Book Reviews

Tali Erickson-Gini, *Nabataean Settlement and Self-Organized Economy in the Central Negev: Crisis and Renewal*. BAR International Series 2054. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010. Pp. viii + 330, illustrated throughout with maps, plans, figures, drawings and photographs. £53.00. ISBN 978-1-4073-0543-1.

The book under review is based on the author's PhD dissertation submitted to the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2004. The title of the original work was *Crisis and Renewal – Settlement in the Central Negev in the Third and Fourth Centuries C.E.* After a thorough reading of the published book it is evident that this title more accurately describes the contents of this book, rather than the modified title adopted for publication. Most of the published material in the book is dated after the Roman annexation in 106 CE, and, from a political point of view, these materials cannot be considered 'Nabataean'. Although Nabataean culture continued through the centuries in that region, the cultural achievements of the communities that were living in the former Nabataean territories were attributed to the new ruling authorities – the Romans and Byzantines – and as such are not to be labelled Nabataean. The material published in this book is based upon the work of several scholars of the Negev cities as well as the author's own fieldwork in Mampsis, Oboda and Mezad 'En Hazeva.

This improved and revised version discusses human settlement phases in the Negev, settlement motivations, as well as cultural production during the classical periods that span the Nabataean to the Byzantine periods. It is worth mentioning that the Late Roman and the Early Byzantine periods have not received enough attention from scholars even though the region under discussion witnessed a notable increase in population during this time. The aim of the author from her study is, therefore, to discuss and present the available relevant evidence that sheds some light on the development and change that took place in the region and the reason behind this change.

The book is divided into two major parts. The initial part discusses the geology of the region as well as its climate and vegetation. The first chapter concludes that these factors inhibited the construction of permanent settlements as the rainfall was insufficient, the water springs were limited and the soil was arable. The author argues that the region under discussion was seemingly inhabited by pastoral nomads, but later, during the Byzantine period (from the 4th to the 7th centuries), it witnessed the appearance of permanent settlements, population growth, as well as an increase in the agricultural activities. The second chapter then summarises the history of archaeological explorations in the region during the 19th and 20th centuries which included various surveys and excavations. Special attention is paid to those which are related to the period of study.

From Chapter 3 to 6 Erickson-Gini presents the historical background about the region from the 1st century CE to the end of the Byzantine period and discusses clearly the available archaeological evidence, history of human occupation, as well as the political, economic and military developments that took place in the Negev and its neighbourhood. In Chapter 3 the author discusses Nabataean origins, the development of Nabataean trade and external policies, as well as its inland and maritime trade, based on historical sources and archaeological evidence. In addition, she discusses the stages of Nabataean expansion up to the annexation in 106 CE, and provides some information about the motivations and reasons behind this event which led eventually to the establishment of the Provincia Arabia. She mentions an important discovery in the region, which is an *officina* uncovered near 'En Boqeq. This is dated to the first half of the 1st century CE and all the materials discovered here indicate use contemporaneous to the Nabataean period.

Chapter 4 examines the crises and decline that took place during the 3rd century CE that followed a very prosperous and developed period. The author then presents information regarding the Sassanid threat and the rise of Palmyra, and considers the central Negev in the 3rd century from the evidence of coins, inscriptions and pottery. The crisis of this time certainly affected the region which witnessed, according to the author's own observations, a notable decline, especially along the Petra-Gaza road, after 222 CE. Chapter Five discusses the recovery in the Tetrarchic period of the late 3rd century and the political, military and economic reforms of Diocletian. This period was a period of architectural prosperity, as is indicated by the Latin texts discovered in several places in the southern Levant. This architectural renaissance was a reaction to internal and external factors, and here Erickson-Gini includes a discussion of the Roman military stations in the Negev.

Chapter 6 discusses political and economic developments in the 4th century and the adoption of Christianity. It details the administrative system during the Byzantine period, including the economy and the commercial competition between Byzantium and the Sassanid Persia. Special attention is paid to the Negev during the 4th century in terms of administration, defensive architecture, and the widespread adoption of the Christian faith, as well as to the incidence of natural disasters such as the earthquakes. Examples of damage caused by earthquakes from excavated Negev sites are also provided. The contents of this chapter suggest settlement expansion in the region. There was an increase in agricultural practices, particularly wine production, as several wine presses have been recorded there, in addition to pottery pots used for the storage or transportation of wine. From Byzantine period too there are agricultural installations such as terraces, water channels and farmhouses.

The second part of the book assesses the archaeological evidence uncovered in three sites in the Negev – Mampsis, Oboda and Mezad 'En Hazeva – with significant attention paid to pottery dated to the period between the 3rd and 5th centuries CE. The author argues that the international trade in the region was replaced by inter-regional trade, which was based on the agricultural production, especially during the 4th century CE. Other scholars, however, speculate that this was a result of

climatic factors (a wetter climate), which lead eventually to the appearance of permanent settlements.

From Chapter 7 to Chapter 9 the author presents the cultural material discovered recently in Mampsis, Oboda and Mezad 'En Hazeva, and sheds more light on the material related to the period of the study. Chapter 10 examines the vessels and special finds of the early 3rd century and concentrates on pottery, and this is followed by further evaluation of the vessels and special finds dated to around 363 CE. Both these chapters divide the pottery into a number of types and forms and provide tables that include descriptive information and parallels as well as illustrations about these discoveries.

Chapter 12 examines the vessels and special finds of the early 5th century. It is followed by tables that include descriptive information, parallel examples, pottery illustrations, information on the ceramic plaques and metal objects, with further reference to a relevant Nabataean text written on the wall plaster inside one of the rooms in Oboda. This was dated by Avraham Negev to the late 4th to early 5th century, although the palaeography may suggest an earlier date as the forms of the letters do not belong to the script of the late 4th century. Rather, this text is similar to some of the Wadi Rum texts that were written by ink, uncovered in 1930s. These are from the vicinity of the Nabataean temple built during the reign of the Nabataean king Rabil II and dated to the 1st century CE. Therefore, from a palaeographical point of view, dating the Nabataean text uncovered in Oboda to the 4th century should be ruled out.

The book is very well illustrated as it contains clear photographs, drawings and maps. Each chapter is followed by discussions and conclusions, as well as appendices. With reference to the appendices, it is a disappointment that the table classifying the coins lacks photographs or drawings of the relevant finds. It would be much improved if these were illustrated in the same way that that pottery images accompany the tables. In summary, this volume is a welcome addition to the history and archaeology of the Negev during the classical periods. It is a rich source of information about the Negev cities such as Mampsis, Oboda and Mezad 'En Hazeva for any scholar and student researching the history and archaeology of the southern part of the Levant during these periods.

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Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg, *Airaq al-Amir: The Architecture of the Tobiads*. BAR International Series 1544. Oxford: Hadrian Books, 2006. Pp. xiv + 229. Illustrated with maps and plans. £42.00. ISBN: 978-1-8417-1757-9 (paperback).

The Qasr al-Abd is one of the most enigmatic buildings in the Ancient Near East, which has inspired voluminous study since its initial recognition by western scholars in 1818. In this study Rosenberg has brought together the key data from nearly 200 years of observation and analysis in a lucid text. The Qasr was initially thought to be a temple, and was more recently argued to be a palace, but neither of these suggestions has achieved general acceptance. Although Albright suggested, as long ago as the 1930s, that it was the mausoleum of the Tobiads, surprisingly, no one until now has attempted to present a detailed argument in support of this hypothesis. Rosenberg does this very well, first by showing the lack of parallels between the recovered plan of the Qasr and contemporary temples and palaces, and, secondly, by showing the many parallels between the Qasr and contemporary tombs and burial monuments.

In order to properly place what is universally recognised as the estate of the Tobaids, known from numerous historical sources, including the Bible, the Zenon papyri, and especially Josephus Flavius, Rosenberg opens with an account of the history of the Tobiad family. In this he suggests a link between the family and its name and the biblical land of Tob, which is clearly located in trans-Jordan. The case for this linkage is a very interesting one, and would resolve a number of difficulties. He also makes a sterling effort to resolve the chronological problems arising from Josephus' account of events which occurred long before his own time.

Of particular interest is Rosenberg's Chapter 13, 'The Bestiary Revisited', in which he examines the various animal and bird sculptures of the Qasr al-Abd, and the parallels for the use of these creatures in art of the period. His conclusions as to the overwhelmingly funerary use of these images in the art of the period constitute a highly suggestive line of evidence concerning the nature and usage of the Qasr, strengthened by the appearance the following year of David Jacobson's new study of the Painted Tombs of Marisa (*The Hellenistic Paintings of Marisa*. Palestine Exploration Fund Annual VII, Leeds, 2007). The one clear mistake in Rosenberg's treatment comes in his discussion of the site of Airaq al-Amir as a whole, which he sees as the estate of the Tobiads, and specifically in his discussion of it as a defensible site, or at least a site with defensible elements, in terms of Josephus' use of the term '*baris*'. In this discussion he several times refers to the man-made, or at least altered, caves in the cliffs above the Qasr as defensible refuges in the event of attack – a mistake against which his familiarity with the fate of those who took refuge in the caves of the Wadi edh-Daliyeh should have warned him. This, however, does not affect his main argument.

While it is hardly likely that Rosenberg's work will lay to rest the long-running argument over the nature of this unique building, and of the estate which surrounded it, his extended argument in support of the mortuary nature of the Qasr al-Abd is a

major contribution to the ongoing discussion of the archaeology of this fascinating site and its architecture.

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Hanan Eshel and Roi Porat, *Refuge Caves of the Bar Kokhba Revolt*. Volume 2. Israel. Exploration Society and the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center of Jewish History: Jerusalem. 2009 (Hebrew) ISBN: 978-9-6522-1078-4.

Professor Hanan Eshel, formerly of Bar Ilan University in Israel, provided before his untimely death (see Obituary) this excellent second volume of archaeological and historical studies relating to the important phenomenon of refuge caves dating from the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt, co-edited with his student and collaborator in the field, Roi Porat. The first volume, co-edited with his colleague David Amit and published in 1998, opened up the subject and provided important archaeological details on these caves and the finds made in them.

In this recent volume, Hanan Eshel contributed numerous papers written by himself, and also as a co-author. He opens the book with an important summary article entitled: 'On the Ongoing Research of the Refuge Caves in the Judean Desert'. The following chapters, co-authored or written with Roi Porat, Amos Frumkin, Uri Davidovich and others, deal with refuge caves in the lower Nahal Kidron (Wadi en-Nar), north of Ein Gedi, in Nahal Qedem, Nahal Arugot (Wadi Areijeh) and elsewhere in the eastern Judean Desert and close to the western shore of the Dead Sea. The book also includes specialist reports on coins (Eshel, Roi and others), military equipment (Guy Stiebel), and environmental remains (Orit Simchoni and Mordechai Kislev; Liora Kolska Horwitz). Importantly, there are further chapters on manuscript discoveries: two new Greek documents and some fragments from the Har Yishai Cave and fragments of a Leviticus scroll from a cave in Nahal Arugot.

One should also mention assessments of Bar Kokhba period manuscripts by Yosi Baruch. Esther and Hanan Eshel, together with Ada Yardeni, describe a new document with the dating: 'Year Four of the Destruction of the House of Israel'. This document points to the likelihood that the Bar Kokhba revolt actually lasted for four years until 136 CE and not to 135 CE which has been the consensus of opinion hitherto: a very important conclusion for history. In one of the papers Eshel describes the discovery of a Bar Kokhba denarius at a site in the Hebron Hills. Hitherto, such coins have only reached the scientific world through robbery and illegal trade activities and not from archaeological excavations or surveys. Over a thousand Bar Kokhba period denarii have been published in learned journals, but all of them from undocumented sources and illegal excavations.

The further significant recent discovery of a rich cache of Bar Kokhba silver coins in the Teomim ('Twins') Cave in the western Judean Mountains is also documented in this volume; it provides scholars with a new view concerning Bar Kokhba numismatics. This recent work by Hanan Eshel and his collaborators is of the utmost importance. The two volumes are published in Hebrew and are replete with numerous maps, drawings and photographs. One hopes that these books will eventually be made available to scholars in English.

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Jan Djikstra, Meindert Djikstra, Karel J. H. Vriezen, *Tall Zar'a in Jordan. Report on the Sondage at Tall Zar'a 2001 – 2002 (Gadara Region Project: Tall Zira'a)*. BAR International Series 1980. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009. Pp. 83, including 3 maps, 25 tables, 3 graphs, 41 photographs and 28 drawings. ISBN 978-1-4073-0512-7 (paperback.)

This excavation report is divided into nine chapters presenting the sondage excavation at Tall (Tel) Zar'a (Zira'a) in the western region of the Wādī al-'Arab, 10 km southeast of the Sea of Galilee, by the Theological Faculty, University Utrecht (Netherlands) as part of the Gadara Region Project, Jordan.

After a short introduction (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 presents the stratigraphic situation within the 5 – 7 m × 6 m sondage at the long-inhabited site, describing 5 strata divided into 2 to 5 phases: Late Roman / Early Byzantine (Stratum I), Hellenistic (Stratum II), Iron Age IIB (Stratum III), Iron Age A/B – AII (Stratum IV), and Late Bronze – Iron Age IA layers (Stratum V); no Iron Age IIC layers were discovered. Preliminary results on possible building structures are incorporated in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 deals with pottery including two discussions on painted pottery and pottery handles. The first treats mainly LBA (Late Bronze Age) painted pottery emphasising the differentiation of local, imported and possible imitated ware. The second demonstrates the diagnostic value of pottery handles and identifies different types of storage jars and pithoi. IA (Iron Age) pottery is discussed in Chapter 7, with a strong focus on cooking pots, due to high incidence of cooking facilities within the 6m × 6m sondage. Statistical analyses show the uniformity of IA cooking pots at Tall Zar'a in contrast to observed modifications of such pots at contemporary sites. Additionally, the typology and the production process of cooking pots are described. Small finds are presented in Chapter 5, which lists a small number of single small finds of varying materials (e.g. a seal impression, a potter's mark or a copper alloy arrow head), and further in Chapter 6, which describes variations of mainly basalt stone artefacts, including millstones, pestles, mortars, weights, spindle whorls and building remains.

All finds and their contexts are listed in clearly arranged tables linked to related phases and strata. Additionally, the context table gives the number of potsherds for each chronological section and the relative incidence of further finds: stone tools, flint, sherds from a *tannur* (clay bread oven of a slightly conical form), bones, glass. Most of the finds and stratigraphic units are documented by photos and drawings. By Chapter 8, at the end of the volume, the historical landscape of the Gadara region is explored and the authors identify Tall Zar'a as the ancient (pre Hellenistic) Gadara / Qadara. Here, the results of the Wādī al-'Arab survey and the excavations of the Biblisches Archäologisches Institut (BAI) Wuppertal at Tall Zar'a (2003 – 2008) are set in relation to textual sources. Chapter 9 contains the conclusion. As long as the aims of the research are clearly defined, even limited information of sondage excavations have great value. This is particularly exemplified by this rather short volume, which underlines the importance of small-scale excavations in large regions such as Gadara.

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Shimon Gibson, *The Final Days of Jesus: The Archaeological Evidence*. New York: Harper One and Lion Hudson, Oxford Pages, 2009. Pp. xvi + 254. £12.99. ISBN 978-0-7459-5395-3 (paperback).

Any scholar who ventures off his own turf to see how one body of information relates to another – or could help clarify another – is likely to be treated as an amateur intruder by the border guards of the other discipline, and even disowned by his own group as wanderer! Nowhere is this more true than in relation to the body of evidence about the origins of Christianity that survive in the form of first or early 2nd century Greek documents commonly referred to as 'the New Testament.' Indeed, such is the vigilance of those who patrol those borders that often none but a member of 'the guild' – a term used by New Testament scholars of themselves – is thought skilled enough to write on 'their' texts: be that person an historian of the period, a theologian concerned with the intellectual content of the document, or, as here, an archaeologist who is concerned with the material remains of the scene where the central events of those documents took place. The result of this segregation is that one can read volumes of exegesis without ever encountering a detailed reference to what we can know about the culture of Jesus; and any criticism of this position is thought to imply a pre-critical approach to the texts when it was assumed that biblical data could enlighten archaeological investigations and vice versa. Similarly, one can read excavation reports from Israel-Palestine which do throw light on aspects of Second Temple Judaism, yet one does not find any reference to any text included in the Bible: its seems that

being in a 'holy book' disqualifies the texts from being considered within empirical discourse.

So, before proceeding any further, let me note that Gibson is to be congratulated for breaking out of the disciplinary boundaries and presenting the non-archaeologist with a survey of what light recent excavations can throw on life in Jerusalem around the time of Jesus. He is engaged in what may be a thankless task, but he recognises that 'a point of stagnation has been reached in scholarly studies [of the gospels], and archaeology is still a seriously undervalued source of data' (pp. 81–2). To remedy this, he has digested a vast amount of information and presents it as a portrait of the city and its religious structures at the time of Jesus' death. For this labour, New Testament scholars should be simply thankful. A case in point is the amount of evidence he has assembled about ritual purity and ritual bathing at the period, both in large pools (Bethesda and Siloam) and in domestic *miqva'ot*, which he sees as pointing to an 'overall "explosion" of purity that took place within Judaism in the 1st century CE' (p.79). Using this archaeological evidence as a point of departure, exegetes of the many passages in the gospels dealing with observance, or not, of purity laws are enabled to appreciate their texts than by following the more normal course of seeing them as manifestations of earlier legal texts. Gibson's book abounds with similar examples of his having brought together information on the 1st century CE in such a way that textual obscurities are removed.

The work is obviously focused on the last days of Jesus life and its central claim is that new archaeological evidence may explain his movements from his arrival in the city until the burial – and inevitably this brings in questions of whether or not the traditional cult-sites in Jerusalem are to be accepted. While no doubt this very sharp focus will be attractive to many readers, it will also raise the greatest suspicions among biblical scholars. Gibson has a confidence about the possibility that the various gospel accounts can be somehow plumbed for dates / times during that week which is far too optimistic. He moves too freely between the Synoptics and John in the hope of establishing a single, firm chronological sequence. This becomes explicit at times, but one senses that it is implicit for much of the book, as when he says: 'This apparent contradiction may be resolved if one attributes the story of the Priest's plot as it appears in Mark (14:1–2) as occurring on *one* of the days of the holy week and not on the first day of Jesus' arrival' (p. 43). This hermeneutic – that the contradictions are but apparent – echoes an approach that can be traced back to the time of Christian opposition to Porphyry in the works of Eusebius at the end of the 3rd century. Here Gibson's solution is a variant on the classic medieval solution as formulated by Adomnan of Iona in the late 7th century and which has its origins in Augustine *De consensu euangelistarum* at the beginning of the 5th century. However, it fails to take account of the nature of the 'history' that is presented in the gospels – and their role in the earliest churches – and therefore asks them to bear an impossible evidential weight. More agnosticism on precise details regarding times and locations, with greater emphasis on context and how archaeology can show the problems with using the gospels as historical quarries, as he does splendidly in his treatment of the

trial of Jesus (e.g. on p. 81) would have offered an even better service to biblical studies.

On the whole there is a tendency in the book to look at the archaeological and textual evidence as if it can cohere – and this implies that statements about miracles in the Scriptures and about ground plans from archaeological excavations exist on a single plane of meaning. This is an example of epistemological *naïveté* that everyone seeking to link the texts to their original historical setting must confront openly. Failure to do so results in rationalism that does credit neither to modern scholarship, nor to ancient religious texts, and on two occasions the book falls into this trap: Dealing with the burial of Lazarus (John 11), Gibson writes: 'The fact that Lazarus' body was not rotting after having been in the tomb for four days suggests that he must have been in a trance of state of catalepsy' (p. 28); and, then, 'owing to the state of medicine in the 1st century it is conceivable that the phenomenon of people waking up in tombs inevitably led to stories of people being raised from the dead' (p. 30). This is conceivable, but the issue of miracles – how they were imagined *then* and how contemporary scholars with an Enlightenment world view might approach these texts so as not to dismiss them – is far more complex than the solutions that are proposed here. Gibson rightly notes that textual scholars are often too unacquainted with the work of archaeologist: *tu quoque*!

The Final Days of Jesus seems to have several audiences in mind: it wishes to provide information for those who go to Jerusalem on pilgrimage (or on 'Bible Study Tours' for those who dislike the associations of the word 'pilgrimage') and this group will find this an excellent preparation for their trip. It also engages with those who seek ever more sensational discoveries about the times of Jesus – see his excellent debunking of 'The James Ossuary' on pp. 175–87 – and its calm assembling of evidence marks it out as a voice of sanity. Gibson does, however, want to encourage a greater dialogue between biblical studies and archaeology, and while he argues for, and illustrates the importance of such a debate, he also shows that there are many hurdles to be crossed on both sides. Having finished this book one just hopes that this agenda will be further pursued.

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Hershel Shanks, *Jerusalem's Temple Mount, from Solomon to the Golden Dome*, Continuum, New York & London, 2007. Pp. 206 with 138 illustrations, $39.95. ISBN 978-0-8264-2884-4

Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar (eds), *Where Heaven and Earth Meet, Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, Yad Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem and University of Texas, Austin, USA, 2009. Pp. 411, with 209 illustrated plates. $40.00. ISBN 978-0-2927-2272-9.

The Temples of Jerusalem continue to fascinate, partly because the evidence is so sparse, and the site is contentious in contemporary politics. Hershel Shanks' book, *Jerusalem's Temple Mount*, provides the excellent idea of starting from the present day and going back in time to the earliest available evidence for the site of the present-day Dome of the Rock, like an archaeological dig, and seeks also to counter any politically-motivated denials of Jewish monuments existing here.

Today two domed structures stand on the Haram al-Sharif, the Temple Mount, and both are splendid constructions. The more obvious one is the Dome of the Rock, an octagonal building with no particular direction of prayer. Its four doorways face onto the four corners of the Earth and its focus is inwards towards its centre, which is the rock called *Even-Shetiyah*, the foundation stone, the centre of the known world in the Jewish tradition. In Muslim tradition it is called *Al-Sakhra* (the Rock) and acts as the cover over the Well of the Spirits, where all will congregate at the end of days to learn their fate. Whichever it is, this is the location of the Last Judgment and so the Dome has no specific direction, but is open to all the four cardinal points, for who knows from which direction the Final Arbiter will approach?

The second dome is different, it is the leaded hemisphere over the Mosque of al-Aqsa and its direction is plain. It was placed south of the Rock, with its face towards Mecca. In this way it faced the birthplace of Mohammed and turned its back on the Rock, which may have been the centrepiece of the Temple of Solomon. It was a significant gesture by the Caliph Omar (who conquered Jerusalem in 635–8 CE), to face south and proclaim the superiority of Mecca and the new faith of Islam. From these present-day structures, which Shanks analyses in some detail, he then reverts to the time when the Haram was bare and bereft of building, which he calls the Interregnum, between the Roman destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 CE and Caliph Abd al-Malik's building of the Dome of the Rock in 692 CE. What was going on during those 600 years? Was this really a Sacred Esplanade or more likely a city dumping ground? Was there a Roman Temple standing on it, or just two statues of the Emperors?

The stone inscription, used upside-down as an infill by the lintel of one of the entrances south of al-Aqsa mosque, seems to be the base of a statue to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, who followed his patron Hadrian in the Roman occupation of Jerusalem. It is quite likely that his statue stood on the Haram, together with that of Hadrian himself, until they were both dismantled by the incoming Arab invaders of 635 CE. It is probable that there was little of significance on the Haram, as the

Byzantine mosaic map of Jerusalem in Madaba does not even show the spot. But one incident of this period must be noted, and Shanks provides considerable detail. It is the attempted rebuilding of the Jewish Temple during the short reign of the Emperor Julian (361–3 CE), named the Apostate. Having abandoned Christian policy for the Empire, it appears that he encouraged the Jews to rebuild their Temple on the original site, with the hope that, on his successful return from the war in Persia, he could see the sacred city of Jerusalem restored and that he 'together with you (the Jews) may glorify the Most High God therein'. This was not to be, for the rebuilding attempts were thwarted by early collapses and the effect of an earthquake in 363 CE, and then the death of Julian at the war in Persia, which meant the project lost its one and only powerful sponsor.

Shanks then goes back to the Temple of Herod, which he calls the 'second' Second Temple, the one destroyed by the Romans to discuss an inscribed stone of the Herodian retaining wall, at the south-west corner of the huge perimeter, marked with the words, 'the place of the trumpeting'. This serves to confirm that this was indeed the outer wall of the Herodian Temple *temenos* (sacred platform) where the priests would blow the trumpet to announce the beginning and end of the weekly Sabbath.

Both the reasons for Herod's rebuilding the Second Temple, and his construction of the enormous platform on which it stood, are rather obscure. Josephus states that he was grateful to God for giving him the right to rule Judaea and the Jews, and to grant success to his kingdom. This all sounds rather abstract, although another reason may have been to solve the chronic unemployment that was always dogging Jerusalem, an important city but one short of natural resources. It had limited water supply and a shortage of minerals and other productive commodities on which to base an economy. As it was founded on a series of limestone strata and had access to nearby timber forests, the builders of the Temple could use these local materials and thus give employment to hundreds of craftsmen.

Herod wished to impress his Roman patrons and managed to build a *temenos* that was larger than anything in the Empire, bigger than that of the Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek, bigger than the upper Acropolis of Athens, or the Forum of Augustus in Rome. It was a stupendous achievement, and Shanks celebrates it accordingly. Like everyone he marvels at the magnificence and scale of the achievement, and drools over Herod's building and ability to move so many tons of solid ashlars.

The plan Shanks offers of the Herodian Temple is similar to other conventional ones and offers no new insights. Like everyone else he is unable to reconcile the descriptions given in Tractate Middoth and in Josephus, and indeed it seems futile to try to reconcile two different literary descriptions until such time as one is able to conduct excavations on the site. Even the exact location of the Temple Sanctuary is in doubt, as is the original square of 500 cubits that was laid down by the Rabbis as the sacred area. This was probably the size of the original platform built by the Hasmoneans around the Temple, and Shanks gives a useful diagram of twelve different 'modern' theories of its location, from de Vogüé in 1864 to Ritmeyer in 1995.

However little we know of Herod's Temple, we know even less of the 'first' Second Temple, built by the exiles returning from Babylon. There is no known description of it, but it stood as a central shrine throughout the Persian period, when the High Priest served as secular leader of the Judaeans as well as religious leader. The famous Cyrus cylinder of 538 BCE records a decree giving permission for exiles to return to their respective countries and to rebuild their shrines, though Judaeans are not mentioned specifically. Ezra mentions a Persian document that gave the Jews permission to rebuild their Temple, but no such document has yet been found. Jewish texts, including Josephus, have it that Alexander the Great came up to Jerusalem on his way to Egypt, but there is no external confirmation of this story. While it is mentioned many times in Josephus and in the Books of the Maccabees, it is not described. The Roman general Pompey entered the sanctuary in 63 BCE but did not destroy it.

In his discussion on the first Temple, the Temple of Solomon, Shanks again follows the conventional line and quotes the well-known similarities with the temple at Tel Ta'yinat, but he also brings some fine pictures of the temple at 'Ain Dara, in Syria, dated in three phases between 1300 and 740 BCE. The overall plan of the 'Ain Dara Temple is similar, but includes an antechamber between the porch and the sanctuary, together with fierce black-stone cherubim, that probably carried out the same guardianship functions as those in the Solomonic Temple. 'Ain Dara additionally contains colossal footprints that represent the entry and presence of the god who was residing there. As Shanks notes, judging by the footprint length of 3 feet and more, the resulting personage would have been over 65 feet tall. As at Jerusalem, 'Ain Dara was built to be entered from a courtyard, but Shanks fails to point out that in the case of the Solomonic Temple this courtyard was shared with the Palace (according to 1 Kings 7:12). And thus the First Temple was really a royal chapel or shrine, with part of the royal quarters and only accessible through them, as in many Assyrian examples. It is not generally recognised that the First Temple was part of the palace complex and would not have been so easily reached by the population. It was only after the Babylonian Exile, when there was no king in Judaea, that the shrine was truly a people's temple. Thus reconstructions of the Temple as a free-standing structure are not correct, although, to be fair, we know little or nothing of the palace construction or ground plan. Hence if we take the depiction of the Temple in 1 Kings as reliable, we must also take into account its description of the palace, the House of the Forest of Lebanon, however minimal that may be.

Shanks discusses the Yehoash tablet, that came to public notice in 2003 and describes repairs made to the fabric of the Temple at the time of King Yehoash (842–2 BCE). The tablet and the text, so close to the original biblical passages, have been written off as a forgery by many, though not all, scholars, so it is hard to understand why Shanks devotes nine pages to this suspect inscription.

Shanks then develops his account of the antecedents to the Temple, the Mishkan (Tabernacle) as well as the prehistory of the site, a subject that is avoided by most commentators on the First Temple. The evidence of the Mishkan is of course purely

biblical and, despite claims to the contrary, no tangible evidence for it at Shiloh has yet been found. But the location of the Temple is another matter, and here Shanks rightly brings details of the cave below the Dome of the Rock, called the Well of the Spirits in Islamic tradition. Located as it is under al-Sakhra, it is now believed to be a Middle Bronze Age tomb with, perhaps, the present short staircase having taken the place of the original shaft. In view of the large number of cisterns under the Temple Mount, Shanks follows Rivka Gonen in suggesting that these were originally shaft tombs further cut and squared off to act as water catchment reservoirs. It amazes Shanks that the holiest of structures, the Solomonic Temple, may have been built over a cemetery, considered by the later rabbis to be the most defiling source of ritual impurity, but who knows what the *Halakha* (normative law), if any, may have been in the time of Solomon?

There is one further point to be made about location, not mentioned by Shanks. Why was the site of Jerusalem so important? Given that it was a defensible site with a good water source from the Gihon spring and a saddle in the long stretch of the mountains that ran down the centre of the land, it provided a convenient crossing point for travellers, nomads and merchants who needed to move from west to east, or east to west. It lay between an ancient port on the Mediterranean (proto-Jaffa) and the fords across the Jordan near Jericho. It therefore may have become a significant crossing point with all the attendant functions of the provision of food and drink, and a shrine for use by those wishing to honour the Deity, as well as a burial ground for the dead. Shechem was in a similar position, a low point between two mountains, and on a route between the Mediterranean (at Straton's Tower) and the fords of the Jordan (at Adam-Damiya), and thus it also became an important religious centre, but one further north. Perhaps it was geography that led to Jerusalem and Shechem becoming the two main cultic centres of Judah and Israel.

With his access to the formidable BAR archives, Shanks has provided some wonderful illustrations and plans, some based on Ritmeyer's drawings, and one stunning double spread of the exterior of the Dome of the Rock (pp.16–17), showing the colourful contrast between its golden dome, the predominantly blue and white casing of the octagon below, and the blue sky above. This is a magnificent rendering of a well-known view, but one has to admit that it is outshone by the more subtle picture of the sombre interior of the Dome, as shown in Pl. 63 of the second volume under review. This is Muslim architecture at its finest, the colours are restricted to shades of grey and gold, but the effect is majestic and awe-inspiring. One can see a dozen columns, each of a different shade of grey marble, but toning together in harmony. The light from the fenestrated drum around the dome shines down to give a magical glow to the whole interior. Shanks has made a brave attempt to set the record straight regarding the Jewish monuments that originally stood on al-Haram al-Sharif.

On the other hand our second volume under review, *Where Heaven and Earth Meet*, has no such defensive programme, or need of it. It is sponsored by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem and the Al-Quds University and Center for Jerusalem Studies, so it comes

with the imprimatur of the three leading Jewish, Christian and Muslim intellectual authorities of the city. It is authored by 21 scholars, affiliated to one or other of these centres of excellence, as well as a number of independent experts from the United States and Great Britain. They all write about their own specialties and periods, but generously acknowledge the contributions made by their colleagues, so that this volume can be said to give a fair and balanced history of the sacred site.

The book is divided into eleven chapters of history, in the chronological sequence from the 10th century BCE to post-1967. Of these eleven periods, the first two reflect the two Jewish temples, the third is the site without a temple, the next one is the first Islamic presence, then followed by the Crusader one, subsequently by four Islamic episodes, and finally two modern ones, both after 1917 There is also a fine ten-page dossier of photographs by Said Nusseibeh of Damascus, followed by eight chapters on themes such as artistic, religious and literary sources, and then three personal points of view from the presidents of the Hebrew and Al-Quds Universities and from Cardinal Martini, former Archbishop of Milan, who served for a time in Jerusalem.. The final chapter is an epilogue written by the two editors, who stem from the Institute of Advanced Studies, Princeton, and the Hebrew University.

The chapter on the First Temple rejects the idea that it was a royal chapel but in fact seems to support this concept when it points out that Ezekiel's view of the future temple was that it should not be connected to the palace (Ezek. 43:7–9). Victor Hurwitz refutes this, by claiming that there was free public access, although he brings no evidence to confirm this premise. Joseph Patrich, writing on the Second Temple period, states that Nehemiah built gates to the Persian citadel (Bira) which were needed as the Temple was no longer part of the royal palace. Patrich also puts forward a controversial siting for Herod's rebuilt Temple, in a diagonal position within the vast platform, apparently locating it on top of cistern no. 5. This is based on his view that it provided the large quantities of water needed for the animal sacrifices and so it would be logical to place it directly above or in parallel with this water source.

After the Roman destruction of the Temple, did the site stand empty? Yoram Tsafrir thinks not; he considers that it may have been occupied by a Temple of Zeus, as mentioned by Dio Cassius, though his description may refer to anywhere in the city. There is the suggestion that the Capitolium (the chief temple of the new Aelia Capitolina, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, the three deities of the new city) was located on the Temple Mount, though the description may also refer to a site nearer to the later Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The testimony of Christian pilgrims is also inconclusive. The Bordeaux Pilgrim, of the 6th century, mentions a temple that he says stood on the site of the Temple of Solomon but he may be referring to the ruins of that building. On the other hand he also refers to two statues of the Emperor Hadrian standing there. These were probably the statues of Hadrian and his protégé Antoninus Pius, the inscription of whose base has been referred to above.

After the Muslim conquest of 638 CE the emphasis shifts from the Temple of Jerusalem to the Mosque of Jerusalem, which was given great significance by Caliph

Abd al-Malik, who designated the Haram as the rebuilt Temple and attempted to make the Dome of the Rock a Muslim focus. The Dome was understood to stand on the Temple of the Lord Jesus and later the Mosque of al-Aqsa on the Temple of Solomon. Possibly the whole of the Haram became one mosque and the Aqsa is just the smaller mosque within the larger one. Kaplony outlines how, in Muslim understanding, Mohammed on his night journey with the Angel Gabriel, came to this 'Furthest Mosque' (the meaning of al-Aqsa). In addition, Sharik an-Numayri, a hero of early Islam, entered Paradise from a pit on the Haram. At the End of Days, the Mahdi messiah will die and the majority of Jews will become Muslims. The Ka'aba will come here from Mecca and the angel Israfil will blow his trumpet from the Rock and resurrect the pious dead. Kaplony claims that during this early Arab period, Jews and Arabs shared traditions about the Sacred Esplanade and had joint access to it.

Under Frankish (Crusader) rule, from 1099, Jerusalem became the capital of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Dome of the Rock was preserved as the Templum Domini, the al-Aqsa as Palatium Solomonis. In other words, the Franks attempted to eliminate the Muslim presence and building achievements. The Crusaders set a golden cross over the Dome and the building became an Abbey Church. The imprint of Mohammed's foot on the Rock, where he sprung onto his horse al-Buraq on his flight to heaven, became the imprint left by the foot of Jesus when he expelled the money-changers from the Temple. Authors Benjamin Kedar and Denis Pringle show that, under the Franks, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which had uniquely carried the Christian tradition in Jerusalem, now had to share it with its former rival the Dome of the Rock, which achieved Christian sanctity by its association with the Herodian Temple, visited by Jesus.

It is noted that although access for both Muslims and Jews was difficult, it seems that the famous Jewish codifier Rambam of Cairo (Maimonides) visited Jerusalem in October 1165 and prayed at the Dome. He mentions praying at the most holy Jewish site, which would be on the Mount, but some say he was only able to gain access to the Western Wall and would not in any case have set foot on the Mount, the site of the Temple, which he considered too holy to be approached by any Jew. Another famous Jew, the traveller Benjamin of Tudela of Spain, writing around 1170, calls al-Aqsa the 'Palace of Solomon' and says it is inhabited by the Knights (Templar) three hundred of whom ride out to war every day. In 1187, the Ayyubid ruler, Saladin, was about to conquer the city and the Crusader leader Balian of Ibelin sued for terms. Saladin refused and said he would deal with the Franks by murder, enslavement and other savageries, as they had dealt with the population in 1099. Balian responded that the Christian population would kill their own womenfolk and children and then set fire to all the monuments on the Haram. Thereupon Saladin relented and the Franks were allowed to leave the city on payment of ten dinarii per man, five per woman and two per child.

After the ousting of the Crusaders, Islamic building restarted on a grand scale and a full description of its work on the Mount is given by Michael Burgoyne. He describes the fact that the walls of Jerusalem were dismantled in 1219 so as to make

the city 'defenceless' and save it from another attack by the Franks (the Fifth Crusade) who were camped in the Nile Delta. It may have had the opposite effect, as most Muslims left the city in fear and building work stopped on the Haram.

Jews had returned to the city in 1209 from France and England but the Haram al-Sharif was out of bounds. During the Mamluk period (1260–1516), described by Donald Little, non-Muslims were barred from the Haram but they could view it from outside or from the Mount of Olives. Some Christians were able to bribe their way in, in Arab dress, and stare in amazement at the five hundred and more lamps that burned in the Dome of the Rock. At the Porch of Solomon, al-Aqsa, one German knight was able to see 'the eight hundred lamps that burn there every day' and wrote that no Christian or Jew was suffered to enter there since 'the Muslims say that we are base dogs and not worthy to go to the holy places on pain of death'. Here, however, the chief Mamluk judge Mujir al-Din published a history of Jerusalem and Hebron in about 1480, in which he notes the history of the Haram from the time of the Creation, including the fact that Solomon, on completion of the Bayt al-Maqdish (Temple) is transported in flight to Mecca, where he foretells the emergence of an Arabian prophet of monotheism.

The architecture of the Mamluk period is described by Michael Burgoyne, in particular the large number of gates, madrasas and mausoleums that were constructed around the perimeter of the Haram, where development was still allowed. Markets and bathhouses were also built to help finance the sanctuary and its numerous staff. The Dawadariyya Convent of 1295, on the north perimeter, has one of the finest Islamic ceilings to its entrance hall. It consists of a pair of eight-pointed dome soffits set within a double square rectangle defined by continuous rows of miniature stalactite vaulting. The architect is named as Ali ben Salami. Under Ottoman Rule (1516–1917), described by Amnon Cohen, the city originally had a population of 5,000, which increased dramatically when the walls were rebuilt in 1538–41, under the supervision of one Mohammed al-Celbi al-Naqqash of Istanbul, who also arranged for a better water supply to the city from Solomon's Pools in 1540. This enabled the fountains at the Gate of the Chain and that of the Superintendent to be built, with many of their ornate arched lintels reusing Crusader stonework.

Yitzhak Reiter and Jon Seligman bring the story up to the present. At the start of the British Mandate in 1917, it became clear that the monuments on the Haram were in a poor state of repair and a full survey was undertaken by E. T. Richmond, an architect who had worked on Muslim monuments in Cairo. Seeing the poor state of the major buildings, Richmond originally recommended that the dome of the Dome of the Rock would have to be dismantled and rebuilt, but that course was eventually avoided by careful repairs continuing over many years. A severe earthquake in July 1927 rocked Jerusalem, but luckily did not hinder the repair works that were completed the following year. Much conflict was due to the limited access to the Western (or Wailing) Wall, where only a small strip of paving was available to the Jews. Here, as elsewhere, the British Mandate tried to maintain the principle of the status quo, maintaining that no substantial change of any kind was

to be allowed to any religious buildings or sites, which applied to the Western Wall as well as all the monuments on the Haram. This principle was applied in theory, if not always in practice, to any request for change.

Earthquake tremors in 1937 did not affect the Dome, but much of al-Aqsa lost its roof and the whole was substantially rebuilt. Parts of the original decorated timberwork had to be removed, preserved today in the Rockefeller Museum. After the war of 1948, the Haram came under Jordanian rule. Tensions arose between the Palestinian administration of the Waqf (the Muslim endowment administering the Haram) and the Jordanian monarchy. King Abdullah I would come to the Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers, with the Jordanian Military Band playing him in. The presence of a British-style military band was considered to be a religious violation of the site, and may have led indirectly to the assassination of the king at the entrance to al-Aqsa in 1951. Of course, things changed after June 1967, when Israel gained control of the Haram, but the Israeli flag that was hoisted on the Dome of the Rock was soon removed on the orders of Moshe Dayan, and the principle was established that the Waqf would retain control on the Haram, preserving the status quo, with only the Israeli police having the right of interference if and when necessary.

With the establishment of the Palestine Authority, Muslim activity increased. Yasser Arafat refused to allow Israel to invite King Hussein to pray at al-Aqsa, and the Palestinian Mufti established his office on the Haram. This is also the time when early Muslim traditions were revived, and included the claim that al-Aqsa was built by the first man Adam forty years after the Ka'aba in Mecca. The existence of the Jewish Temple is denied, it is only referred to as the 'alleged' temple, even though the official guide to the Haram, issued in 1929 by the Supreme Muslim Council, had stated that the Dome had been the site of Solomon's Temple, where David had built an altar to the Lord. The rise of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement, based in Umm el-Fahm in the Galilee, changed rhetoric into action. Their actions culminated in a very substantial change to the status quo when the southern Solomon's stables (so called because the Knights Templar had installed their horses there) were converted into a multi-storeyed underground Mosque, called al-Marwani. This involved extensive construction works being undertaken without any archaeological supervision, resulting in the loss of substantial evidence relating to the original uses of the Haram and its construction by Herod and others. This work was started in 1997, specifically against the advice of the professional team of the Waqf, who had been barred from the operation.

An interesting Palestinian view of the post-1967 events is given by Nazbi Al-Jubeh of the Centre for Architectural Conservation in Ramallah. He points out that the Israeli side made three changes to the status quo immediately after 1967. The destruction of the historic but slum-like residential quarter in front of the Western Wall, the seizing of the keys to the Magharibah (Moghrabi) Gate, by which the Haram was approached from the Western Wall Plaza, and the confiscation of the Madrasa Tankizziyah on the west side of the Haram, for use by the Israeli Police. These actions by Israel caused suspicion among the Muslim community and led to the closure of the Haram to visitors. The Israeli authorities insisted that the open

areas on the Haram were public spaces but allowed the Waqf to maintain control over the buildings and decide whether to give access to visitors or not. A major traumatic event was the arson attack on al-Aqsa by the Australian Michael Rohan in 1969, which led to much damage to the wooden structure of the Mosque, the eventual installation of a proper fire-hydrant system, and a well-directed programme of restoration by local craftsmen, which won the Aga Khan award for Architecture in 1984–86. Al-Jubeh points out that the changes initiated after Israeli control of Jerusalem were always considered as changes to the 'Status Quo' and so caused great resentment among the Palestinian population, but the major change to the status quo has been the reconstruction of Solomon's Stables into an underground Mosque, larger than al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock combined. This work has created the greatest change to the status quo of the area and the fact that it was done without any archaeological supervision is a blot on both the Muslim and Israeli administrations.

Of the personal accounts, with which the volume concludes, the most revealing is that by Mustafa Abu-Sway of Al-Kuds University. He confirms that the Holy Land is sacred to the people of the Book and their prophets, and that the line of prophecy led from Abraham to Mohammed, who was taken from Mecca to the Farthest Mosque (al-Aqsa) and the 'blessed cities', which is a reference to the Bayt al-Maqdis, the Hebrew Temple in Jerusalem. The Bayt al-Maqdis was also a name given to al-Aqsa Mosque, and the term al-Aqsa was used to designate the whole site of the Haram rather than just the southern Mosque. But what is significant is that Allah took the prophet Mohammed on the night journey from Mecca, not direct to heaven, but via the holy city of Jerusalem, which is the gate to heaven for the Muslims as well as the Jews.

Guy Stroumsa, of Oxford University, says that the Temple Mount is a prime example of the fact that religious history is the story of the 'devaluations and revalorizations' of various manifestations of the sacred. The Temple Mount first owed its sacredness to Solomon's Temple. The Christians then attempted to erase its significance and transfer it to the Cenotaph of the Anastasis (Holy Sepulchre) while the Mount remained desolate, as predicted by Christ. On entering Jerusalem, Caliph Omar politely declined the invitation to pray at the Anastasis and went on to build the beginnings of the Dome of the Rock on the site he considered more sacred than that of the Holy Sepulchre. The Islamic Dome was later, by the Crusaders, transformed into the Abbey Church, the Templum Domini, which restored for them the supremacy of the Mount. But that did not last long before the site was again Islamicised, with Christians and Jews denied access. The day will come, Stroumsa says, when the three faiths will meet in Jerusalem, and the Jews, who held it in the past, the Christians who believe in it for the future, and the Muslims, who hold it for the present, will all search for the consensus that will bring them together. Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini quotes the prophet Malachi, who speaks about the Messenger who will prepare the way, 'and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to the Temple, and the Angel of the Covenant…behold he is coming…' (3:1). As a Christian, Martini understands these words to refer to Jesus

of Nazareth and his entering of the Temple, as recounted by John the Evangelist. For him, as for the Hebrew prophet Malachi, the Temple Mount is the place of the convergence of many peoples, and Martini extends that to many faiths as well.

Finally Menahem Magidor, recent President of the Hebrew University, admits, as a secular Jew, that when he is on the site of the Haram, the Temple Mount, he is transported in time. He connects to the ecstasy of his forefathers, he is part of a long chain that runs through the Jewish, Christian and Islamic presences that all joined in making this a 'sacred esplanade'. He remains firmly attached to his Jewish past, unbothered by the fact that 'another religion was dominating the site' and 'the fact that……History superimposed the dreams and imaginations of other cultures, adding depth and meaning to my collective memory'. This is the overwhelming conclusion of this marvellous volume. That the three Abrahamic faiths, often at loggerheads, have each given added depth to the meaning of this site, which they all consider to be their connection from Earth to Heaven, and on which, in this volume, they have graciously given ground to each other.

Hershel Shanks has set the scene for a rational evaluation of the background to the present-day Temple Mount, while Grabar and Kedar, and their team of all the three monotheistic faiths, have given him a stamp of approval for the history of the Temple Mount, al-Haram al-Sharif, and all its vicissitudes throughout the ages.

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Nazenie Garibian de Vartavan, *La Jérusalem Nouvelle et les premiers sanctuaires chrétiens de l'Arménie: Méthode pour l'étude de l'église comme temple de dieu*. Yerevan, 2009. 450 pages. Bibliography of over 500 references including 90 original sources. 153 figures and 25 plates, including 10 in colour. US $120. ISBN 0-9527827-7-4 (paperback).

Pilgrims have sometimes made a great difference when they went back home, and the Armenians are an excellent example. They went on an annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and they and their neighbours were led to change both their church calendar and their holy places into reflections of Jerusalem. *La Jérusalem Nouvelle* deals directly with this question, and also sheds new and unexpected light on the design of the Mother Church of Ējmiacin. The author, Mme Garibian de Vartavan, describes her method as *ecclésiologie appliqué*, which means that the key documents about church design are contextualised largely by liturgy and theology. The author is a very reliable guide through the documents.

The book therefore starts with Eusebius' dedication sermon at Tyre, connecting the church with the Temple – not the Jerusalem Temple on earth but its model, the one in heaven. Synagogues were also connected with the heavenly Temple, although

the author does not say so. The Beth Alphaa mosaic, for instance, has angels on the nave floor and in the picture of the sanctuary (see cover of *Strata*), and the simplest explanation is that this synagogue too represented the heavenly Temple. It was also true of Constantine's church on Golgotha. But the area, which was known as Golgotha long before, already had a building on it – the Temple of Aphrodite: this being the principal reason for pulling the shrine to Aphrodite down. During the clearing of the site an unexpected event took place. The Tomb of Christ was discovered, and the author accepts the statements of Eusebius (*Vita Const*. 3.30.4) and Sozomen, who lived in about 400 CE (*Hist. Eccles*. 2.1.5), that inside it were pieces of the cross. She thus rejects as legendary their finding by Helena.

The rock, now revered as the site of Golgotha, as Gibson and Taylor have said, is far too small for three crosses, and a wider area for Golgotha is also implied by calling the Martyrium, to use the words of Egeria, the 'Great Church built by Constantine on Golgotha behind the Cross'. So what is the Rock of Calvary containing the cross itself? The author, judging perhaps from the unsuitability of the site, thinks that it must commemorate another miracle, and suggests Cyril's luminous cross which extended from the Mount of Olives to the Anastasis. But there is no need to suggest such a miracle. The cross may have been there since the first arrangement of Golgotha. In my mind it served as a focus for the whole Golgotha area, and, according to Egeria (*Itin*. 37.5) the people who looked at this cross during Holy Week thought simply of the suffering Christ.

Vałaršapat, or Ējmiacin, the present seat of the patriarch, had been ruined and burnt to the ground by the Persians in the 360s. The city included four holy places, according to the *Vision of St. Gregory*: the Mother Church, the places where the first virgins were martyred and the oil-press where they lived. St. Sahak rebuilt the churches and dedicated them between 414 and 417 CE. But at almost the same time (417 to 435 CE according to Charles Renoux) the Armenian Church adopted the calendar of Jerusalem. This meant a change in the church year, but it also implied a need to get some parallel holy places linking Vałaršapat and Jerusalem. So the four churches were given parallels from Jerusalem. The church farthest to the east, St. Hrip'simē, was the Eleona. The oil-press was the church of Gethsemane, which is Aramaic for 'oil-press'. The Mother Church was the Basilica of Constantine, now the Holy Sepulchre, and the one to the south, St. Gayanē, was Holy Sion.

The book ends with a study of the Mother Church of Ējmiacin. Anahit Sahinyan was the only archaeologist allowed to excavate the church, and he was working in the 1950s, since when there have been many improvements to archaeological method. Sahinyan concluded that the present church was founded at the end of the 5th century. Garibian de Vartavan shows that very little is known about the history of the church, apart from the fact (or legend) that it was founded by the first missionary to Armenia, St. Gregory the Illuminator. If this is true it ranks as a famous church, but the history of its restoration and repairs is almost completely lacking. At the beginning of the 5th century St. Sahak did some repairs (which are unknown), in 487 CE Vahan Mamikonean had to do some more repairs to stabilise the church, and by 618 the Catholicos Komitas changed the wooden roof into one

built of stone. This is all the information available and highlights how great our need is for comparable studies on other famous Armenian churches, I hope by someone as reliable as Garibian de Vartavan.

This is an excellent book, not least because it fearlessly offers new and convincing interpretations of the documents.

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