Fig. 20.1: Interior, Mosque of Omar, from Volrath Vogt, *Det Hellige Land*, 1879.

Birger Løvlie

Chapter 20

A City of Murderers? Norwegians in Jerusalem in the Late 1800s

Why would Norwegian theologians undertake a troublesome and expensive trip to the Holy Land as early as the second half of the nineteenth century? Volrath Vogt, theologian and high school teacher, went there as early as 1863. At least two other expeditions followed in Vogt's footsteps, one in 1869–1870, and another one in 1886. All journeys resulted in books or extensive reports that tell about long boat trips and fatiguing weeks on horsebacks from Jaffa and Beirut to Jerusalem. The participants of the two last expeditions described themselves as pilgrims, who travelled with Jerusalem as their goal; the place where the most crucial events in Christianity took place. Was the sight of the Holy City worth all efforts? All participants could answer yes to that question, but several of them expressed disappointments. Some ended up naming Jerusalem the City of Murderers, while others put less emphasis on what might seem negative, focusing on God's promises and plans for the city and the land, and not least with hopes attached to the New Jerusalem.

In the second half of the 1800s, there seems to have been a growing interest among Norwegian theologians and laymen in travelling to Palestine; the Holy Land. We will have a look at their stories in order to map their experiences from journeys which at that time were long and fatiguing. What motivated the participants to invest time, money, and effort in such a trip? Did they see and learn enough to say the journey was worth every effort? I will return to these questions, but let me first introduce the travellers.

Volrath Vogt

In 1863 the theologian and teacher Volrath Vogt (1817–1889) went on a study tour to Syria and Palestine. Vogt was born in Denmark, but grew up in Tune in Østfold, where his father was a pastor. He studied theology at the University of Christiania (Oslo), graduated in 1838, and was shortly afterwards appointed as a teacher at

Christiania Cathedral School.¹ There he taught religion and geography.² When he left Norway on his journey, he had already published his textbook in biblical history (1858) for the primary school,³ and a similar textbook for the secondary schools appeared with a separate chapter on the Holy Land.⁴ The following year, he started his journey, which led to his great work *Det hellige Land [The Holy Land]* (1879), being published after he had worked on it for 15 years, as he wrote in the introduction.⁵ He also published the diary he kept during the journey.⁶

Vogt's book about the Holy Land, which is about 750 pages, is a comprehensive depiction of Palestine and the surrounding area. It is, in part, formed as a reference book where cities and other places are described in alphabetical order. With its detailed ethnographic, botanical, zoological, and geographical information, it is largely organised according to the same pattern as the topographical literature that appeared in abundance from the late 1700s onwards; partly because the authorities in Copenhagen encouraged it.⁷ His books are richly illustrated with drawings of important destinations for travellers (Fig. 20.1), but also of animals and plant life, and even one of Lot's wife. The presentation stands out with its sober and impersonal style. He carefully explains the connection of the various places to the Bible, but also informs the reader about their later history. He also uses other sources, especially Josephus, but also Eusebius, Tacitus, and Herodotus. His description of Jerusalem is particularly extensive and covers almost 200 pages.

As mentioned earlier, Vogt wrote a textbook for the secondary schools, where he added a chapter describing the Holy Land, revealing his topographic interest and knowledge even before having been there. He tells about the climate, which is peculiar in the way that both palms and vines thrive, but otherwise the land is no longer flowing with milk and honey. He regrets that some information, such as the size of the population, was difficult to determine because the Turkish "authorities" did not care about that matter. Many places which are related to the history of Israel, or to the life of Jesus, are mentioned quite briefly: Galilee, Caesarea Philippi, the Mount of Beatitudes, Bethsaida, Nazareth, and Capernaum. Samaria is cited with reference to Ahab and Jezebel, and Shechem in connection with Joseph's grave and the well of Jacob. The cities of Judea are briefly described, most often with reference to the Old Testament.

1 The name of the capital of Norway was spelled Christiania till around 1870, when it was changed to Kristiania. From 1925 the name has been Oslo.

2 Andreas Aarflot, "Volrath Vogt," in *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, vol. 9, ed. Jon Gunnar Arntzen (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 2005), 388.

3 Volrath Vogt, *Bibelhistorie med lidt af Kirkens Historie* (Christiania: P. F. Stensballes Forlag, 1858).

4 Volrath Vogt, *En større Bibelhistorie med Beskrivelse af det Hellige Land* (Christiania: P.F. Steensballes Forlag, 1861).

5 Volrath Vogt, *Det hellige Land* (Kristiania: P.T. Mallings Boghandels Forlag, 1879).

6 Volrath Vogt, *Reise i det Hellige Land og Syrien* (Kristiania: Selskabet for Folkeoplysningens Fremme, 1865).

7 Norway had been united with Denmark since 1397; a union that ended in 1814.

He is more elaborate about Jerusalem, *The House of Peace*, and the history of the place, starting with the conquest by the Israelites at the time of Moses and Joshua. He points out that the city is built on four mountains, describing the area with reference to the sacrifice of Isaac. He also refers to Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives, where Constantine's mother built the Ascension Church. Among memories of the holy history of the town, he designates David's grave, then the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which includes both Calvary and Christ's grave. In his great book *The Holy Land*, he has a detailed presentation of the history of this church and the problems associated with the location; problems that he summarizes briefly in his textbook. He also provides information about the Muslim presence. At Moriah, where the temple stood, there were now five mosques. The most beautiful was, in Vogt's opinion, what the Christians called the Omar Mosque, located in the centre of Moriah. Vogt rejects the tradition claiming that it was built by the Caliph Omar (died 641), but expresses sympathy for those who believe the mosque was originally a church that Constantine built at the place he believed was Christ's grave and called the Church of the Resurrection.

The general impression is that Vogt attaches the greatest importance to the places with a clear connection to the ancient Bible story, with a particular interest in Abraham, David's Kingdom, and the prophets. Places related to Jesus's life are emphasized, but enjoy less space, and he is equally interested in early church history, including the Crusader era. Actually, such a selection could simply be a consequence of Vogt writing a textbook of stories that were to be told to children at school, where a narrative didactic method was appropriate.

Vogt was not the only one from Norway who sought out the Biblical places, and published the results of their studies. In the fall of 1869, the vicar of Horten, Johan Storm Munch (1827–1908) went on a similar trip. A little later, in 1886, four Norwegians set off on the same journey. Three of them were theologians, Birger Hall (1858–1927), Johan Storjohann (1832–1914), and Bernt Støylen (1858–1937); while the initiator, Peter Waage (1833–1900), was a professor of chemistry. These expeditions will be followed based on the participants' own reports.

The Sources

Like Vogt, Munch spent a long time writing down his experiences, but around 1877 he began to publish his own magazine, *Vidnet [The Witness]*, and there he wrote several articles about his journey. Then, seven years later, the whole story appeared in book form with illustrations and a map of Jerusalem.⁸ Birger Hall started to write

⁸ Johan Storm Munch, *Minder fra en Jerusalemsfærd* (Kristiania: P.T. Mallings Boghandels Forlag, 1884).

letters already while he was travelling, and these were printed in a magazine for pastors.⁹ His book about the journey was published shortly afterwards.¹⁰ From Bernt Støylen we also have another important source in his unpublished, but relatively detailed diary notes.

Our sources are dissimilar in many ways. The most eye-catching difference is that while Bernt Støylen and Birger Hall wrote while they were travelling, it took at least eight years from Munch's journey until his story was published. Comparing Munch and Hall, we see that Hall's presentation is somewhat closer to the course of events. In some parts of his book, Munch has the most detailed presentation, especially about Jerusalem. Hall had read Munch's book and chose to emphasize what Munch had written too little about, or left out. Both Munch and Hall mention that they have been inspired by Vogt's writings and that most of the illustrations in their books are also borrowed from Vogt. The illustrations seem to have been made by using a technique that was relatively new at that time; xylography.

Munch's Expedition

Johan Storm Munch was born in 1827. He was named after his father, Johan Storm Munch, who was bishop in Kristiansand. When his father died in 1832, his mother had to move to Christiania with her eight children. Johan was the youngest, and grew up in poverty in a backyard, in conditions he experienced as unworthy. His older brother Andreas Munch (1811–1884) became a well-known National Romantic poet, while the great historian Peter Andreas Munch (1810–1863) was his cousin. The famous painter Edvard Munch (1863–1944) was the son of one of Johan Storm Munch's cousins.¹¹

By working as a teacher, Johan Storm Munch managed to complete his studies in theology in 1852 and in 1855 he was ordained a pastor in the Church of Norway. His pastoral service was initially performed in Norwegian assemblies in Wisconsin. From 1859 he was back in Norway, where he served some years as pastor for prisoners in Christiania, before becoming the vicar of Horten¹² in 1867. One of his duties was the chaplaincy at the marine station in the town, a role that gave him an opportunity to

⁹ Birger Hall, "Breve fra en reise til Østen," *Luthersk Kirketidende*, nos. 12–21 (1886): 116–9, 130–4, 152–8, 163–6, 195–7, 215–6.

¹⁰ Birger Hall, *Fra Østen. Reiseerindringer fra Ægypten, Syrien og Palæstina* (Kristiania: P.T. Mallings Boghandels Forlag, 1888).

¹¹ Johan Storm Munch, *Munch. Familiebok 1686–2000* (Lillehammer: Thorsrud, 2000).

¹² A small town at the west side of the Oslo fjord; at that time a base for the Norwegian navy.

accompany one of the boats, a corvette, called *Nordstjernen* (The North Star), which was to represent Norway at the opening of the Suez Canal in the fall of 1869.¹³

The journey came at a time when Munch was in a phase of life with growing problems that were related to his position as vicar. He was required to execute his work in accordance with the law that was designed by the autocratic king Christian V (r.1670–1699) in 1685, which included, *inter alia*, the mandatory confession of sins before participating in the Lord's Supper. Another heavy burden was to practice church discipline towards different cases of delinquency. While the bishop told him to drop these rules as outdated, Munch seems to have been a conscientious man, who was faced with growing resistance from his congregation, above all from the editor of the local newspaper. Munch was happy to get away for a while on a journey he described as a pilgrimage.¹⁴ In his case it turned out, as so often happens, that it was difficult to escape from problems. They grew after he returned home. He ended up resigning from his position in Horten and moved to Christiania, where he worked as a free evangelist. For a short while he left the state church, but doing so caused too many disadvantages; he was refused the right to speak in the churches in town and thus restored his membership rather quickly. His preaching was even appreciated at the Royal Palace, where the king and queen gladly listened to him before the king had a glass of wine and a cigar together with him. A collection of his sermons was published in 1888.

Munch's expedition to Palestine/the Holy Land started in September 1869 and he did not return until May 1870. In his unpublished autobiography he mentions that the conditions he faced on board were rather awkward, but that most could be accepted as he had been offered this outstanding opportunity to visit Jerusalem; a miraculous gift from the Lord. Nevertheless, there appeared to be difficulties that seemed to spoil his pilgrimage. He had received incorrect information about the boat that should take him from Port Said to Jaffa. When he and his companion¹⁵ finally made it on board, the weather was so bad that it was impossible to dock in the harbour at Jaffa, but Munch was strong in faith and saw the problems as a picture of the believer's battles through life. After a day of waiting, the storm had calmed down so much that they could be transported to the harbour. That was a lesson one could learn from: Life is full of difficulties that arise, but the Lord, who often thinks differently, settles them in his own quiet way. Well on board a boat to Jaffa, Munch was still worried, but fully confident that the Lord would take him to the place where he himself had once walked, suffered, died, and rose again. Munch was now on his way up to Jerusalem to thank the Lord for his wonderful leadership.

¹³ An extensive report about the expedition (243 pages!) was published by Solveig Tunold, see Jacobus Bugge, *På tokt med korvetten Nordstjernen 1869/70: dagboksopptegnelser* (Oslo: Tanum, 1943).

¹⁴ Munch, *Minder fra en Jerusalemsfærd*, 1.

¹⁵ Munch did not say who this companion was.

Already on the ship to Jaffa, Munch observed a phenomenon that both there and later seemed a little provoking. Among the passengers were a group of Germans, and they behaved like tourists, not like pilgrims. Poor Arabs made a better impression, and when he saw a Turk who was praying on his knees, openly on the ship's deck, at all times, Munch felt embarrassed on behalf of Lutheran Christians.

From the very first moment Munch set foot in Jaffa, he had the feeling of being on holy ground, but the noise surrounding him made it impossible to get into a holy frame of mind. Munch comforted himself with the Scriptures. He meditated over the many texts in the Bible which referred to Jaffa, a city that, with its enchanting beauty, reminded him of the eternal summer and never-ending peace. Above all, this town was the place for Peter's revelation, the first example of Christian mission among the Gentiles. Munch was led to the house where Peter was said to have lived, and was a little bothered by the fact that this was not historically correct. He knew that the city had been destroyed, and commented that the Lord does not tend to do miracles with stones. He looked in joy at the pilgrims from all the countries of the Western world travelling through the town, as a confirmation of Peter's message that what God has cleansed we should not look upon as unclean. The beauty of the town allowed Munch to use words like Sharon's flower and the lily of the valley to describe it.

From Jaffa he travelled together with the group of Germans from the ship, by horse and wagon. As he wrote, he wanted to take the readers on a spiritual journey through the land that belonged to the Jews before the curse was laid upon them. Partly Munch travelled through the country that had belonged to the Philistines, and that allowed him to reflect on the topics of curses and judgement. The route was full of ruins from different times. Even a church that was dedicated to Saint George was in ruins, reminding Munch that a house should not be built on sand. Eventually, the travellers came to a monastery in the city of Ramleh (or Arimathea)¹⁶ where it was possible to stay overnight. Munch felt that he was walking on consecrated ground, although he considered a multitude of traditions that associate biblical persons with the place to be legendary. Still, most of the things he writes about are brief remarks in passing. All his attention was concentrated upon the climb up to Jerusalem. He mentions that the road made his journey troublesome, and adds a comfort for his reader: Life brings many sufferings to those who are on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem, walking the narrow road, where the journey is full of dangers and where the character of the believer is formed by the temptations he meets.

In Jerusalem, Munch looked out across the destination of his journey, surprised by its oriental appearance, and by the many Arabs and Turks in the streets, but he judged it all to be appropriate surroundings for the Lord's grave. 16 years later, four other Norwegians set out for the Holy Land. Their journey was different from Munch's in

¹⁶ Vogt used the name Arimathea, probably because of its connection to Joseph of Arimathea.

many ways, but their main motivation for the journey was the same: The Holy City. A brief presentation of these men and their expedition seems appropriate before looking more deeply into both Munch's and their portraits of Jerusalem.

The Next Expedition

In the autumn of 1885 a Norwegian ship-owner, August Tellefsen, offered his friend, Professor Peter Waage an opportunity to visit the Holy Land by giving him some free tickets on one of his boats to Egypt. Waage invited the young candidate in theology, Bernt Støylen, and pastor Birger Hall. At the last minute, yet another pastor, Johan Storjohann, also managed to get a place on the journey.

Peter Waage (1833–1900) was a professor of chemistry at the University in Kristiania for nearly 35 years. He made several major discoveries within chemistry, the most ground-breaking together with his brother-in-law Cato Guldberg (1836–1902) when they formulated the law of mass action, also known as the Guldberg and Waage's law of mass action, which forms the basis for general and physical chemistry. During studies in Paris, he became acquainted with the YMCA movement, and returned to Norway eager to start Christian associations for young men. He was the chairman of the Kristiania youth association from 1879 and chairman of the national organization from 1880. Waage was known to be a very pious man with a burning heart for all Christian work, but also as a man who felt his responsibilities as a heavy burden. When it was decided that the YMCA would arrange their world conference, which was to be held in 1902, in Kristiania, Waage became so frightened that he prayed loudly to the Lord to take him to his heavenly home. Waage died in 1900, and the conference started with thanks to the Lord who had heard Waage's prayer.¹⁷

Birger Anneus Hall (1858–1927) was born in Vefsn, a small community in Northern Norway. He was educated in theology and ordained in 1881 to serve as a pastor at the Seamen's Mission in London and Cardiff, where he remained until 1890. In 1890, he was engaged by Lutherstiftelsen [The Luther Foundation], a publishing house that was owned by the organization of the same name. There he published various edifying books, including a large songbook.¹⁸ In 1902, he became pastor in Kristiania, but moved later to Trondheim, where he was a pastor from 1914 to 1926. Hall received

¹⁷ According to an article concerning Verdenskongressen KFUM [YMCA World Congress], August 23–30, 1902; in *Bergens Aftenblad*, August 23, 1902.

¹⁸ Birger Hall, *Kirkeklokken. Aandelige sange for hjemmet, opbyggelige møder, feste, ungdomsforeninger, kvindeforeninger o.s.v.* (Kristiania: Marius Lind, 1890).

strong impulses from British church life; not least from the great awakenings. He wrote a book about the famous one in Wales in 1904.¹⁹

Bernt Andreas Støylen (1858–1937) was a fisherman's son from Kvamsøy, a small island in West Norway. In 1873, at the age of 15 he went to Volda²⁰ to qualify himself for a job as a teacher, but after three years teaching in the elementary school, he decided to study theology. He passed his exams in 1885, and at that time he was invited by professor Waage to travel with him. His linguistic interest, especially in Hebrew, was possibly the reason he was invited. Støylen led a career that made him one of the most influential theologians in The Church of Norway in the first decades of the twentieth century. For some years (1895–1902) he was the headmaster of a teacher training seminary at Notodden in East Norway, before he became professor of practical theology at the University of Christiania. In 1914 he was appointed bishop of Kristiansand, and as bishop he led the committee that produced a new hymnal in New Norwegian, a written standard based on Norwegian dialects.²¹

The journey to Palestine took place early in Støylen's career, and a note from his diary says a lot about his motivation to conduct the expedition. It states that he had to raise a loan of 1,000 Norwegian kroner in a bank in order to finance the trip. He could probably have lived a year in Kristiania for that sum.

Around Christmas in 1885, the plans for the journey were nearing completion. At the same time a complication arose. Birger Hall had told pastor Storjohann about the planned trip, and Storjohann immediately invited himself along as a member of the group, a request Birger Hall said yes to without consulting with the others. Waage knew Storjohann as a man with little ability to cooperate, and was sceptical, but was persuaded. He must have regretted it later.

Johan Cordt Harmens Storjohann (1832–1914) was born into a wealthy merchant family in Bergen, with German ancestors. He was a man that could launch a thousand ships, but found it difficult to steer them. After studying both in Christiania and Erlangen, he graduated in theology in 1860. After a study trip to Edinburgh in 1863–1864, he took the initiative to establish the Norwegian Seaman's Mission, and became pastor at the Norwegian Seaman's Church in London 1868–1872. As the founder of this organization, he was made a Knight of the Order of St. Olav. He was

¹⁹ Birger Hall, *Vækkelsen i Wales efter engelske kilder* (Kristiania: Johannes Bjørnstrads Forlag, 1905).

²⁰ A rural community in North-West Norway. Støylen attended "Voldens høiere Almueskole med annekeret Dannelsesanstalt for Almueskolelærere," a combination of a high school and a seminary for teacher training that existed from 1861 till 1880. The teacher training seminary started up again in 1895 and is today a part of Volda University College.

²¹ The hymnal was first printed in 1925 and officially approved by the government in December 1925; see Peter Hognestad, Anders Hovden, and Bernt Støylen, eds., *Nynorsk salmebok for kyrkja og heim og skule* (Björgvin: Lunde forlag, 1929).

also one of the men who initiated a national organization for inner mission, Lutherstiftelsen (1868), and he worked for some years as the leader of Christiania Inner Mission. When the journey to the Holy Land started, he was pastor at the prison in Kristiania. The last years of his career were darkened by severe conflicts, which led to the government removing him from office. His biographer has portrayed him as a practical and effective man, with great stubbornness and little flexibility. This did not make him the best of companions on a tiring journey through the Holy Land.

The trip started from Cardiff around the end of January, and after sixteen days the company arrived at Port Said in Egypt. Hall and Storjohann made a trip to Cairo, while Waage and Støylen went by boat to Jaffa, where they were to be put ashore, but that became impossible due to bad weather. Instead they ended up in Beirut and had to travel by horse and wagon to Damascus, and then on horseback to Jerusalem; a journey that took 18 days. The next day the two others arrived. The harbour at Jaffa was still blocked by the storm, and Hall and Storjohann had to start from Beirut just like the first group, and thus logistics began to be problematic. Storjohann refused to accept the primitive conditions they encountered and proved to be an arrogant urban aristocrat. Eventually, even his friend Birger Hall lost his patience with him. His fellow travellers tried to bear over with him, but when they came to the last day in Jerusalem, they had come to the end of their tether. Støylen noted in his diary that he, Waage, and Hall, had decided unanimously that Storjohann had to find his own way home, alone, through Europe. This was inevitable for a man who behaved as if he was the only one in town and set himself first in every matter.²²

Støylen's diary notes from the journey are concise. He mentions that the boat trip from Port Said was uncomfortable and demanding, but even standing on deck and seeing the Holy Land was compensation for all the struggles so far. Along the way from Beirut to Palestine, Baniyas (Caesarea Philippi) seems to have made a strong impression. Its former Roman and Greek splendour was gone, and the town was small now, but here were valleys and hills that had witnessed Jesus's deeds. He looked over to Mount Hermon, where Jesus walked up with three of the disciples to speak to heavenly guests about his coming suffering and death.

In Støylen's daily notes there is a lot of information about the Christian presence in the country, especially as it may have been in the Crusader era. He thought

²² In Støylen's own words: "Storjohann hadde me alle tre einstemmegt sagt frå oss. Han skal fara heim yver Europa. Når han ikkje kan tenkja seg at der er andre folk til enn han og soleis set hines hugnad på spel ved sitt krav på alt og alle, så fær han finna seg i det." ["All three of us had unanimously renounced Storjohann. He is travelling home across Europe. When he cannot imagine that other people than him exist and thus puts their comfort at risk by his demands on everyone for everything, he will have to endure it."] Bernt Støylen, *Palestinaferd 1885–1886*. Unpublished diary. Oslo: Nationalbiblioteket, Ms.fol. 4547: D: 1a. See also, Olga Støylen Runde, *Bernt Støylen. Ein biografi* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 2008), 82.

it was exciting to spend an evening and a night on Mount Tabor, in the Latin monastery, but when they arrived at Nazareth, they found that the young (and unmarried!) theologian had received insufficient information. He had heard of many beautiful young women there, but in Nazareth, everyone had become old and ugly as trolls. He also states that they received a telegram from Hall and Storjohann who came along on the same road. They did not take the time to wait for the two, but travelled on to Nain, where there was a nice new church. In Nablus, they even met Protestant Christians when they visited Jacob's well and Joseph's grave.

Birger Hall was the one who wrote most extensively about the expedition (Fig. 20.2). Before publishing his book, he let Volrath Vogt read through the manuscript for advice, and Hall provided the book with illustrations he had borrowed from him. Hall mentions that they experienced a storm on their way into the Mediterranean. Hearing that the superstitious crew thought it might be one of the pastors on board who was the cause of the storm, the group agreed that it probably had to do with Storjohann. Hall mentioned that Storjohann had to give a sermon on board, but whether or not his text was from the book of Jonah is not quite clear.

Hall's story about the Holy Land and Jerusalem surpasses the others in enthusiasm, but he is also more polemical. In Damascus, the greatest experience was attending a prayer meeting together with missionaries of different denominations; Anglicans, Presbyterians, and also women that Hall presents as missionaries in the harems. Later, on Mount Hermon, for the first time, he had a view of the Holy Land and broke out in jubilation over the sight of the land where Jesus had walked and struggled. Of course, there were many such experiences, and sometimes it all became too much for him; like when they were shown the well from which the people in Cana had got the water that had become wine. Such legends might suit tourists, but not a Norwegian theologian who was able to distinguish between history and myth.

Hall describes the nature, folklore, and hospitality with the same enthusiasm. They were greeted with hospitality by Christian missionaries and relief workers along the way, and there were many of them. In Tiberias, they lived with a French knight and also met a Scottish missionary. In Nazareth, they stayed with another missionary and, on the way, Hall noted many places with English missionaries and deacons.

Hall, however, did not let himself become uncritical simply because of the Christian presence in the area. Catholics, especially Jesuit institutions, scared him a little. In this place, he argued, the Catholics were attempting to win terrain—as so often the case elsewhere – in every possible way. The Catholic school and church buildings in Beirut and Damascus were flashy and testified clearly to the struggle between the Protestant and the Catholic spiritual power. Hall and his fellow travellers felt discouraged in Damascus and the same negative criticism is expressed in places related to the era of the Crusades; a phenomenon they obviously viewed as a part of Middle-Age Catholicism. The British schools made a more positive impression. In

Fig. 20.2: *Jerusalem*. Illustration from Birger Hall's *Fra Østen. Reiseerindringer fra Ægypten, Syrien og Palæstina*, 1888.

Beirut they encountered some men from the German Temple society²³ and deacons from Kaiserswerth, but also representatives from the British mission and schools. In Beirut they also enjoyed a visit to a Protestant university that was founded by American Presbyterians. In other words, Hall viewed the various forms of Christian presence wearing dogmatic glasses. In Safed he observed the Jews who studied the Talmud, and spent their days praying and drinking. Their lazy life was evaluated with the Lutheran work ethic as the criterion. It was, however, their meetings with Islam that gave rise to the most negative outbursts. Hall tells about missionary work that was subjected to resistance from the Sultan. Even as early as in Port Said, Hall expressed his disappointment over Ferdinand de Lesseps, who gave the inhabitants their first mosque; a testimony to the false tolerance that allows everyone to keep their religion. After another complaint over the Jews, Hall penned a positive portrait of a missionary who worked to convert Jews. Both on the way to Jerusalem and in the city itself, he sighs over places that are in the hands of Muslims; immersed in darkness as they are.

Eventually, Hall and Storjohann approached Jerusalem. They came first to Nablus, where they meditated over the story about Jesus and the woman at the well, before entering a monastery with French-speaking monks. From there it was a nine-hour ride to Ramallah. They got lost and stopped under a tree at midnight, where, luckily, they were discovered by some Greek Christians from a nearby village. They got one of them to show them the way, and after three hours they reached the town. They were all tired and Storjohann was angry. But now they were in Jerusalem, the city they had travelled to see.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings were the goal. The depictions of the journey through Palestine, from Jaffa or from Damascus, are characterized by relatively sparse notes showing that many places related to the history of the patriarchs and the Jewish kings attracted their attention. The same applies to places known from the Gospels, but when they had come so far that they could see Jerusalem, they were on really holy ground. Everyone who walks there must be filled with a sacred feeling,

²³ Probably a colony of members of the “Tempelgesellschaft,” a German Pietistic movement. Such colonies were established in several towns, like Cairo, Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Beirut; the first in 1854. Tempelgesellschaft. Freie christliche Gemeinschaft, “Geschichte. Vom Land um den Asperg,” Tempelgesellschaft, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www.tempelgesellschaft.de/posts/vom-land-um-den-asperg-546.php>.

wrote Munch, but quickly added that narrow, dirty streets, full of arguing Turks and Arabs, could easily leave you in a very different frame of mind. Nevertheless, Munch believed that this city looked better as an environment for the Lord's grave than a European city would do. It allows room for memories, and that was the essential thing about this place. Støylen was more down to earth; he had imagined that the town was higher up in the mountains. It is not easy to impress a man from northwest Norway when it comes to mountains.

For Munch, as for Hall and Støylen, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was almost decisive for the success of the journey. In Munch's meeting with Jerusalem, he appears in the first place as both a pilgrim and a slightly sceptical theologian. His first excursion in the city was to this church, where he was filled with melancholy, because the site of the Lord's last suffering was in the hands of the infidels. The reason for his sadness was that this was an arrangement to prevent the believers from fighting each other about the right to own the place. He commented on the uncertainty about the location of the church; it upset him a little, and the feeling of holiness faded somewhat. On the one hand he was deeply touched; the building left an impression that St. Peter's Church could not provide. On the other hand, he faced the question of whether the church was located where Jesus was crucified and buried. Munch found good reason to doubt that the building was located in the right place. It was chosen by the not quite trustworthy Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, after a revelation, at the site where Hadrian had earlier put up a statue of Venus. Munch knew that the Catholics since then had maintained the belief that the church was on the spot where Jesus was buried, and he suspected that the Catholics might be a little superstitious. He realized that he had reasons for doubt and mentioned other possibilities, but found that the superstitious Catholics still might be right and left it to the reader to choose.

It was difficult for Støylen to get in the right mood in this church. When he got there, the Armenians were holding a mass, and the church was full of lamps and sparkling glitter. It was impossible to come forth, and those who attended the mass were kissing each stone and crossing themselves as they went down on their knees in reverence. Støylen remembered the words that the place of worship, whether it was in Jerusalem or at Gerizim, was irrelevant. Our Lord must accept being worshipped in many ways.

Hall was even more direct than Støylen. The fact that Turkish soldiers were on guard in the church was simply a disgrace. In his eyes, what was happening in the church was idolatry. He was not at all impressed with Russians who kissed a marble stone, at the spot where the saviour was laid down to be anointed, but even he was fascinated by the reverence that pious Russian women demonstrated. He assumed that the church was not located correctly, and he was not edified by viewing the church itself. Eventually, he became acquainted with Conrad Schick, a German

architect and archaeologist,²⁴ whose research had led to the conclusion that the place actually could be the Calvary.²⁵ This made Hall feel a lot better, despite all the Greek and Catholic glitter and the endless *Kyrie eleisons*.

As already mentioned, Munch was more filled with a sacred feeling, perhaps because he had read the Danish pastor and poet Christian Richardt who visited Jerusalem in 1862.²⁶ Munch reprinted Richardt's description of a Good Friday in Jerusalem. Then he followed up with a whole chapter that was formed as a sermon on the resurrection, with a theme from Job's book: I know that my redeemer lives. As the theme suggests, the sermon is apologetic; the aim is to convince the reader of the truth of the resurrection. When Munch, a few years later, published his collection of sermons over the texts of the church year, he pointed to this chapter in his Easter sermon.

From the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the road went to the Via Dolorosa. Munch envisaged history as if in a dream, imagining Jesus's sufferings. Then he collected his thoughts and impressions in his elder brother's poem about Veronica with the sweat-cloth. Støylen walked the Via Dolorosa along with Waage and from there to St. Mary's Church, which Støylen experienced as unusually beautiful, but with disturbing pictures and ornaments. Støylen wrote in his diary that he could not pray in that church without closing his eyes. Much of what they saw had a negative impact on Støylen and his companions, reducing their interest in the city. Both Støylen and Hall ended up calling Jerusalem "the city of murderers."²⁷

Later, the whole group went to the Temple Square, which was full of Turkish soldiers. Hall showed interest in the Omar mosque, perhaps mainly because he was convinced that it was originally a church. In this place, Munch concentrated on the connection with the Old Testament. He was at the site where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac, and the Omar Mosque became less important. He encouraged the reader to study the history of the place such as Vogt portrayed it, before proclaiming: At this locality, the history of salvation is concentrated! Here we must be prepared to sacrifice what our hearts hold dear, the Isaac of our hearts.

The rest of the time in Jerusalem was spent on walks to a number of other places related to biblical history. They went through the valley of Kedron and to Gethsemane. They walked to the Bethesda pond, they were in the valley of Hinnom, and they visited Bethany. Støylen and Hall were careful to show the biblical background of the place, whether it concerned thoughts about Absalom's tomb, the

²⁴ A. Strobel, "Conrad Schick (1822–1901)," in *Evangelisches Lexicon für Theologie und Gemeinde* (Wuppertal, Zürich: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1994), 1762–1763.

²⁵ Hall, *Fra Østen*, 139.

²⁶ Christian Richardt was probably known among Norwegian readers, for some of his hymns, for example "Alltid freidig når du går . . ." The hymn is still in use, see *Norsk salmebok 2013* (Stavanger: Eide, 2013), 512.

²⁷ Hall, *Fra Østen*, 136; Støylen, *Palestinaferd 1885–1886*.

palace of David and Solomon, or the Valley of Hinnom as the site for the sacrifice of children to Moloch. Munch, in turn, was not particularly impressed by Gethsemane, which consisted only of a few olive trees and small flower beds. If Jesus had gone a stone's throw away from the disciples, it must have been much larger, and Munch realized that there had been deforestation. Here he sat down deep in thought about the most important battlefield in history against evil.

For everyone, the stay in Jerusalem included a trip to Bethlehem, one hour's ride from Jerusalem. Hall's account was full of exclamation marks. He and Støylen reported a lot of Catholic glitter, and they had to revise the picture they had of a stable. They continued to the Dead Sea and stayed in the monastery Mar Saba, a wonderful building on the mountain where John of Damascus used to live. In the depiction of this place, Hall shows that he has benefitted from Vogt.²⁸

Munch also came to Bethlehem. The town was characterized by the inhabitants being intrusive sellers, but Munch was not bothered by them, he fell on his knees in the Church of the Nativity. Also here he questioned the authenticity, but accepted and found out that the cave was big enough to be a stable. Then he wrote a Christmas sermon that begins with the words of Hieronymus, who lived for a long time near here: The gates of heaven are open just as wide in Britain as in Jerusalem. The Kingdom of God is inside you. Do not believe that something is missing in your faith because you have not seen Jerusalem or Bethlehem!

The stay in Jerusalem was the last part of the study trip. The final chapter of Munch's story begins with a fast evening trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem before the gates closed at sunset, and reminds us that we must also fight to get through the gates of New Jerusalem. He left Jerusalem with his mind full of thoughts of the men of this city who were so obstinate that they did not understand that God had visited them.²⁹ He said goodbye to the Holy Land, acknowledging that the Lord's proclaimed punishment had been fulfilled. Based on Romans 11:25f., he asked: Should the converted Israel be gathered in the land of his fathers? Why not? The blessing of the Lord will be upon Zion. What the crusaders did not accomplish with their sword can be done by the message of peace, as the prophet Isaiah had said.

For Støylen and his companions, the end of the journey must have been more dramatic. Even Hall mentioned that his friend and colleague Storjohann had to travel home on his own, but Støylen is more direct. It became for him impossible to go on with such a stubborn man who was blind to how unreasonable his own huge demands were. It has not been possible to find out how Storjohann got home; only that he spent some time in Sicily, where he led worship for Norwegian sailors.³⁰ Hall and the others travelled via Amsterdam to England. He rounded off his

²⁸ Hall, *Fra Østen*, 151.

²⁹ Munch quoted Luke 19:44.

³⁰ Svend Schartum, *Døde som lever. Minnekranser i anledning av pastor Storjohanns hundreårsdag* (Bergen: A/S Lunde & co forlag, 1932), 62.

observations with a comment from the heart: It felt good to be in an evangelical country, far away from Muslims and Catholics.

Concluding Remarks

What motivated these men to make such a strenuous and lengthy journey? Was it worth all the effort? The answer to the question about motivation is rather obvious in the case of Vogt. School, teaching, and education were his main interests, and he lived in a period with a growing understanding of the importance of biblical history. Both in 1828, 1848, and 1860, the Norwegian Parliament had made changes in the school laws, expanding the number of subjects; and one of the new subjects was Bible History.³¹ This necessitated a closer understanding of the area where Bible history took place. Vogt travelled with the intention to write, and he published his book with the shortest possible and very impressive foreword: It took me 15 years to write this book.³²

An interest in teaching was probably a motivation also for Støylen. He was trained to be a teacher; he had worked three years in the elementary school, and proved his lasting interest for teaching as headmaster at a teacher training seminary. It is amazing to see a young candidate in theology place himself in quite a big debt to finance a journey to the Holy Land. But at a time when the teaching of Christianity in the schools was the most important meeting place between church and people, it goes without saying that pastors responsible for this teaching could see the benefits of such a study trip.

Was the trip worth every effort and disappointment? When we look at the excitement that shines out of the texts, the answer is quite simple. It was a peak experience. According to Reidar Bolling, Støylen was influenced by the impressions of his trip throughout his life, and he characterized the impressions as a visualization of the narratives from his childhood.³³ In his memoirs, Munch made it clear that he seized an opportunity to get away from his problems, but characterized the effect of his journey as a spiritual renewal; he experienced his own Pentecost.³⁴ The long lasting effect of his “escape” was the same as Hall had in mind from the first day on his journey; both became writers.

31 Helge Kringlebotn Sødal, “Skolens vekst og fall som kirkelig institusjon,” in *Mellom gammelt og nytt. Kristendom i Norge på 1800- og 1900-tallet*, eds. Knut Dørum and Helge Kringlebotn Sødal (Bergen: Vigmostad og Bjørke AS, 2016); Egil Lien Thorvaldsen, “Hele Norges bibelhistorie. Om Volrath Vogts ‘Bibelhistorie med lidt af Kirkens Historie’,” in *Norsk lærebokhistorie III- en kultur- og dannelseshistorie*, eds. Dagrun Skjelbred and Bente Aamotsbakken (Oslo: Novus forlag, 2011).

32 Vogt, *Det hellige Land*.

33 Reidar Bolling, *Bernt Støylen* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1951), 56.

34 Johan Storm Munch, *Selvbiografi* (Nasjonalbiblioteket: Handskriftsamlingen, 1903), 105.

In their books, Munch and Hall shared their excitement, though Hall experienced provoking disappointments. The writers relate what they have seen, knowing that they had witnessed things and places that almost none of their readers would ever see. To a certain degree, they might have written for different readers: Hall probably had state church pastors in mind,³⁵ while Munch had started his career as a free evangelist and first published his experiences in a magazine for lay people; later in a book where his edifying purpose is evident. They had been in the same city and seen the same things, but may have looked at it from different points of view.

An obvious similarity between the travellers is their genuine interest in the Old Testament history of the country and cities. It is also striking that Jerusalem was the ultimate goal of the expedition. In particular, those who came via Beirut expressed a mood of expectation as they undertook the difficult journey from Galilee “up to Jerusalem” in Jesus’s footsteps. They are also keen to clarify the historical foundation for connecting the deeds of Jesus to specific sites, for being able to say: “This is the very place.” In particular, the localization of The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was important. They discuss the problem that the building is situated within the city walls, while the New Testament assumes that the crucifixion took place outside the walls, and they concluded that the question was not finally answered. A sense of being at the most holy places in Christianity was not enough; their faith demanded historical reliability.

Støylen, Hall and Munch also show a common interest with regard to the different signs of the significance of the Holy Land for the history of the Christian church. They shared an admirable respect for ancient figures such as John of Damascus and Hieronymus, but wrote also about a multitude of institutions and church buildings. At the same time, some differences come to the surface. More than the others, Munch was interested in different churches, not only in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, but elsewhere on his journey. He enjoyed the sight of the Church of the Apostles, built in memory of Pentecost; the event that led to the Gospel being preached throughout the country. Munch was convinced that it could happen again, but first, the Lord must overcome the Jewish national pride. For the evangelist Munch, the miracle of the first Pentecost implied a no to all nationalism, but it also represented the starting point for a hope for the Jewish people. Hall and Støylen were somewhat ambivalent in their evaluation of different church buildings. They express themselves negatively, almost contemptuously, over all the glitter and gold they encountered. Their reactions might have been determined by their Protestant scepticism towards other confessions, but also by the fact that the buildings were a part of the controversial history of the Crusaders. Støylen characterized the crusaders as fanatics, while Munch was more positive and impressed by their buildings.

³⁵ As mentioned, he first published his book in a magazine for pastors.

Munch was almost silent about encounters with Christians on his journey, but Hall drew detailed pictures of those he met along his route; often influenced by his negative attitude towards Catholic and Eastern Christianity. He wrote with greater sympathy about German and British Protestant mission and diaconal work, which he witnessed in both Beirut and Jerusalem, while all Catholic institutions were regarded as competitors; as opponents in a spiritual struggle. Like Støylen, he repeatedly characterized things he did not like as fanaticism; not only the German Temple Society in Beirut and Jerusalem, but also the Crusaders, and the group known as American Adventists. This assembly is portrayed in detail by Odd Karsten Tveit in his book about the American Colony, entitled *Anna's house*.³⁶ It should also be mentioned that Birger Hall made a new trip to Jerusalem in 1891, and then he renewed his contact with the assembly leader, the Norwegian-born Anna Spafford. This visit led to a somewhat changed attitude towards the assembly.³⁷

The most interesting difference in our sources has to do with the Jews. Both Støylen and Hall noticed things they did not like. They observed many examples of a Jewish devotion, which in their opinion was merely an outer shell. Neither did Jewish culture create any positive reactions. The Jews were lazy, many lived on alms, and Hall could not understand that Jewish immigration would lead to progress for the country. Both he and Støylen also expressed negativity about the unbelievers; the Muslims. For Hall, it was particularly bad to see that important places in Jerusalem were in their hands. Munch, in turn, has a relaxed, almost positive impression of the Turks. This is surprising; Munch had a reputation for being rather polemic, at least in the debate about the state church system in Norway. It may have to do with distance in time. Munch wrote his report more than ten years after his journey to Jerusalem. In the meantime, Munch had, as mentioned above, established himself outside the ministry of the state church as a free evangelist. He wrote to edify his readers – many of them new converts – and he was, partly optimistic regarding the future of the Jews; an element that is absent in what Hall and Støylen wrote. For them, Jerusalem was the city of murderers; a name they might have found in a famous hymn by Thomas Kingo (1634–1703),³⁸ but still a depreciatory remark, revealing an attitude towards Jews that was common in Scandinavia at that time. Jerusalem is an evil city. That is where they crucified our Saviour, says an old lady in Selma Lagerlöf's book *Jerusalem* (1901).³⁹

The study of Jerusalem seems to have given Støylen and Hall next to nothing of eschatological thoughts. We look in vain in their texts for something about the heavenly Jerusalem. Jerusalem became for them an icon of judgement; the essence of

³⁶ Odd Karsten Tveit, *Annas hus. En beretning fra Stavanger til Jerusalem* (Oslo: Kolofon, 2004).

³⁷ Tveit, *Annas hus*, 128, 476.

³⁸ "See, hvor nu Jesus træder Hen til den Morderstad" ["See now how Jesus walks into that City of Murderers"], the first sentence in Thomas Kingo's hymn from 1683; see *Norsk salmebok 2013*, 189.

³⁹ Selma Lagerlöf, *Jerusalem I* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1978), 217.

Lutheran dogma concerning the future.⁴⁰ These men were not only Lutherans, they represented an official religion of a state, a type of church that gives little room for eschatology, as they tend to sanctify time and territory more than eternity.⁴¹ When Munch, on the contrary, wrote his book about his journey, he had for more than ten years been a member of the reform movement as an ardent opponent against the state church system. In the view of the reformers, this system was characterized by a lack of religious freedom, protected by laws that linked people to religious duties that should be observed in order to enjoy all civil rights. While attacking this lack of freedom, it is interesting to see that Munch and his reform friends often use the metaphors from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians (4:22–26). They described a church in bondage, borne by Hagar, the slave woman, but the church and her members should have been the sons of the free woman, Sara, children of the Jerusalem above. That is how they pictured a free church.⁴² Munch resigned from his office when he felt that his divine call was reduced to performing rites that aimed at making his parishioners good citizens of Norway, more than of the New Jerusalem. Instead he started a career as a free evangelist in Christiania, deeply influenced by the most famous evangelist at that time, Dwight L. Moody.⁴³ This may explain why Munch sounds like an optimistic Methodist, waiting for the final triumph of Christ.⁴⁴ His thoughts turned to the eternal summer already in Jaffa, and before leaving Jerusalem he reminded himself of the Pauline passages about the conversion of the Jewish people when the time of the Gentiles is over. Then the temple will be restored, there will be Christian churches around the country and cities will flourish. The curse will be gone, and the land will flow again with milk and honey. His journey resulted in images of a future for the believers; images that Munch wished to share with his readers. He travelled as a pilgrim and wrote as an evangelist.

40 The Augsburg Confession, article XVII.

41 Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A&C Black, 1986), 303.

42 Nils Jakob Laache, "Om kirkelig Frihed og vor Landskirkes tilstand i saa Henseende," *For Fattig og Riig*, nos. nr. 35–8 (1869): 273–8, 281–7, 289–95; Andreas Høyer, *Kirkelige Vidnesbyrd. En Redegjørelse* (Molde: R. A. Olsens Forlag, 1872), 323; Johan Storm Munch, *Mit Forhold til Statskirken og dens Embede. En Bekjendelse* (Horten: Udgiverens Forlag, 1875), 8; Ole Irgens, "Den kirkelige Reformbevægelses Forhold til den evangelisk-lutherske Kirkes Bekjendelsesskrifter," *Ny Luthersk Kirketidende*, nos. 2–3 (1877): 17–20.

See also Birger Løvlie, "The Concept of Freedom in Theological and Political Debates in the 1870s," in *Norwegian-American Essays 2017. Freedom and Migration in a Norwegian-American Context*, ed. Harry T. Cleven (Oslo: Novus Press, 2017).

43 Johan Storm Munch, *Moody og Sankey og deres Virksomhed i Skottland, Irland og England* (Kristiania: Palmquist og Svenson, 1876).

44 For a thorough study of the eschatology of early Methodism, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollanz LTD), 1980.