

# A Summer Visit to the Holy Land

This is the last of a series of letters written by Mrs. F. Orion Nixon during her visit last summer to the Holy Land. Her last stop before heading back to Murfreesboro was Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ.

National Hotel  
Jerusalem, Jordan

It is my last evening in Palestine. The night is cool. The moon, almost full, hangs above the Mount of Olives and the stars



seem so near. Jerusalem lies below us—the massive walls, the Damascus Gate, the Dome of the Rock. I am looking from my hotel window at the Jerusalem with which I

have become familiar in these six weeks, in whose streets I have walked, a city I have come to love. To leave brings a feeling of sadness.

Jerusalem, Israel, seems so remote—yet, only a short distance away. A barricade, some barbed wire, a strip of waste land, are all that separate us from the other Jerusalem. Soon after our arrival in Israel we applied through the American Consulate for permission from the Jordanian Government to cross into old Jerusalem at the close of summer school. We heard nothing until the day before we were scheduled to pass; we were then told to report at 8:30 the next morning at the Mandelbaum Gate. Eight of our group—"Christian pilgrims wishing to visit the Holy Places"—were permitted to cross. No Jew or anyone with Jewish connections is allowed to enter.

When one passes through the Mandelbaum Gate, he passes from one world into another—from the west to the east. Jordan lives in the tradition of her past and that is of the East. It is still a country of the camel and desert-roaming Bedouin.

## To Uphill Calvary

The city lies there in the moonlit silence. The sounds of the day are hushed. By day, in the narrow streets, with wall and buildings crowding all about, one hardly notices that the way to Calvary is uphill. Now, with the city spread before me, I can see the Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrow) passing under the Ecce Homo Arch, turning sharply at the Third Station of the Cross, then twisting, bending, yet all the while climbing slowly to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

We walked the way that Jesus walked from the time of His arrest to His Crucifixion. The streets were narrow and crowded, and the people were in Eastern dress. The men wear the long cotton tunic, and over it the "abayah," which is a kind of cloak hanging in loose graceful folds. The women wear black embroidered with colors that are bright but never gaudy. Donkeys blocked the way, so laden that sometimes only a head and ears were visible. A porter in a tunic of sacking was bent double under sacks of potatoes. There was the smell of garlic and cooking and humanity. Open fronted shops, reaching back like caves displayed loaves and cakes; pastry and boiled sweets; sacks full of flour and sugar and

beans; baskets of peppers, rice and tomatoes; live rabbits and poultry and pigeons; carcasses of calves and lambs.

From station to station we went. Here is the Fortress Antonio, the Praetorium of the Gospels, where Pontius Pilate took up residence during the Passover. Here he questioned Jesus, and having heard Him, said to the Jews—"I find no fault in this man." Here He received His cross; here He fell—onlookers watched from doorways with the indifferent expression of those to whom a sight is very familiar—as familiar as once was the sight of a prisoner being led by Roman legionaries to die on a cross. Here was where Jesus was met by His mother.

A woman sits on the pavement weighing peppers. Here is where Simon Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross. A hen clucks in a coop and an Arab child is eating corn on the cob. The way is very steep. A man is leading a donkey laden with sacks and we press ourselves against the wall to make room for him to pass. I take a picture of an Arab smoking a pipe through a long tube—called a "Narghile."

Ahead of us is Calvary and the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Flickering candles light the darkness that goes up to Calvary. Here Jesus was nailed on a tree; here Mary and John stood. No sound but the murmur of a Franciscan priest, "Our Father, who art in Heaven"—Here Christ's body had lain; from here He had risen from the dead. A shabby figure in a patched coat was kneeling and kissing repeatedly the slab on which His body was anointed.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is dim and battered and shabby. There are tawdry hangings, dusty chandeliers, glass balls, artificial flowers. Some reflect the tradition that Jesus was buried here and show you another tomb—the "Garden Tomb" near Gordon's Calvary. One must look beyond the dust and trappings to find a place of love and sacrifice.

## Cloud of Crucifixion

The cloud of Crucifixion still hangs upon Jerusalem—the darkness that was upon the face of the earth. The sun shines, yet the Via Dolorosa is always dark, because walls and barred windows rise steep on both sides.

From the Holy Lane we passed under Crusader arches to the dazzling brilliance of the Temple Court. In the center stood the Dome of the Rock that is the sanctuary of the Moslems and the site of Solomon's temple. Inside the Mosque is the sacred rock on which it is said Abraham was to have sacrificed his son Isaac. A Moslem legend claims that from the rock Mohammed ascended into heaven, and in one corner there is pointed out a footprint which is said to have been left by the sole of his feet.

To the east is the Mount of Olives where Jesus prayed and taught His disciples to pray. On the slopes is the village of Bethphage, to which he sent the two disciples to get the colt "on which no man had yet ridden." On the top stands the little church of the Ascension, which at a distance, looks like a thimble. Bethany, the home of Mary and Martha, is a white dusty village, and a little old bent

man with a candle went ahead of us down steep steps to show us Lazarus's tomb, with an inscription—"I am the resurrection and the Life"—Gethsemane, lying on the lower slopes of Olivet, is tended with love and care by the Franciscans.

From among the beautiful garden beds rise the twisted olive trees, some with immense trunks that have split through the ages.

Are these the same olive trees that were in the garden in the time of Christ? It is reasonable to suppose that they were born of the shoots of the ones there in His day. The olive is slow growing and of long life; for ten years it bears no fruit and bears little until it is forty or fifty years old.

From Bethany the road drops down to Jericho past the Inn of the Good Samaritan, with above it the ruins of the Crusader Castle of Blood. The Mountain of Temptation stands black against a brassy sky. After a long ride we came to the Qumran Caves by the Dead Sea where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

## To Bethlehem

We have crowded much sight-seeing into these days in Jordan—south to Hebron, David's early capital and site of the tombs of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, and north to the ruins of Ahab's palace in Samaria. Our last place was Bethlehem, which seems to breathe peace in this war-ravaged land. It is much like any other Palestinian town with an uneventful history, with one exception.

When the Persians laid waste the cities of the Roman Empire, burned Jerusalem, they spared the Church of the Nativity, for, seeing a picture of the Magi bringing their gifts to the Christ child, they were filled with wonder and respect. Down a flight of worn steps to a cave is the spot, marked by a silver star and an inscription, which reads: "Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born." It seems to me a good place to visit last—here where God's love met human need.

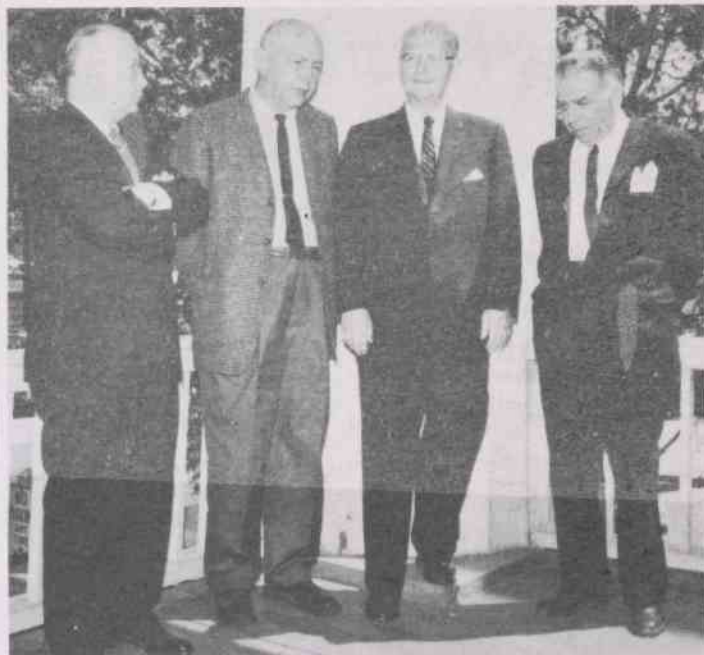
I leave tomorrow for Cairo and by the time you receive this I will be coming home by way of Beirut, Istanbul, Amsterdam to New York. It has been a rich and exciting experience, but I must confess to a homesickness now for eastern North Carolina and Chowan College.

## New Honorary Fraternity is Inaugurated

Chowan College has inaugurated a new honorary fraternity to give recognition to those students who have been especially outstanding in their campus service and citizenship, and whose loyalty to the college has been extremely noteworthy.

The organization, which is purely local in scope, will be known as the "Order of the Silver Feather," the name being selected in keeping with the Chowan nickname of "Braves."

New members of the organization will be selected by the faculty awards committee and announced during the annual Awards Day Program. The charter of the organization provides



FORMER PRESIDENT'S PASTOR — Dr. Edward H. Pruden (third from left), pastor of the First Baptist Church, Washington, D. C., was a recent chapel speaker. He was the pastor of former President Harry Truman during his administration. With Dr. Pruden are three faculty members, long acquainted with the Washington pastor: Dr. Bela Udvarnoki, Professor William I. Marable, and Professor Eugene Williams.

## Distinguished Chapel Speaker

"International relations, racial relations are my relations, the attitude of the individual. Any improvement of these relations, therefore, must start with the individual — with me." These statements, in a chapel service April 20, came from Dr. Edward H. Pruden, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Washington, D. C.

For Dr. Pruden, who was accompanied by Rev. Walter Moose, Pastor of the Seaboard Baptist Church, to come to Chowan was like a home-coming. Dr. Pruden was born in Chase City, Virginia, and was warmly received by his friend, Professor Marable, another Chase City

citizen. Professor Williams was glad to see Dr. Pruden as his fellow student at the University of Richmond. Mr. and Mrs. Cadle and Dr. Udvarnoki welcomed him as a former schoolmate in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

After the chapel service Dr. Pruden visited the campus in the company of President Whitaker and was deeply impressed by the great progress Chowan has made in the past years.

Dr. Pruden grew up in North Carolina, near Seaboard, and he maintains a keen interest in Chowan, the college near to his home of youthful years.



CONGRESSMAN VISITS — On a recent visit to northeastern North Carolina, Congressman Herbert C. Bonner of Washington, N. C., stopped by Chowan College to chat with three students who are enrolled on scholarships made possible by the Congressman, incumbent representative from the First Congressional District. Left to right are Brenda Taylor, Gates; Congressman Bonner; Morris Pritchett, Columbia; and Albert Bess, Moyock.

that no more than five students may be selected each year.

Under the charter, the primary qualification for membership is exemplary service to Chowan College. In addition, however, membership is limited to only those students who: (1) have been at Chowan at least three semesters; (2) have maintained a grade average of "C"; and (3) have never been on probation or campus restriction of any kind.

The students selected each year will receive a key symbolizing their membership in the "Order" and their names are to be placed on a permanent membership roll which will be displayed in a prominent place at the college.

When the disk jockeys tell you that they personally guarantee the products they advertise, it sounds like a child betting a million dollars.