkway. Two young men on foot were called forward, only to be sent back. Progress was slow. As foreigners we were waved through briskly. One soldier was 'working', three others with feet up enjoying the joke in the office. There was a similar small group of Arabs waiting on the other side, including some teachers and pupils whose misfortune it was to live on one side of the checkpoint and have their school on the other. In the distance on the right, down in the valley, was the controversial Har Homa settlement, glistening white. No-one had yet moved into the development, according to the Dean. Our delay was nothing much, but one can guess the cumulative humiliation of having to face the soldiers twice a day, with the arbitrary delays and turnings back. I admired the gentle dignity of those waiting with us, including the young men who had been turned away: it was far more impressive than the swaggering guards, who for all their power lacked authority. On the other side of the checkpoint, a taxi was waiting for fares and we returned quickly back to the 'normality' which is Jerusalem.

Later, Fr Michael told me the story of Hilda, a receptionist at the Rehabilitation Centre. During one of the closures of Beit Jala, her mother had died in Ramallah, which was also closed. She had tried, but not been permitted to attend her mother's funeral. Hilda is disabled and gets around in a wheelchair, and cannot have been any sort of a security threat.

Edmund Shehadah, the executive director of the Centre, had been out of the country during one such closure. Soldiers had used his home as a strategic base, forcing his wife and family to stay in one room. There are not many countries where this could be regarded as legal, but here it seemed a common story.

During the Bethlehem siege, there had been regular gatherings of Christians from Jerusalem to pray at the checkpoint. On the day after the siege was lifted, they were allowed in and greeted with overwhelming warmth. The mayor had been insistent that they come into the Church of the Nativity: even in the first few hours of freedom the very hard working teams had started to get the place cleaned up as a priority.

I went to the Garden Tomb later in the afternoon and tried to think and pray through the rich experience of these nine days. What do I make of it all?

- The Psalms really came alive, and those readings from Jeremiah and the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, with their references to Jerusalem and Zion.
- The sense of walking in Jesus' steps, even though impressionistically: the right places substantially, but hidden under an often unhelpful present appearance.
- The particular places, the foundational Christian shrines of the Church of the Nativity and the Holy Sepulchre, discovered this time as compelling and moving places of prayer. Giving a full attention to specific place involves a sensitivity also to its spiritual dimension. Receiving what the Holy Sepulchre and the Nativity offer, means also receiving Christ as Saviour and Redeemer.
- The friendliness and dignity of the Arabs: the distance I felt from the Jewish people, a sense of discomfort because of what was happening elsewhere out of sight in their name, but also because of the emotional effects of trying to face the Holocaust; shame, anguish and disgust, and the guilt which it induces.

- It is the Death and Resurrection of Jesus which makes all the difference, the great integration into real life of all things and all people, the hope of the new heaven and the new earth: the Holy Sepulchre is the very centre of all Christian life, and spiritually in every church.
- The primacy of hospitality, welcome, friendliness, acceptance (all of which I understand to be the Christian faith, but also evidenced in the other Jerusalem faiths), versus all the boundary making, the checkpoints, turnings away, aggressive poses, dark glasses, petty delays, obstructiveness, humiliation, trashing of property, the rubbishing of people.
- Out of my response to the shrines and places of prayer, a reinforcement of what I take to be Johannine teaching, that the Crucifixion is the Ascension, and the Resurrection is Pentecost (the shrines of the Ascension and Pentecost felt thin and far less satisfying than those of the Incarnation and Passion).
- The gentle and special contribution here of the shrines of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I had not appreciated how St Mary is venerated by Muslims also.
- The resolution to pray, and, if I can, find ways of working for the bringing in of justice in this land. The path to reconciliation will be as deserted and hard as the most bleak wilderness here. But it cannot be done from a supposed neutrality: here there are only sides, and no middle ground on which to stand, except the moderate and inclusive beliefs of the vast majority of adherents of each religion. The extremists have seized the language, which itself has become a victim of the conflict. Maintaining a communicative solidarity with the Christians here is very important for their morale, as is finding ways of supporting the Anglican churches here in their ministry of reconciliation.

3 September 2002 Fatalities reported by B'Tselem

'Abd al-Qarim Bassam 'Sa'adi, **age 17**, from Jenin, killed by IDF gunfire during a fire exchange, in Jenin refugee camp, Jenin district, The West Bank

Baher abd a-Ra'uf 'Eid, from Burin, killed by IDF gunfire in Burin, Nablus district, The West Bank. Was unarmed.

Hussaein a-Najar, from Burin, killed by IDF gunfire in Burin, Nablus district, The West Bank. Was unarmed.

During these nine days, there were no Israeli fatalities
either in the Israeli or Palestinian territories
attributable to the Intifada,
according to B'Tselem.

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