

POLEMICAL (DIS)ORDER

DEBORAH PINTO FDEDA, IFAT FINKELMAN, AND TANIA COEN UZZIELLI
IN CONVERSATION WITH YISCA HARANI

Ifat Finkelman:

Let's start from first principles. The Status Quo is a kind of dedicated conflict resolution tool, especially in the Holy Sepulchre. It's really the only place where the Status Quo is defined by the parties to the dispute. The ruling power enforces it and is responsible for preserving it, but the denominations themselves were the ones who came to a mutual agreement in the first place. This is unlike other places with a Status Quo in force, where it was defined by the ruling power.

Yisca Harani:

The so-called Status Quo agreements weren't made between the denominations. For example, the Franciscans sold the section behind the Aedicule to the Copts in the sixteenth century. They came to an agreement together, yes, but it would never have taken effect without the approval of the Ottoman authorities. On another occasion the Armenians made a large payment to Istanbul for a particular section of the church. So from day one, back in Saladin's time, the ones who owned the rights to the church and could do what they wanted were the Muslims. This church was Muslim territory. Now just think about the Ottoman Empire: they have a huge Christian minority,

millions of Christians all the way from Iraq and Syria via Lebanon, Greece, and the Balkans, and it's a minority that can't be ignored. So they say to themselves, this minority will have rights here, and it can pay us a small tax to make it worth our while. But then another factor enters the picture. This minority is made up of lots of subgroups, so we have a number of communities under Muslim rule, each one with different rights. Why? The ruler has to give them something to prevent them from rebelling and to maintain their loyalty.

IF: Enlightened politics?

YH: I don't know if it's enlightened.

I think it's just a ruling technique. In the fourteenth century powers like Naples and Genoa are on the way up, and Muslims with fleets in the Mediterranean want to trade in their ports. What does this have to do with the Holy Sepulchre? Plenty! The doge of Genoa will turn around and say, "You want me to give you trading privileges? So you need to find some privileges to give us. Say there are Catholics who want to pray at the Holy Sepulchre, open the doors to them, won't you? Give them a place to stay, give them a chapel." Geopolitics is the

name of the game. For the ruler, survival includes managing minority affairs, combined with international diplomacy, and it all flows into the eight thousand square meters of the Holy Sepulchre. Do you follow? It's all political constructs, not enlightened rule, not community relations. What is more, this Status Quo was the Ottomans' downfall. What did the Status Quo do? Cut off the Ottomans' ability to go on dealing and bargaining. The Status Quo comes along when the Ottoman Empire is on its deathbed, at the beginning of the end. There could never have been a Status Quo in the seventeenth century or in the eighteenth.

Wajeeh Y. Nuseibeh,
Custodian and
Doorkeeper of the
Church of the Holy
Sepulchre. Photo:
Gil Marco Shani



IF: It came from a position of weakness. The Status Quo agreements were a kind of sanction imposed on them.

YH: Exactly. Like the whole thing about declaring at the United Nations that Jerusalem is Israel's capital, when the international community said to Israel, "You can't decide where the capital is." What was the world telling us? "You can't determine your own destiny. We'll determine it for you." Exactly the same thing happened here: the outside world,

in Paris and later in Berlin, settles the fate of the Armenian chapel in the Sepulchre. So the world is telling the Ottomans, who had been defeated almost every front, to sign off on the Status Quo in the Holy Sepulchre, they have no choice but to sign. For a moment the ruler is no longer ruling, talking in a rather metaphorical sense, because he is still in power. In the Holy Sepulchre he's not the one in charge. So who is the one in charge? We come to the point: the Status Quo in charge. What is the role of the Ottomans or any subsequent ruling power? To preserve the Status Quo.

IF: On the one hand, freezing the nineteenth-century political position resolved the conflict, but on the other was a very cruel thing to do. It froze a very specific balance of power in which the weak were weak and the strong were strong, and in the long term it created an anomalous situation.

YH: I'm not sure how cruel the freeze was. In some cases it actually empowered the weaker side. I'll give you an example: the Armenians have exclusive rights to the Chapel of Saint Helena. Every day at a set time when the Armenians come to Mass, the Copts (who have fewer people in the church) also come and have a service there. This doesn't cause any problems between them, because from a theological point of view they belong to the same group. It's a unique arrangement, however, one that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. So on the one hand we can see here the Armenians have the right to use the site as they wish, and on the other hand, we see that the Copts have the rights to use the site, even during

liturgical time slot of the more powerful Armenians. In practice, what seems like the Copts' "invasion" of the Armenian territory during the service is a classic Status Quo situation. It's not an invasion but the possibility of coexistence. It's a right to perform rituals that dates back at least 150 years. If there wasn't any Status Quo and the Ottomans still had the right to broker deals for the rights within the church, then President el-Sisi of Egypt, say, could visit Istanbul and come to new agreements that would totally change the balance of power. But ever since the Status Quo was signed, it froze the crazy situation in which people from different power blocs have to live together.

Deborah Pinto Fdeda:

There's something very elusive about the Status Quo: on the one hand, it sets the rules, like a kind of law, but on the other hand, it's fuzzy and open to interpretation.

Coptic Mass in the Chapel of St. Helena.
Photo: Gil Marco Shani



YH: It's not a law. The Status Quo is something else, something self-sufficient. The Status Quo is the here and now.

DPP: But if it's so detailed and significant, how did it get written down? And if it's not written down because it can't be written down, how can it be enforced?

YH: Suppose we're living in the Ottoman period, OK? Ottomans are rather laid back. Things are the way they are. They aren't put in writing. From time to time internal problems come up, and then they issue firmans. But the problem is that the firmans contradict one another, so then they go back to established practice and the logic of the ruler in the conflict. Things carry on like this until the British arrive, and then Sir Harry Luke examines the situation and says, "Now then, chaps, however have you managed all these years without a text? Time to get your act together!" Then he takes Sir Lionel George Archer Cust to one side and says, "All right, you took Classical Greek at Eton, so you must know Modern Greek, you work it out!" Cust sits down in the church and, with all due respect, only samples the situation there. I mean, come on! Was he there when the Armenians celebrated the Festival of the Cross in a Julian leap year? No way could he get everything down in writing. But to give him his due, he did get a reasonable sense of what was going on, and he did succeed in creating a relatively clear layout. The fact remains that the courts determined that his report is the only valid official document on the topic.

Tania Coen Uzzielli:

The interesting thing about the rituals in the Holy Sepulchre area, documented and undocumented, is the fierce commitment to performing them again and again with devotion and precision.

YH: Look, the church isn't a museum. The denominations there don't care much about visitors and tourists. It's a clock that ticks in its own way, not counting seconds, minutes, or hours. It's on liturgical time. There's a liturgical clock here, and that's what sets the rules.

TCU: You're saying that the repetition of the rituals is significant because it preserves my rights. If I miss a service, I'll lose my rights to it. If I'm a minute late, I've changed the Status Quo. In other words, the Status Quo is always being recorded and rebuilt.

YH: Yes. Not recorded but recycled. Let me tell you how it *is* recorded. In recent years the documentation became a battle of cameras. Ever since cameras entered the scene, the church officials themselves photograph events, because the camera catches the Status Quo. Even if there is nothing in writing or the written text doesn't cover everything, as long as I have a picture, I can prove my claims to the Status Quo. The picture becomes testimony and confirmation. What does this lead to? Now every church has its own files. Every time a dispute arises, they can turn to the maintainers of the Status Quo and say, "Ah, I have pictures from 1982 and 1996 that prove something or other." That also serves as a threat. Cameras are weapons.

IF: This church is completely different from every church in the world. Unlike typical churches, which have a clear structure and a clear routine and an obvious typology in both plan and elevation, the "order" in the Holy Sepulchre is made up of narratives. It's made up of the stations of the anointing, the crucifixion, the

tomb, and so on. But it's also a lay of many historical churches, topped the "order" of the Status Quo. Of course this creates insane clashes.

YH: It certainly creates insane intert. But however insane it becomes, the order within the disorder.

IF: When you enter the Holy Sepulchre today as a visitor, it's an eclectic, place. At the same time, if you look at the pilgrims, they seem to be coming at home, as if each of them—Armenian Catholic, or whatever—has their own way to attend the church.

Orthodox pilgrim at the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Photo: Gil Marco Shani



YH: Right. Everyone comes to the Holy Sepulchre to further their own mission or agenda. For example, when entering the church, all the Orthodox must bow to the left. This is connected to a split pillar on that side. In the 11th century, the Armenians prevented the Orthodox from entering the church after a dispute arose between the two communities. According to legend, at the next Saturday Holy Fire ceremony the Holy Fire burst out of the pillar and died. So the pillar is sacred to the Orthodox.

this day. The Catholics, for example, walk past it without even being aware of the story behind it. The Armenians, for their part, turn their backs to it because they come out of the story as the bad guys and the losers. So this legend has some kind of historical basis on which the site is constructed as a polemical story. This is an essential point—the whole church is in fact one big polemical territory, and this is expressed in the rituals, the texts, the traditions, and the positioning of objects.

The Calvary, Greek Orthodox property. Photo: Gil Marco Shani



IF: Then the church is chiefly a narrative, telling a story?

YH: You can really hear the story, as a consequence of the fact that the faithful need contact with the stones themselves. The meeting of the narrative and the area is the real story. The space supplies it not just through the classic locations, not just through the familiar route leading up to Golgotha, the descent to the Stone of Anointing, the passage to the Tomb, to the discovery of the Cross, and the exit. There is also the Orthodox chapel where you can place your head and hear Jesus being flogged, the place where Jesus was bound, and for Catholics also

the place where his mother appeared to him. That is to say, the church contains much more than the familiar narrative of Jesus, and so it adds a second circle to the experience. Some things are a must, but there are also circles on the periphery. The phenomenon of peripheral circles couldn't happen anywhere else in the world, only somewhere under Muslim rule. Because after the pilgrims' long journey to the Holy Land from a distant country, via Rome or Marseille, from the moment of entering the Holy Sepulchre and paying the fee, they don't want to leave. They want to stay inside. They want to extend their appreciation of the story.

IF: You mean the experience of the place is total. Maximal exploitation of the space. It's something very different from churches that try to overwhelm the visitor and convey an experience of the almighty. This is a place that stresses the ongoing experience. Ritual and activities define the place more than architecture, more than the physical space.

DPF: I see a distinction between those who live in the church and those who come to visit. For visitors it's much less the rituals and more the authenticity of the place.

YH: Right. The visitor comes to see the real thing.

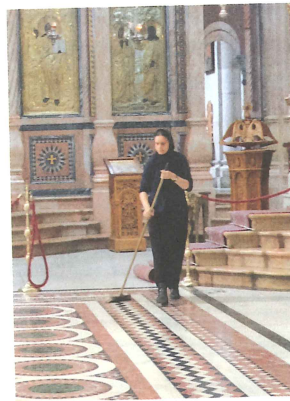
TCU: It's a place of memorial.

YH: More than that. For example, in a Gothic church the ambulatories, the chapels, and the other wonderful things that you see while visiting the place all contain relics. There are no relics in the Holy Sepulchre (except in the sacristy of the Orthodox, where the relics are mostly

bones of saints that have little to do with the place). That's because the church itself is the relic. The cave is the relic. The stone is the relic.

IF: You're talking about a sensual experience of the place, the ability to lay one's head on the stone, on the relic. In that context, activities not necessarily connected to religion or prayer are also highly significant and sensual. For example, everywhere else ablution is a requirement, but here it's a privilege. Especially the everyday, down-to-earth things, like the right of maintenance, the right to restore and repair, the right to decorate or furnish, or even the right to ring the bell.

Cleaning the
Katholikon.
Photo: Gil Marco
Shani



YH: That kind of issue is totally characteristic of shared sacred sites. But here in particular it's clear that cleaning is a statement. Not just "Who is more devout?" but even "Whom did God call to clean my area?" It makes a declaration that goes far beyond politics. It's exactly the same with who gilds the golden dome on the Temple Mount. Jordan has been fighting for years to have that as its exclusive right. Saudi Arabia would love to share . . .

DPF: You're saying something highly significant for understanding the Quo—that it has lots of gray areas, cases in which the right of maintenance and usage is undocumented, which arise only when something happens. For example, when a stone falls or collapses, as happened recently in Sultan. Then it all starts up: discussions, investigations, photographs, procedures. Everything aimed at understanding what should restore or repair.

YH: Right, you can't rely on any old. Every new event not recorded by documented by one of the denominations has to be handled specifically. A good example is the Holy Fire ceremony in 2000. The Greek Orthodox patriarch at the time was seriously ill, and he was brought into the Aedicule in a wheelchair attached to an oxygen machine. Apparently while he was inside, he was taken to an Armenian, "Do me a favor, and take the candle with the fire." The following year a terrible dispute broke out. The patriarch had died during the year, and when his successor entered the Holy Sepulchre, he was met by an Armenian who claimed the privilege of bringing out the fire. The new patriarch, who knew that the Orthodox had a leading role, thought that was insane and unreasonable. So what was the point of the Armenian privilege? The year before, precedent is set. *Precedent* is an inspiring word in the Holy Sepulchre. Because precedent is catastrophic, change to the situation. On that day, violence broke out, and the pope was called in to settle the dispute. It's not the only example.

IF: We talked earlier about anomalies. You said that anomalies are our way of managing. That's interesting.

YH: Here I'm no longer speaking as an expert. I'm speaking as a citizen of a crazy country, who lives a reality of anomaly; hence the stabilizing solution will be a similar Status Quo.

IF: That reminds me of Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonism. If I take conflict as a given, an inseparable part of life, then I am acknowledging my contestant and acknowledging contestation as a normative situation. Consequently I am constantly trying to create ongoing dialogue. More than that, the conflict is not just a given—it's dynamic, constantly changing, constantly updating.

YH: And there is dialogue. First of all the different churches hold fixed seasonal meetings and more intensive meetings before holidays, at which they go over a detailed daily timetable of who does what and when and where.

IF: A program?

YH: Yes, a protocol. For example, the calendar of Easter religious ceremonies. I've brought a really old one from 1999, "for official use only." The annual meetings rotate between the principal denominations: the Armenians, the Catholics, and the Orthodox. Every year a different denomination publishes the document. But this handbook is for major events; it doesn't deal with day-to-day issues. The day-to-day is what fascinates me. I'm not interested in bombastic declarations; I want to see how an Armenian and a Catholic live

side by side, just as I want to see Israelis and Palestinians living and functioning together on a daily basis.

IF: There's an interdependence between users in everything connected to shared spaces, like space based on shared economy. If contestants share the place between them, it means that they depend on one another. I'm trying to understand if that's an advantage or a disadvantage or whether it's just de facto, the way things are.

YH: Definitely de facto: each individual community would be overjoyed to have the whole pie. The interdependency is a result of force of circumstances more than true partnership. Take the Copts and the Syrians, for example. This church is managed by three power blocs that have no way of getting rid of those two minorities. The reason is a consequence of a historical process. Armenians, Copts, and Syrians adhere to the same theology: all three sects left the church after the Council of Chalcedon and so are called non-Chalcedonian churches. At some point the Armenians became the trustees for the Copts and the Syrians, and they also authorized them to hold a procession at the site under their auspices. And so it happened that to this day, in every procession in which the Copts and the Syrians take part, they tag along behind the Armenians. The astounding thing is how significant the Armenian presence at the site is: they seem like one third of the world, when in fact they're only a tiny minority today. That's another anomaly related to their historical connection to Jerusalem over the years and how they staked a claim there by purchasing land, transferring funds, and so on.

ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱՑՈՅՑ 2017
ԱՄԱԳ ԸԱԲԹՈՒՄՆ ԵՒ Ս. ԶԱՏԿԻ ԱՐԱՐՈՂՈՒԹԵԱՆՑ

ԸԱԲԹ, 8 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• Երեկոյան 3:40-ին ՀՐԱՇԱՓԱՌ, Երեկոյան Ժամերգութիւն եւ Նախատօնակ Ս. Զարութեան Տաճարին մէջ:
ԿԻՐԱԿԻ, 9 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• ԾԱԳԿԱԶԱՐԳ: Առաւօտեան 6:30-ին մուտք, ապա Ժամերգութիւն եւ Ս. Պատարագ Հայոց Վերնամատրան մէջ: 11:30-ին ՄԵՏԱՀԱՆԴԷՍ ԹԱՓՕՐ Քրիստոսի Ս. Գերեզմանին շուրջ: • Երեկոյան 5:00-ին ԳՆՆԵԱՑԵՔԻ արարողութիւն ի Ս. Յակոբ:
ԱՄԱԳ ԵՐԵՔԱԲԹԻ, 11 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• Առաւօտեան 9:00-ին Ս. Պատարագ Ս. Յովհաննէս եկեղեցին՝ Ս. Զարութեան զայիցը: Ապա ուխտատրաց քափօր:
ԱՄԱԳ ՀԻՆԳՇԱԲԹԻ, 13 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• Առաւօտեան 7:00-ին Ժամերգութիւն եւ ապա ԿԱՐԳ ԱՊԱՇԽԱՐՈՒԹԵԱՆ ի Ս. ՅԱԿՈՔ: • Ժամը 9:00-ին Հանդիսատը Ս. Պատարագ ի Ս. Յակոբ: • Երեկոյան 2:30-ին ԿԱՐԳ ՈՏՆԼՈՒՄՅԻ ի Ս. Յակոբ: • Երեկոյան 5:00-ին եկեղեցական արարողութեանը եւ քափօրով երբ դէպի Քրիստոսի Առաջին Բանտ ի Ս. Հրեշտակապետաց, ապա Ս. Ծառ եւ յետոյ Քրիստոսի Երկրորդ Բանտ ի Ս. Փրկիչ: • Գիշերուան 7:00-ին ԿԱՐԳ ԽԱՆՐԱՄԱՆ ի Ս. ՅԱԿՈՔ:
ԱՄԱԳ ՈՒՐԱԲԹ, 14 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• Կէտորուան 1:15-ին ԿԱՐԳ ԽԱՉԵԼՈՒԹԵԱՆ ի Ս. Զարութիւն: • Երեկոյան 5:00-ին ԿԱՐԳ ԹԱՂԱՄԱՆ ի Ս. Յակոբ:
ԱՄԱԳ ԸԱԲԹ, 15 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• Առաւօտեան 7:00-ին Ժամերգութիւն ի Ս. Յակոբ: Ժամը 10:30-ին Ապա Թարգմանը, ընկերակցութեանը Սիարբան Վարդապետաց, կը քանայ դուռը Ս. Զարութեան Տաճարին: • Ժամը 11:00-ին զանգահարութիւն եւ մուտք ի Ս. Զարութիւն: • Երեկոյան 5:00-ին ՃՐԱԳԱԼՈՅՑԻ արարողութիւն եւ Ս. Պատարագ ի Ս. Յակոբ:
ԿԻՐԱԿԻ, 16 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• ԶԱՏԿԻ: ՅԱՐՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՏԵԱՆՆ ՄԵՐՈՑ ԶԻՍՈՒՄԻ ԶԻՍՈՒՄԻ Առաւօտեան 2:30-ին (կէպիչեյին ետը) մուտք ի Ս. Զարութիւն, ապա Ժամերգութիւն, քափօր եւ Հանդիսատը Ս. Պատարագ Քրիստոսի Ս. Գերեզմանին վրայ: Սկիզբ Ս. Պատարագի՝ 7:30-ին: • Երեկոյան 4:00-ին ՄԵՏԱՀԱՆԴԷՍ ԱՆՎԱՍՏԱՆ Սեճ Բակին մէջ:
ԵՐԿՈՒՇԱԲԹԻ, 17 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• ՈՒՆԻՏԱՆՈՐԱՅ ՊԱՏԱՐԱԳ: Առաւօտեան 7:00-ին Ժամերգութիւն ի Ս. Յակոբ: Ժամը 9:00-ին Հանդիսատը Պատրիարքական Ս. Պատարագ: Յետ Ս. Պատարագի ՄԵՏԱՀԱՆԴԷՍ ԹԱՓՕՐ Ս. Յակոբեանց Մայր Տաճարին մէջ:
ԵՐԵՔԱԲԹԻ, 18 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017	• ԶԻՐԱՍԱԿ ՄԵՆԵԼՈՑ: Առաւօտեան 7:00-ին Ժամերգութիւն, ապա Ս. Պատարագ եւ Հոգեհանգիստ Ս. Յակոբեանց Մայր Տաճարին մէջ: Սկիզբ Ս. Պատարագի՝ 9:00-ին:

ՍՈՒՐԱ ԱԹՈՒՆ
1 ԱՊՐԻԼ, 2017

ՍԵՒԱՆ ԱՐԶ. ԳԱՐԻՊԵԱՆ
ԼՈՒՍԱՐԱՐԱՊԵՏ Ս. ԱԹՈՒՆՑ

Timetable of Holy Week, an in Armenian. S Armenian Pat Jerusalem

So the Status Quo preserved groupings that have completely dissolved. The Syrians are a case in point, since most of the world is totally unaware of their existence. The Status Quo turned the site into an anthropological museum. It perpetuated the existence of the Syrians, and that's lucky. They are the only church whose liturgy is in Aramaic, the only ones whose prayers Jesus would be able to understand if he came back.

TCU: None of this could have happened without the physical character of the space. It sounds rather banal, but something about the fragmentariness of the site that permits its continued existence.

YH: I totally agree with the word fragmentariness because that's exactly what's going on, also in the context of the functionality of the site. For

Palm Sunday,
and Easter, 2017
Source:
Patriarchate of

Changing a light bulb
at the Katholikon.
Photo: Gil Marco
Shani



in order to conduct a ceremony, you need a location to set up equipment and make preparations. Preparing the wax for the Holy Fire ceremony, for example. In this context all the service rooms in the church around the rotunda are also fragmentary. Checking out these rooms and working out what you can and can't do in them is a story in itself. What are the boundaries of my freedom within the functionality of the church? Even though the church is perceived first and foremost as a religious, a sacred location, it's a functioning location, not isolated from life. People live there twenty-four hours a day for years on end. For example, I love seeing the crates of fruit and vegetables being carried in for the refectory of the Franciscan monastery. I mean, there's something fascinating about the mundane that deserves attention, because the church functions as a microcosmos. It's a world of its own, but it's not an autarchy; it needs a connection to the outside. So the outside pours in, and that includes cartons of milk, biscuits, coffee, candles, and spare bulbs.

IF: When we plan buildings, the issue of service functions is very important. I mean understanding how the place really

works. You don't think about things like that in the context of a church.

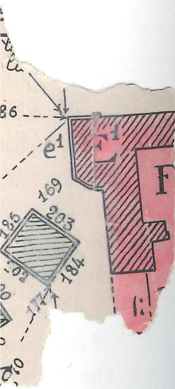
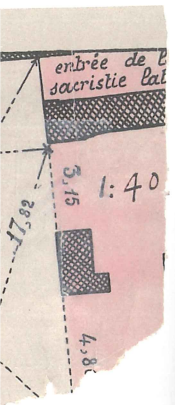
YH: Right. But in the Holy Sepulchre you have to think about them. At the end of the day there are four communities living there. When the doors are closed at night, four groups go to sleep: Catholics, Orthodox, Armenians, and Copts.

IF: That means that the Status Quo, the division, and the choreography are there not only in the services, the liturgy, the candle lighting but also in the day-to-day. In the back-of-house or the practical details enveloping the site.

DPF: As a case study you can look at the church as a shared house, right? Everybody has their own private zone, and there's also a shared area that everybody takes care of together. But the surprising thing for me is that they have no contact. They aren't coordinated, and they don't care about one another. Not to mention that each one believes to some extent that he owns the whole place.

IF: Because you have nothing to gain by sharing. From your own point of view you can only lose.

YH: Right. So I come back to the word that shocked me before—the Status Quo is “cruel.” But without waxing too philosophical, if life is cruel, then that is the given. And maybe it would be crueler if the whole church were Orthodox. You know what that would make the church? You would walk in and see mosaics of saints everywhere or the icon wallpaper that has recently been pasted up in all the Orthodox churches in Israel. Everything would look the same.



IF: So the Status Quo saves the church from genericness?

YH: Exactly. The Status Quo prevents the site from becoming generic.

TCU: It's one of a kind. Unique. Nowhere else is like it.

IF: That's a relief. As long as the site is shared, it preserves its authenticity. If it became exclusive, it would immediately take on generic characteristics willy-nilly.

YH: Even more than that. The layers of the site prevent it from becoming generic. Most places have clear stratification: the lowest layers are the earliest, and the highest are the most recent. But here there's a patchwork.

TCU: No logic.

IF: That makes sense. Because the Status Quo doesn't have any logic either. It's totally opposed to logic. It's a kind of territorial, political, and economic management of a sacred site that is a product of the modern world.

TCU: Yisca, what do you think is the government's interest today in maintaining order at the site? Sooner or later they will come to blows. Why did the police take on the job?

YH: The police didn't take on the job. The police were handed the job by the state, which has a clear and unambiguous interest: to show the world that we run Jerusalem, without problems and without insecurity. We want to show the world that our freedom of religion and freedom of worship are the best in

the Middle East. So since this church has daily international visibility, why would we show the conflicts? Whenever there's a conflict, the buck stops at the ruling power. So the police can't prevent fights, but it can manage them.

DPF: The different denominations in the church, the ones that really run it and live it, what connection do they have to the State of Israel?

YH: What are relations like between the Christian denominations and us? Complicated yet good in general. Even assuming that they would prefer the State of Israel to be the ruling power (and I'm not at all sure that that's true), they are in a position in which they want to be politically correct toward their countries of origin. How can the Copts, for example, say that they are pro-Israel? Their brothers in Egypt would accuse them of being a fifth column within Islam and Christianity. But at the same time they know that the State of Israel can support them in all kinds of conflicts and disputes. They realize that Israel is currently a necessity that's been forced upon them, and it's very much in their interest to get on well with it. It's a kind of survival technique, just like in the Ottoman period.

DPF: It must be rather hard for them to have another father figure that comes along and makes the decisions: "You'll sit here; you'll sit there, and we'll see how it works out."

YH: Look, throughout history the church was never controlled by a Christian from within the church. When the British were in charge, they were Anglican. When it was the Muslims, they were Muslim.

Now it's Israel, and they're Jewish. The ruling power has never been Orthodox, Armenian, or Coptic. They're aware that the ruler is always a heathen. That's what they know. Of course, with Israel the situation is more complex because they have to show their brothers that they're opposed to Israel.

DPF: And in that context, when Trump declares in the UN that he recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, how does that affect the church?

YH: Are you telling me you didn't see the church leaders' statement? Oh, come on . . . the very next day the church leaders made a statement that it wasn't OK and said how much they opposed it.

IF: And how did international opposition to the declaration affect recognition of Israeli sovereignty at the Holy Sepulchre?

YH: For practical purposes, we have had sovereignty since 1967, and as the ruling power we inherited the obligation to preserve the Status Quo. If the world doesn't recognize Greater Jerusalem under Israeli rule, why should it recognize Israeli rule at the Holy Sepulchre? And the fact is that it doesn't. The vibe is—next year in rebuilt Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas will be in power, and he will take care of the Holy Sepulchre. And what does the Christian world think about the fact that Jerusalem now belongs to the State of Israel? The answer is that Christians would love to see Jerusalem proclaimed as an international city. They would like nothing more than for it to become what used to be called a *corpus separatum*. One thing is clear: the Christians don't want Muslim rule, and they don't want Jewish rule. They would

love to step up to the plate after thousand years of Muslim occupancy and fifty years of Israeli occupation set up something new and neutral would raise a fascinating question: Who would be the ruler responsible for the Status Quo? Assuming that the *corpus separatum*, what would be the next step? Wow, this is cool. Almost. Would there be a rotation of rulers? Would a new dispute determine the ruler? That's worth thinking about.

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