

Repackaging the Pilgrimage: Visiting the Holy Land in Orlando

YORKE M. ROWAN



SACRED TO JEWISH, Christian, and Muslim communities, the Holy Land has long captured the imagination of artists, travelers, statesmen, warriors, pilgrims, traders, and tourists. An iconic landscape in the Western eye, it is a place where the ancient is conceptualized as familiar, personal, and benign while the modern is constructed as foreign, exotic, and dangerous. For many who look to the Holy Land as blessed territory, it not only is history but evokes connections to a spiritual heritage. And for those who consider that landscape sacred, the value of that heritage is measured not by critical proofs of historical accuracy but by the power of the symbols found in the Holy Land.

In the “Holy Land,” the vaguely defined region generally limited in modern experience to Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, the presentation of the past has a long history. As a number of scholars have discussed, archaeology was integral to nationalistic interests during the early years in Israel’s history. However, as some argue (e.g., Baram and Rowan, this volume; Silberman 1997), the state of Israel’s interest in archaeology can no longer be adequately summed up as a solely nationalistic one. Instead, the importance of tourism has expanded considerably during the past few decades, consciously targeted for specific, primarily Christian and Jewish, audiences for economic purposes.

Modern political realities, however, persistently intrude on the tourism industry. There are many Americans who find the distance, cost, or potential danger of a visit to the Holy Land prohibitive, and increasingly dangerous in the current political situation. One solution to this problem is to create a site for heritage consumption (and perhaps in the future, potential pilgrimage) closer to home, far from political turmoil and at much lower expense for the visitor. Just such an alternative to foreign travel is now available in a new theme park called the Holy Land Experience (henceforth, HLE) in Orlando, Florida.

Critics might interpret such efforts as just another cynical endeavor to substitute authentic experience with a version of history that is sanitized, inaccurate, and largely entertainment for profit. Yet there is a long tradition and appetite for the place of the Holy Land in the American consciousness, manifest in a variety of ways. These have included various forms of visual imagery and representations, such as models of various Holy Land sites, naming of towns with biblical names (Davis 1977), and the popularity of innumerable traveler's accounts (Goell and Katz-Hyman 1977; Handy 1977; Klatzer 1997). However, there is an implicit problem of authenticity when promoting such a venture.

The "heritage industry" has been variously described as, for example, a crusade (see Lowenthal 1998), a commodity (Ebron 2000), or applied (or public) history (Glassberg 2001; Shackel 2000). Until recently, the concept of heritage was generally treated as a set of problems to be solved, and there was relatively limited interest in examining the nature of heritage as a cultural process. More recently, heritage has moved away from the practice (training people for specific skills) to one increasingly inclusive of theory and ideas.

This chapter explores the attraction such a site holds for visitors, and whether the ideal of authenticity so central to heritage tourism is a useful standard or is irrelevant in this context. I would like to focus on the demonstrable continuity such a creation displays with other places in American history and suggest some ways to understand what might attract visitors to the site, and how this attraction relates to archaeology and the past.

The substantial blurring between museums and other venues for popular tourism that incorporate perspectives on the past has been the topic for debate among academics and professionals. Increasing competition among institutions offering authentic experiences to cultural tourists means that institutions such as museums no longer claim exclusive authority as providers of historically related experiences, but represent simply an early form of institutional commodification of culture (Prentice 2001). The notion of authenticity is a problem inherent to museums as well, for whatever they select for subject matter, museums utilize objects, subject them to interpretation, and present them as information. However, the removal of objects to museums and interpretation limit that authenticity, for the objects become media and are no longer in their context (Lowenthal 1990; Prentice 2001).

Background

The Holy Land Experience, opened on February 5, 2001, is a \$16 million self-described "living biblical museum" located on fifteen acres about five miles southwest of Orlando. It is focused on a time period between 1450 B.C. and 70 A.D. At this biblically based theme park, costumed employees sell "Camel Coolers" to the

thirsty, perform dramatic enactments for the pilgrims, and provide a place for quiet contemplation of the grace of God. Music written exclusively for the project is piped in, and multimedia presentations are used to dramatize selected important biblical events. The periods that the park attempts to encompass range from the time of Moses (c. 1450 B.C.) and the Exodus, Jesus' teachings and eventual crucifixion.

Marvin Rosenthal is the founder of HLE, and president and CEO of Zion's Hope, a nonprofit evangelical Christian ministry. According to their promotional literature, the purpose of Zion's Hope is "to share the message of the Bible accurately in its historical and *cultural context*" (emphasis mine). Rosenthal, the author of books such as *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* (1990) and *Not without Design* (1980), attended the Philadelphia College of Bible and Dallas Theological Seminary, and was ordained into the ministry in 1968.

According to the website and promotional literature for HLE, its purpose is to

1. "Create a wholesome, family oriented, and educational facility where Christians can come to be encouraged and reinforced in their faith . . .
2. create a "total immersion" experience that offers historical proof of the Bible and dynamically demonstrates that the Bible is God's Word to man . . .
3. lovingly share the message of the grace of God for sinful men, as demonstrated in the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son."

The overtly Christian, evangelical mission of the HLE is fostered throughout the theme park, providing facsimile structures and reenactments of Christ on the cross, singers in traditional biblical garb, a film, and special admission rates for groups or annual membership. There is a cafeteria with piped-in music, shopping opportunities, a model of the Old City of Jerusalem, and entertainment, with additional special events on schedules listed on the HLE website.

In contrast to the far larger Disney parks, HLE is modest in size and aspiration, with no rides, parades, or games. Within the park, the Holy Land Experience consists of approximately six buildings, plus replicas of the Dead Sea Scrolls cave and Calvary's Garden Tomb. An additional structure, built in a fourth-century Byzantine style according to the HLE literature, is The Scriptorium: Center for Biblical Antiquities.

The Experience

Guests arrive by driving through a Roman-arch replica entrance, based on arches from Jerash (ancient Gerasa) in central Jordan.

Entrance to the park is through turnstiles placed within the arched city gate modeled on the (Ottoman) Bab el-Khalil, or Jaffa Gate of the Old City of

Jerusalem, replete with guards in Roman dress. Just inside the gate, a small courtyard centered on a faux well, a few tables, and a cart with souvenir items for sale forms the Jerusalem Street Market. The “street” continues slightly to the left, but directly ahead of the visitor is an entrance to the first and most upscale shop, the Methusaleh Mosaic store, which connects inside to another shop, the Old Scroll Shop. A diverse selection of merchandise is available, including souvenirs (refrigerator magnets, T-shirts, etc.), stones from the Holy Land, jewelry, videos, Dead Sea scroll items, and a variety of books, from cookbooks to religious materials. A striking amount of Judaica is available in the gift shops, such as hannukias, mezuzot, and seder plates.

Passing through either the shops or the Jerusalem Street Market, the passage then opens onto the path where a number of choices are available to the visitor. To the right, the Wilderness Tabernacle provides a shaded area modeled after a Bedouin tent where visitors sit, awaiting a twenty-five-minute multimedia presentation, *The Old Testament Ritual of Worship*. Inside, visitors are seated on bleacher-style seats, where the presentation includes two actors dressed as Levitical priests, reenacting the rites of the ancient priesthood against a backdrop of stars (photo I4.I). This includes a cutaway view of what is termed the “sacred Ark of the Covenant.”

After viewing the presentation of the Old Testament ritual of worship in the Wilderness Tabernacle, the visitor exits into the Plaza of the Nations, an open stone courtyard expanse surrounded by thirty Roman columns and dominated by the Temple of the Great King. Within the courtyard leading up to the Temple of the Great King, concerts and biblical drama reconstructions are staged on the steps. To the left of the plaza is the main entrance, centered directly in front of and framing the temple. Visitors are shepherded into an area outside of the temple to wait for the next showing of a video entitled *Seeds of Promise*. Although visitors are free to choose their own plan of action, they are also ushered along from one venue to the next in a carefully conceived plan that exposes them to the optimal amount of religious content and greatest number of shopping opportunities.

The six-story gleaming Temple of the Great King, based on an assumed facade of the Herodian temple, a “one-half scale representation of the holy Jerusalem Temple that stood on hallowed Mount Moriah in the first century A.D.” is touted as “God’s home on earth. It was the same place where Abraham, nearly two millennia before Christ was born, was to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. King Solomon also built the very first Temple on the same site. And in the time of Jesus, the priests would gather on the steps and sing Psalms of Ascent to the Lord.”

Inside of the Temple of the Great King is the Theater of Life, where the movie *The Seed of Promise* is shown to visitors. According to Zion’s Hope, the film “powerfully communicates God’s master plan for redeeming mankind.” The film opens in A.D. 70 as the Romans use a battering ram to crash through the temple doors



Photo 14.1. Postcard for sale at Holy Land Experience Depicting a Scene from a Performance in the Wilderness Tabernacle

while “the priests hold unwaveringly to the belief that their sacrifices will save them from destruction.” Alternating with the images of the battering ram are images of a stake being driven through the hand of Jesus, giving the impression that these events occurred simultaneously as viewed on the big screen. At the end of the film, dry ice is piped into the auditorium below the seats to simulate the effect that the viewers are in heaven meeting the creator, mirroring the images in the film. The effect on the audience was profound; many in the audience were tearful,

many were praying. After the film the path leads visitors from the temple to Calvary's Garden Tomb.

To the left, Calvary's Garden Tomb (photo 14.2) is found down the Via Dolorosa Path leading past the imitations of a Roman road, an olive press, and indigenous plants and trees of the Holy Land toward the Garden Tomb. In the brochure, the opportunity to spend "some time resting, praying, or reflecting in the Garden" is offered, with periodic dramas enacted by actors in traditional biblical garb—cowl and sandals—depicting the message of the gospel in word and music. On the website of the HLE, Calvary's Garden Tomb is promoted as "an authentic replication of the actual tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem," (Holy Land Experience 2001), presumably based on the tomb outside of Jerusalem's Old City that many Protestants regard as the site of Christ's entombment. However, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is widely regarded in the Catholic and Orthodox churches as the site of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Choosing one or the other for replication at HLE is a religious decision based on historical precedents and preferences. The more barren, unembellished tomb cut into stone may appeal to Protestant preferences by avoiding any reference to the Catholic and Orthodox churches, and avoiding the ritual- and symbol-laden hierarchies those churches represent.



Photo 14.2. Calvary's Garden Tomb, Holy Land Experience. Photo by M. Keisel

Visitors can meet their more basic needs by turning right: food and beverages are the next stop on the logical progression through the theme park. Adjacent to the courtyard of the Plaza of the Nations is the Oasis Palms Café (photo 14.3), an Arabian-themed cafeteria-style (buffeteria) restaurant where patrons sit among Bedouin rugs, traditional agricultural implements of the Near East, and music with an Arabic flavor. Along with time-honored American fare exoticized with biblical names such as Goliath burgers, Jaffa hot dogs and fries, or chicken sandwiches and Coca-Cola, patrons may order Jaffa felafel, Israeli salad, or hummus and pita from a wall menu in the shape of Torah scrolls.

The final building, where the Jerusalem Model A.D. 66 is housed, is the Shofar Auditorium. Inside is the model of the Old City of Jerusalem, touted as the largest indoor model of Jerusalem in the world, requiring over a year to construct. Periodically throughout the day, a detailed presentation is provided including a discussion of the development of the city and Jesus' movements during the last week of his life until his crucifixion. Extensive shopping opportunities are also available within the building.

Two exhibits remained unfinished at the time of our visit, the Qumran Dead Sea Caves and the Scriptorium, although the structures for each appeared to be completed externally. According to our guide, David Rosenthal, son of the president of Zion's Hope and founder of HLE, the Scriptorium will house "one of the finest private collections of biblical artifacts in the world including cuneiform, scrolls, codices, manuscripts, and Bibles." Rosenthal told us that a Michigan collector (whom he did not identify) donated a large portion of the HLE collection. The concept behind the Scriptorium, according to Rosenthal, will be to present the various authentic forms of the Bible through time.

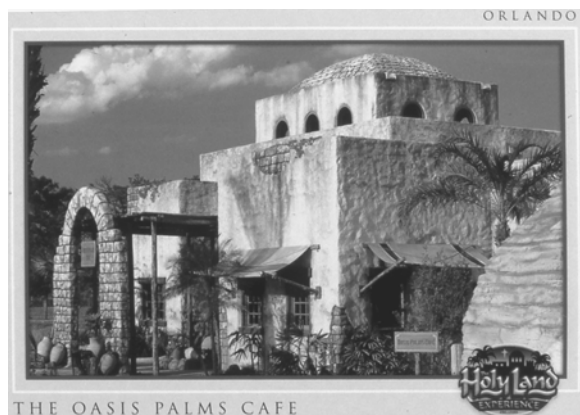


Photo 14.3. Oasis Palms Café.

The structure representing the Qumran Dead Sea Caves, created using forced perspective, appears to be complete on the exterior but was not quite finished during our visit. Rosenthal alluded to future plans for park expansion, including reproductions of Capernaum and other aspects of the Sea of Galilee region. It will come as little surprise if additional shopping opportunities and food venues accompany any new exhibit spaces. Finally, HLE is exited through the same entrance gate, channeling visitors back through the Jerusalem Street Market, the two nearby shops, and a final opportunity for any last-minute shopping.

Representing the Other in the Holy Land

The linkage between Americans and the Holy Land was established from the earliest days in North America. According to Ben-Arieh, until the eighteenth century Jerusalem was viewed by Christians as important as the city of God, but not for its physical or geographical characteristics (1997, 27). For the Puritans, the North American land was conceptualized as sacred, and their entry into it divine; early settlers also projected the Holy Land onto the geography of America, naming over a thousand places with biblical names (Greenberg 1991). With the rapid growth of Protestantism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Americans shared similar experiences growing up to those of Edward Robinson, when biblical scenes were not only experienced in Sunday school but at home, in school, and often on a daily basis (Handy 1977, 37). As children grew up, biblical place-names were heard and read, and reinforced on the landscape of America as well. Robinson's travel writings thus tapped into an awareness of biblical scenes and stories held in common for many Americans.

In the nineteenth century, a new form of Christian pilgrimage literature, inclusive of millenarian views, grew with the expanding travel accounts by Protestants. During this period, emphasis on the physical land and geography supplanted that of the earlier metaphysical ideals of the Holy Land. Examining evidence from Robert E.M. Bain's prints in the large, predominantly photographic volume *Earthly Footsteps of the Man of Galilee* (1894), John Davis (1992) argues that when the inhabitants of the Holy Land didn't measure up to scripturally derived American expectations, Americans were happy to appropriate the role of the chosen people. As Davis argues, these early examples of American Holy Land depictions confronted a dilemma—the people inhabiting that land. Davis contends that Bain's photographs of sacred locales, following Christ's footsteps in chronological and geographical order, either eliminated indigenous people or diminished them through ridicule or scorn. For similar reasons, the recreation and replication of Palestine in North America allowed participants to focus on sacred geography without the intrusive presence of the Jewish and Muslim inhabitants.

One common thread throughout the many images of the Holy Land was the desire to represent biblical narratives as well as the landscape that formed an important facet of American social and historical identities. That identity, a specifically Protestant one, often ignored the indigenous peoples. Despite the large increase in travel to the Holy Land after the Civil War, pilgrimage remained restricted to the few. Although there was an expansion in travel through time, limitations of distance, cost and logistics continued to limit potential visitors. There were alternatives, however, such as the scholarly writings of the biblical geographer and father of biblical archaeology, Edward Robinson, and the many inspired by him who created a burgeoning Holy Land travel literature, particularly after the Ottoman authorities lifted the ban on the establishment of Protestant missions (Ben-Arieh 1997, 27–28). Travelers and pilgrims to the Holy Land during the nineteenth century were shocked when their expectations were poorly met by the Holy Land reality, most famously remarked by Mark Twain and Herman Melville (Davis 1977, 13). Coupled with this realization and the limited successes of missionary efforts in the Holy Land (Handy 1977, 38–39), the possibility for expanding the idea of the sacred land within North America could be elaborated. Two such examples are exemplified by replicas such as Palestine Park at the Chautauqua Institution and the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904.

The Chautauqua Movement and Palestine Park

The Chautauqua movement was a religious and educational enterprise, originally opening as a Sunday school institute in New York in 1874, initiated by John Vincent, essayist for the book *Earthly Footsteps* in which Bain's photographs appeared (Vincent 1971, 16). Sermons were few and no services were held; the concept was based on the thoughtful study of the Bible, nature, and science as part of teaching sacred geography. In the early years this included exhibitions of panoramic paintings, stereo photographs of Palestine, complemented by lectures on the early aspects of life in the Holy Land, to instruction in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic (Davis 1992, 257).

Within a few years of opening, Chautauqua was successful, and it was not long afterward that a local resident, W. W. Wythe, opened a landscaped park known as Palestine Park (Davis 1992, 257). It was a 170-foot scale model of the central most religiously relevant portions of the Holy Land, using Chautauqua Lake as the Mediterranean. Based on the popularity of the area, Palestine Park underwent several reconstructions, with the addition of cast-metal cities and growing to 350 feet. The outdoor geographic model was used as a teaching instrument, with lectures around the diminutive mountains and the Sea of Galilee. The nature of this

enterprise—recreating the Holy Land in North America—was envisioned as a long-term project with sacred underpinnings to the pedagogy: “The old model of Palestine will by that time have been repaired. Returning merchant-ships from the Levant will have brought quantities of rock, earth, and timber from Syria itself; these will be transferred to Chautauqua, become a part of our own model of Palestine, and people may tread the sacred soil without crossing the sea” (Vincent 1971, 235).

Davis (1992) argues that Palestine Park represented American desires to dwell in the “real” Holy Land. Visitors to Palestine Park often donned Oriental costumes, including Reverend Ostrander, who spoke daily before a model of the Jewish Tabernacle of the Wilderness while wearing the “miter, robe, and breastplate of the high priest” (Davis 1992, 264, fig. 16) similar to performances by employees (photo 14.4) and the multimedia presentation of the Wilderness Tabernacle of HLE.

Another regular, known for delivering lectures in Arab garb, climbed atop a recreation of a Jerusalem dwelling to sound the call to prayer like a muezzin, indicative of the desire for people to move from the role of the chosen race in the New World to that of the Old World (Davis 1992). Unlike the Chautauquan conflation of Jewish and Islamic culture, ancient and present time, represented by an amalgamation of Middle Eastern Bible people, the HLE is more specifically aimed at framing the Jewish people as the antecedents to Christians, not as contemporaries.



Photo 14.4. Employee of the Holy Land Experience Dressed as a Levitical Priest and Blowing a Shofar. Photo by M. Keisel.

St. Louis World's Fair of 1904

A predecessor to HLE, the big hit of the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904 (the Louisiana Purchase Exposition), was the extensive area called the "Pike," a commercial endeavor over a mile long with concessions and amusements that included a reproduction of the Holy City with twenty-two streets and three hundred buildings, covering eleven acres (Davis 1992, 266). The St. Louis World's Fair was twice the size of the Chicago Fair, and included the largest anthropological exhibit of any world's fair. Representations of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Western (Wailing) Wall, and the Dome of the Rock surrounded 1,000 people imported from Jaffa for the event. Although on a grander scale and including the active participation of foreign peoples, its goals were to provide a similar experience to Palestine Park—all aspects of the St. Louis Jerusalem were tightly controlled, just as Palestine Park provided a safe place, sanctified by the overt religious intent. Similar to HLE, the St. Louis version focused on representing Jerusalem, but more inclusive of symbolically critical structures than created for HLE.

Gilbert (1994) suggests that world's fairs, as the destinations of modern pilgrimages, fit within the long history of sacred travel in Western society. Like earlier forms of pilgrimages to ancient holy places, where sacred fragments of bone, water, or wood could confer authenticity on the traveler's experience, souvenirs from fairs also conferred a modern form of experiential authenticity, despite the mass production of souvenirs (Gilbert 1994, 23).

Representations and Commodification of the Holy Land

For MacCannell (1973, 1976), tourists are alienated people seeking authenticity as a form of fulfillment. Greater interest in heritage as a perceived more natural, nonmodern, or pristine time may be viewed as one component of this desire to find authenticity. Authenticity however, is a fluid concept. In some respects, the tourist's desire for authentic experience is a modern embodiment of the religious pilgrim, a ritual process forming or reaffirming a collective consciousness (Graburn 1989). As heritage undergoes a process of commodification, niche tourism reflects different meanings attached to what the individual believes to be an appropriate use of leisure time. The search for an authentic experience is less crucial to understand the motivation of tourism according to Turner and Turner (1978), who also view tourism travel similar to a pilgrimage by representing a period of liminality for participants, where daily life and the structured organization of society is suspended during the antistructural aspects of the ritual process (Turner 1969).

Although at many heritage sites a reconstruction offers the opportunity to step back in time and experience what life was really like, there must always be a selective portrayal of events and histories that are tailored to reflect the tastes of the modern visitor. At a site such as the HLE, the creators recognize the limits on authenticity, set as it is far from the actual Middle East and based on replication. (Indeed, David Rosenthal at HLE noted several times the great expense and concerted effort necessary to replicate structures such as the entrance gate, or the caves in which the Dead Sea scrolls were found.) At the same time, the experience is less contingent on exact replication of events, reconstruction of buildings or portrayals of personages. Instead, the emphasis is on promotion of biblical narratives for education and spiritual edification of visitors. In this way, the specific desire to promote something similar to a religious pilgrimage is overt, not covertly arising out of alienation. Nevertheless, particular events and narratives must be and are chosen with a particular goal in mind, that of eliciting a religious experience or education. This follows in a tradition of American interest in the Holy Land without the obtrusive realities of the current affairs; people, their political aspirations, and their very place in the land of the Bible are removed.

How might authenticity be conferred? Prentice (2001, 12) suggests a variety of associations used to impart authenticity. Museums, for example, evoke authenticity through original artifacts from the past; association with a location, as memorial museums often do, may also commemorate events through proximity to where something important occurred, or is thought to have occurred (Prentice 2001, 7–8). How might the authentic be evoked in the absence of typical key elements, or even direct experience? Although a venue such as HLE cannot offer claims to nationalism given the diverse background of Americans, authenticity may be conferred through establishing what Prentice termed the ‘offer of origins’ (Prentice 2001, 19). Just as English (Hewison 1987), Irish (Costa, this volume), or African (Ebron 2000) identity is marketed to tourists, so this idea may be extended to include those common origins people seek or recognize, defined beyond national borders. Authenticity may be promoted through shared spiritual origins, by tapping into beliefs centered on mutual religious origins. In this particular respect, HLE may be seen as analogous to study tours, one for Protestant believers, who wish for betterment and enrichment by gaining insights and a reaffirmation of faith enhanced by experiential encounters. Yet there can be little doubt that HLE represents what Prentice termed “constructed authenticity,” the offer of an experience otherwise unobtainable through other means.

HLE represents an additional installment in the unfolding and changing perception of the Holy Land as a key metaphor for aspirations to Protestant dominion over a land regarded sacred. Out of necessity, that perspective is also aimed at a specific audience, much less general than earlier symbolic representations of

the Holy Land such as those exemplified by Palestine Park at Chautauqua and the St. Louis World's Fair. Moreover, it encourages the extension of a continued transnational postimperial era attachment to the biblical past, to which the United States was an enthusiastic latecomer.

This is obviously a significant difference from the use of archaeological images, finds and heritage for nation-states to claim ancient glories as their own. Instead, there is a subcultural aspiration to highlight Jesus' path in the Holy Land. Yet there are some similarities. Christianity, of course, considers the sacred nature of the land primarily based on Jesus' central role after descending in the form of a man, and his return from that land. If the divine presence is considered to dwell in the land of Palestine and Israel, the periods when the nascent Jewish and Christian faiths ripened are the periods of specific interest to the HLE enterprise, as they are to much of the Western world (Ben-Arieh 1991, 10). For Christian evangelicals, Israel as Zion is predicated on an understanding of that land as sacred, spiritual territory, one that in some way must be restored for redemption. This is not a recent Christian perspective but one established for centuries; the land of Christ's incarnation and redemption, the nativity, Christ's childhood, preaching, resurrection, and ascension all occurred on the landscape regardless of whether later associations are historically authentic or not (Werblowsky 1997, 12). Nevertheless, this seems to be a particularly Protestant vision; Rome as the particular focal nexus for pilgrimage retains centrality for many Catholics (Klatzker 1991, 69–70).

Although there are clear drawbacks to planning to create a representation of the Holy Land in Orlando (cost, lack of clear authenticity, lack of sacred landscape), there are benefits as well. Control over what is represented and how it is presented is perhaps the most obvious mitigating factor. In this way, choices underscore the facets of the mythical Holy Land that Christians, particularly those open to the evangelical message of Zion's Hope, consider central to representing the land of the Bible such as Christ's tomb, the temple, and the holy city of Jerusalem. Equally emblematic are those many elements that are left out, such as Masada, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, or the Dome of the Rock, and a host of other sites with emotive value to others, but not viewed as central to Jesus' path. Obviously, all aspects of the biblical narrative and landscape cannot possibly be represented. Nevertheless, there are similarities with other depictions and visual images of the Holy Land dating back to the nineteenth century that suggest historical continuity in motivation. This allows participants, in particular believers, to validate and elevate their sense of placement in history.

HLE is a decidedly and unabashedly Christian version of the Holy Land; Judaism is virtually nonexistent except in its role as the essential roots of Christianity, and as a purchasing opportunity. Islam, of course, is absent. Virtually no

mention of Jewish inhabitants is made during the public presentation of the model of Jerusalem. It is also interesting to note that nowhere at the HLE is there any discussion of archaeology, despite Rosenthal's focus on accurate replication and rendering of structures and use of objects (such as the authentic forms of the Bible to be displayed in the Scriptorium) to establish authenticity. Everything that is replicated or fabricated derives from biblical, rather than archaeological, sources. Calvary's Garden Tomb, apparently named and modeled after the Garden Tomb near the Damascus Gate outside of Jerusalem's Old City, is promoted as the actual tomb of Jesus without inclination to offer proof, nor is a rationale offered as to why this particular tomb is more likely than that of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the latter also traditionally considered the place of Jesus' entombment and his resurrection to Catholic and Orthodox believers.

The solution at Chautauqua was different because it was participatory, obviating the need for indigenous peoples or actors. The desire to modify space to a surrogate Holy Land, playing a role both as an instructional device and part of the spiritual and physical lives of the Chautauquans, is nevertheless quite similar to HLE.

This is not to suggest that the creators of the HLE are solely manipulating visitors for profit; their interest in bringing the Bible to visitors is repeatedly stated and seems earnest.¹ Nor is this necessarily a completely inaccurate depiction of the current Old City of Jerusalem, where at least two of the four main gates leading into the Old City also confront the visitor with a vast array of souvenirs, food and drink, and religious paraphernalia—primarily Christian and Jewish. In the city of Jerusalem, one is treated to a booming sound and light show at the Tower of David Museum utilizing an array of models, reconstructions, and electronic visual aids including film. Multimedia is increasingly incorporated at other sites with historical content in Jerusalem and Israel, and a model of ancient Jerusalem is a popular tourist destination. In fact one visitor to the Holy Land Experience suggested that it is was better than the real thing, not as “smelly” as butcher's alley (*suq el-labham*) in Jerusalem's Old City—and much less crowded. This sentiment is apparently common, and was echoed by Senator J. R. Burton at the dedication ceremony of the Jerusalem Exhibition at the St. Louis World Fair, when he noted more than once that a visit to the exhibit would be superior to visiting the real Jerusalem (Rubin 2000, 67).

Similarly, the more technologically advanced HLE provides a transformative experience, albeit brief. By fetishizing the Holy Land and despite the blatantly replicated aspects, HLE is able to exploit a sentiment somewhat similar to what John K. Wright (1966) termed *geopietiy*, such that participants are able to maintain not only an attachment to a geographic area, but a perceived spiritual and cultural superiority. The overt marketing, even by a nonprofit venture, is simply the next logical step that many other ventures tapping into heritage employ.

It would be unsurprising to find what is sometimes known as the heritage industry, especially those in charge of museums and historical sites, disdainful of such places as the HLE. There is, of course, no claim of authenticity around the chosen plot of land, the buildings, or the performers and sales people hired by the organization. Rubin underscores four typical American characteristics reflected in the Jerusalem Exhibition at St. Louis (Rubin 2000, 68), three of which remain major factors at the HLE nearly one hundred years later. First, similar to the model at the St. Louis Exposition, which was claimed to be the largest of its kind, the Scriptorium at HLE is claimed to “houses the world’s largest indoor model of first-century Jerusalem” (Holy Land Experience 2003). Second, the emphasis on a live experience, a “virtual visit” is a trend shared not just with the World’s Fair at St. Louis and HLE, but also Williamsburg, Virginia, and other similar historically themed sites. Third, the central role Holy Scripture and the Holy Land play as a theme throughout American culture, particularly among Protestants. Only the profit motive, a primary goal in American society (Rubin 2000, 68), is not clearly a fundamental goal of HLE, although marketing of goods is clearly intended to generate substantial revenue.

In some sense, this then is the most purely commercialized form of commodifying the past, the next logical step in promoting versions of the past where mass cultural tourism and pilgrimage intersect. Visitors wishing to become closer to the biblical narrative are only one additional step removed from authenticity, that of proximity, than those who actually walk in one of the various putative Garden Tombs in Jerusalem or along the Via Dolorosa. I would argue that the distance from the authentic place located within Israel/Palestine is not of vital concern to visitors attracted to the HLE, because people are interested in constructing authentic relationships with a particular retelling of the past, and that past assists them in the construction or reaffirmation in a sense of identity. As David Lowenthal (1996, 128) points out, “heritage passes on exclusive myths of origin and continuance, endowing a select group with prestige and common purpose.” Creating that constructed experience of shared spiritual identity is only enhanced through use of authenticating elements such as ancient texts and agricultural implements, not dependent on them.

The Holy Land Experience condenses various experiences into one place. As a tourist venue containing models, performances, multimedia displays and, of course, shopping, it represents a theme park destination. As a site for religious observation, biblical education and spiritual edification, aspects of pilgrimage are evoked. And finally, as a model of a foreign place considered sacred by its creators and visitors, the site maintains the continuity of tradition Americans feel for a religious setting.

Visitors to HLE occupy a particular subset of the tourism industry, one that does not fit neatly within the larger realm of international tourism. Superficially, visiting HLE has more in common with family vacations to Disney World, but perhaps with similar motivations to those fueling visits to battlefield sites or art museums. At the same time, the religious impetus parallels the one that stimulated travel and pilgrimage to the Middle East. But HLE provides the opportunity to evoke religious sentiments while avoiding costly travel, inconvenient political realities, and face-to-face encounters with people of differing cultural backgrounds.

If, over time, the HLE exhibits the power to motivate visitors as active participants in pilgrimages, additional layers of semantic complexity will be involved through the ritual process as a form of group creation and affirmation. Nevertheless, the commercial strategy will undoubtedly remain, underscoring the contradictory aspect to the self-conscious production of solidarity through the avowed evangelical and spiritual mission.

A major focal point for current cultural analyses centers on investigative approaches to studying global and local processes. HLE represents a different permutation of what Benedict Anderson (1991) termed "long-distance nationalism," in this case a nationalism with continuity to American perceptions of what is sacred in the Holy Land. This commodification of the past fits well into the process of globalization, where time and place are deemphasized in favor of reconstructing a past and place regardless of earlier political or natural boundaries. People seeking to anchor themselves in an identity through the HLE are cultivating relationships through communities, despite their separation from the physical place being replicated. Even if they are not located in the Middle East, places may arouse great passion; like many people, those that HLE is trying to reach and draw in are those living in that small place between the future we envision and that past many wish to recapture. In this way, HLE performs a similar role as many archaeologies from around the world, by providing material correlates for stories and myths of identity and belonging. It is here, perhaps, that archaeologists should examine how easily a gulf may form between an academic perception of how the public should understand the past and how easily the past may become decontextualized and dehistoricized in favor of simplified, profitable renditions of the past divorced from any scholarly influence.

Note

1. Although Zion's Hope, Inc., is a nonprofit ministry, a recent ruling granted a tax exemption for the sanctuary and administration building but not the theme park (*New York Times*, November 23, 2001).

References

The author would like to thank Uzi Baram, Morag Kersel, and Stephen Shoemaker for their constructive comments on this chapter. David Rosenthal kindly provided a guided tour of the park, for which the author expresses his appreciation.

- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.
- Baram, Uzi. n.d. "National Identity, History, and Heritage: Perspectives on Tourism and Archaeology in Israel." Manuscript in possession of author.
- Ben-Arieh, Yehoshua. 1991. "Holy Land Views in Nineteenth-Century Western Travel Literature." In *With Eyes toward Zion—III*, edited by M. Davis and Y. Ben-Arieh, 10–29. New York: Praeger.
- Davis, John. 1992. "Holy Land, Holy People? Photography, Semitic Wannabes, and Chautauqua's Palestine Park." *Prospects, An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 17: 241–71.
- Davison, Roderic H. 1977. "The Search for Sources." In *With Eyes toward Zion*, edited by M. Davis, 88–99. New York: Arno.
- Ebron, Paula. 2000. "Tourists as Pilgrims: Commercial Fashioning of Transatlantic Politics." *American Ethnologist* 26(4): 910–32.
- Gilbert, James. 1994. "World's Fairs as Historical Events." In *Fair Representations*, edited by R. Rydell and N. Guinn, 14–27. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Glassberg, David. 2001. *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Goell, Yohai, and Martha B. Katz-Hyman. 1977. "Americans in the Holy Land, 1850–1900: A Select Bibliography." In *With Eyes toward Zion*, edited by M. Davis, 100–125. New York: Arno.
- Goulding, Christina. 2000. "The Commodification of the Past, Postmodern Pastiche, and the Search for Authentic Experiences at Contemporary Heritage Attractions." *European Journal of Marketing* 34(7): 835–53.
- Graburn, N. 1989. "Tourism: The Sacred Journey." In *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, edited by V. Smith, 21–36. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Greenberg, Gershon. 1991. "America—Holy Land and Religious Studies: On Expressing a Sacred Reality." In *With Eyes toward Zion—III*, edited by M. Davis and Y. Ben-Arieh, 50–62. New York: Praeger.
- Handy, Robert T. 1977. "Sources for Understanding American Christian Attitudes toward the Holy Land, 1800–1950." In *With Eyes toward Zion*, edited by M. Davis, 34–56. New York: Arno.
- Hewison, R. 1991. *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*. London: Mathuen.
- Holy Land Experience. 2001. Press information. www.theholylandexperience.com/press/construction.html. Accessed October 2001.
- . 2003. The Holy Land Experience Fact Sheet. www.theholylandexperience.com/press/facts.html. Accessed June 17, 2003.

- Klatzer, David. 1991. "American Christian Travelers to the Holy Land, 1821–1939." In *With Eyes toward Zion—III*, edited by M. Davis and Y. Ben-Arieh, 63–76. New York: Praeger.
- Lowenthal, David. 1998. *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- MacCannell, Dean. 1973. "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings." *American Journal of Sociology* 79(3): 589–603.
- . 1976. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. London: Macmillan.
- Prentice, Richard. 2001. "Experiential Cultural Tourism: Museums and the Marketing of the New Romanticism of Evoked Authenticity." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 19(1): 5–26.
- Rubin, Rehav. 2000. "When Jerusalem Was Built in St. Louis: A Large Scale Model of Jerusalem in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition 1904." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 132: 59–70.
- Shackel, Paul A. 2000. *Archaeology and Created Memory: Public History in a National Park*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Silberman, Neil A. 1997. "Structuring the Past: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Symbolic Authority of Archaeological Monuments." In *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, edited by N. A. Silberman and D. Small, 62–81. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1975. "Geopietry: A Theme in Man's Attachment to Nature and to Place." In *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geosophy*, edited by D. Lowenthal and M. J. Bowden, 11–39. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Turner, V. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Turner, Victor, and Edith Turner. 1978. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia.
- Vincent, John H. [1885] 1971. *The Chautauqua Movement*. Books for Libraries.
- Vogel, Lester I. 1991. *To See a Promised Land*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Werblowsky, R. J. Zwi. 1997. "The Meaning of Jerusalem to Jews, Christians, and Muslims." In *Jerusalem in the Mind of the Western World, 1800–1948*, edited by Y. Ben Arieh and M. Davis, 7–21. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Wright, John K. 1966. "Notes on Early American Geopietry." In *Human Nature in Geography*, edited by J. K. Wright, 250–85. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.