

FAITH AND FATE IN JERUSALEM

By

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"They were cynically said to have come to Jerusalem to do good, and they stayed to do well."

(Ronald Storrs, British governor of Jerusalem 1920-26, about The American Colony)

FOREWORD

It was the coincidence of discovering Selma Lagerlöf's novel *Jerusalem*, and The American Colony Hotel in that city simultaneously that provided the inspiration for this book. Stepping through the doorway of a hotel as old as the century one can hardly avoid feeling an overwhelming sense of the famous history all around. It happened to us. And Selma Lagerlöf's novel aroused our curiosity about what had actually gone on between the Swedish and American emigrants who lived, fought, worked and died here. Common to all of them was their deep religious conviction, and they all lived a tumultuous, and, at times, hard existence. While the novel centres on the faith of the emigrants, and on love, the official history of The American Colony mostly entails their charity work.

By accident we became aware that the story was much longer and more complex than would appear to be the case. Two books, written by Swedish emigrants who had grown up in the Colony, revealed another side to the story, aspects of The American Colony's life which were quite central to its development but which appeared to have been kept quiet up until then.

Our interest began to grow, one source led to another until in the end we had most of the parts of what was a dramatic jigsaw puzzle that outdid Selma Lagerlöf's novel, if not in terms of its beauty, then in the fictional and imaginative aspects of the story.

Like Selma Lagerlöf, we began in Jerusalem and ended in the little parish of Nås in Dalarna, where most of the Swedish emigrants originated. The story turned out to be very much alive in both places. There are many primary sources for the story, but most of them are influenced by the fact that the person telling the story has a personal or immediate interest in presenting it in such a way that it complies with certain ideals - or that it covers over a lie. We were therefore forced to treat such sources with great caution. This applies in particular to the primary source, *Our Jerusalem*, Bertha Spafford Vester's book (first published 1950. 2nd edition 1988). This is, first and foremost, a tribute to her mother, Anna Spafford, the central figure in the book; the Swedes are hardly mentioned here. But we also tread carefully with Edith Larsson's *Dalafolk i heligt land* ("The People of Dala in The Holy Land"). Published in 1957, not least of this book's aims is to resurrect her father, Olof Henrik Larsson, after the treatment he received from everyone in the Colony, including her. Fortunately we were able to make use of a great number of contemporaneous travel accounts, letters and newspaper articles, just as we have had access to existing research material.

This account includes dramatic events, a glimpse of the revivalist movements in Chicago and Nås, as well as tales of life in Jerusalem. There is also the story of The American Colony, which began its existence in asceticism, but which, increasingly, was characterised by power struggles and division. Many aspects of the long course of events remain to be investigated and documented, and at times we have had to work out what might have happened from the diverse sources we had. The book does not, therefore, claim to be an academic study, but simply to provide a well founded account of The American Colony's activities in Jerusalem in the years from 1881 to 1930. And the time before and after this period.

We are grateful to the people of Nås for their great assistance and interest in passing on information to us about the exodus in 1896. This applies not least of all to Ulf När sjö who was very helpful in organising our visit to Nås. Furthermore we would like to give a big thanks to the relatives of the emigrant, Gästgifvar Bibi Andersson and her father, Gästgifvar Erik Andersson, along with Ingemar Matsson-Nåsell who supplied us with valuable letters and articles. To the writer and former rector Olof Fahlén of Linköping, who for many years has conducted his own research into the Colony's history, warm thanks for the interesting information. The same goes out to Åke Nåsander in Stockholm. Another descendent of the emigrants, Eric Dinsmore Matsson of Båstad is warmly thanked for good information. In Jerusalem we owe a great debt to professor Ruth Kark, The Hebrew University, for much valuable information, and the same applies to the many in and around The American Colony Hotel who have been helpful to us.

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1. DISASTER AT SEA

In November 1873 the French luxury liner SS Ville du Havre set sail from New York on a course bound for France. The Ville du Havre was the most luxurious steamship of its day and, as was common at a time when sailing ships were giving way to steam driven vessels, the Ville du Havre was also rigged to hoist sails. The ship was under the command of a French captain, M. Surmount, and had a crew of 173 men. Among the passengers on board was a young woman, Anna Spafford, the wife of a renowned Chicago lawyer, Horatio Spafford. Aside from running his legal firm, Spafford was also a leading activist of the city's evangelist community. Horatio Spafford was not accompanying his family on this trip, but intended to join them as soon as he had taken care of a few business matters. Anna Spafford was travelling with her four children; eleven year old Annie, nine year old Maggie, seven year old Bessie, and Tanetta, who was two. They were all on their way to France for a holiday. Also travelling with Anna Spafford was her good friend and neighbour, Mrs Goodwin, along with her three children. Their party also included Willie Culver, the son of family friends and Nicolet, the Spafford family's French nanny. On board the ship Anna Spafford renewed her acquaintance of four French priests who were returning home from an evangelist conference in the United States.

Horatio Spafford had chosen the cabins which his family and friends were to occupy with considerable thought. However, just before the ship was about to set sail he contacted the purser and asked him to move his family into two other cabins further forwards towards the bow of the ship. He did not quite know why he decided to do this; something simply told him that it was important.

Heavy squalls off the coast of New Foundland made the sea very rough and most of the passengers became seasick. But from there on the Atlantic showed a more gentle side of its nature and the sea was indeed so calm that the passengers could hardly tell that they were sailing. At one of the tables in the rather grandiose dining room, where there were fresh flowers in the vases, the French pastor Lorriaux seized hold of the menu and began giving Anna Spafford impromptu lessons in French. Pastor Lorriaux was an acquaintance of the family, his sister having once been employed as a nanny by the Spaffords to take care of their young daughters. Elsewhere on the ship another of the French priests, Emile Cook, had organised Sunday school for the many children on board.

It was the 21st of November, and after dinner Anna Spafford and the nanny, Nicolet, put the children to bed before rejoining the other passengers in the saloon. Later in the evening Anna Spafford and pastor Weiss went up on deck for some fresh air and to admire the stars. The air was clear and invigorating. There was no moon. Anna Spafford admired the view, despite the fact that her enjoyment was somewhat tainted by the absence of her husband whom she missed; this was the first time they had been apart for such a long time.

Pastor Weiss and Anna Spafford bid one another goodnight and retired to their cabins.

At about two o'clock in the morning the Ville du Havre was shaken by two thunderous reports followed by loud screams. The engines stopped and the ship came to a standstill. The corridors filled with frightened half-dressed passengers shouting to one another, but their questions remained unanswered. Anna Spafford and Nicolet hurriedly pulled on their dressing gowns and quickly got the children up and into their clothes. With little Tanetta in her arms, Anna Spafford was one of the first to reach the upper deck.

In the water, a few hundred metres from the Ville du Havre lay the cause of the commotion; a large ironclad sailing ship, the British vessel Lochearn. Like two huge wounded beasts the Ville du Havre and the Lochearn lay in a sea foaming with the force of the collision.

On the deck of the Ville du Havre Captain Surmount was shouting out orders to his crew and to the frightened passengers. On the quarterdeck, officers and sailors struggled to release the lifeboats. In most cases this turned out to be impossible; the handsome looking vessel had just been painted and the lifeboats were stuck to the hull. The same applied to the davits - these too were stuck fast to the ship's railings with paint. The crew shouted out that there was nothing to worry about, that everyone should remain calm, but the passengers were rushing senselessly about on deck in their flimsy attire. Everyone was struggling to climb aboard the few lifeboats they had managed to release. The deck was a bedlam of curses, shouts and hysterical screams. People fell to their knees and began to pray.

Anna Spafford stood with Tanetta in her arms. The eldest daughter, Annie, could see that she was heavy for her and leant her shoulder into her mother to lend some support. The two other children, Maggie and Bessie, pressed themselves to their mother. Nicolet and Willie Culver were there too, and Pastor Lorriaux kept an eye on the little group. Pastor Weiss ran back down to his cabin and returned with coats and shawls for the children. Miraculously, he had survived the collision even though his cabin was amidships, just at the point where the Lochearn struck the Ville du Havre. It was here that the first passengers perished, and it was here that Anna Spafford and her children would have been lodged if it had not been for her husband's last minute change of mind. Mrs Goodwin, their neighbour, and her three children, whose cabins were amidships, were never to appear on deck.

Anna Spafford and her little group stood alongside one of the released lifeboats, but terrified passengers forced their way past, pushing the little group aside. At that very moment a shudder went through the ship; the screams became more urgent and the confusion increased. Pastor Weiss thought that there were too many people crowded onto their side of the ship and he began to shout that they must quickly make their way over to the other side. At that moment the mainmast snapped and fell, pulling the mizzenmast down with it. The released lifeboat was catapulted overboard, carrying with it all the passengers who had managed to fight their way onto it.

Things now began to happen very quickly. The Ville du Havre tilted sharply to starboard and began to sink. Anna knew that the end was near, but she was not afraid of dying, and thought only that it would be a comfort for her husband to know that she and the children perished together.

There was a moment of silence on board as the deck slowly slid down into the sea. Little Maggie held onto Pastor Weiss' hand. She looked up at him. "Pray!" she said. "God help us," replied the priest. Another loud crash was then heard as the bow broke away from the rest of the ship and sank. Maggie, who up until this moment had been terrified out of her wits, now let go of the pastor's hand and walked calmly over to her mother, who still held little Tanetta in her arms. Annie continued to lend her support, while seven year old Bessie clung, pale and silent, to her knee. Nicolet and two of the French priests were there too. Maggie turned up her dark eyes to look at her mother, saying; "Mother, God will look after us." And Annie said: "Do not be afraid. The sea is His, and He created it."

The sea was now washing over the quarterdeck and, like a chasm, it yawned open up to swallow the crumpled shell of the Ville du Havre. The little group fell together into the water - along with all the others crowded onto the deck. Below deck, inside the ship, there were many who were trapped and unable to do anything to save themselves. All slid into the sea which was several kilometres deep, in a maelstrom, in a rush of fragments of wreckage and human bodies.

Twelve minutes had passed since the Ville du Havre was struck.

As Anna Spafford was dragged down her little girl was ripped out of her arms. She made a grab for her but managed only to grasp a hold of her dress, and then the material was jerked out of her hands once again. When she reached out again her hand only brushed the material of a man's corduroy trousers. Then she lost consciousness.

She awakened to the sound of oars stroking the water. She was lying in a boat, drenched from head to toe and retching from the sea water. Her long hair was thick with salt and her gown was in shreds. Nobody had to tell her that her children were gone.

She had been lying in the water for an hour. She went under and then surfaced again, unconscious. At some point a wooden spar slid in under her and this saved her life.

Sailors from the Lochearn managed to recover her from the water while desperately combing the area for survivors. Shortly afterwards they found Captain Surmount, who had been washed overboard from the bridge of his sinking ship. Pastor Weiss was already in the little lifeboat, as were Lorriaux and Blanc, and later they found the fourth priest, Pastor Cook. Nicolet, however, was among those missing.

On board the Lochearn, Anna Spafford learned that two of her girls, which ones she never learned, had appeared on the surface close to a man whom they had then clung to. Being a good swimmer, he had told them to hold on tightly to his coat. But first the smaller child lost her grip, and then the other child sank, just as he was almost within reach of a boat.

Anna did not give up the hope that she would see her children again. Every time a boat with rescued passengers came up alongside the ship she peered down desperately in the hope that she might catch a glimpse of one of her little girls.

Now and then faint cries were heard from the sea, but gradually the voices died away. No one

could survive in the cold water for long. A slight, but insistent voice was heard. It came from a little girl who was clinging to a piece of wood. "I don't want to drown," she shouted. They managed to pull her up into a boat. She was the only child to survive the wreck of the Ville du Havre.

By four o'clock in the morning the cries for help had ceased and the sea fell silent. There was only the moaning of the wounded and the weeping of the bereaved to be heard in the clear, starry night. The ocean rose and fell gently. It had claimed 226 lives and spared only fifty-seven.

Anna Spafford suddenly had the feeling that a divine voice was addressing her. The voice said; "You have been spared for a purpose. There is a mission for you to accomplish." And she was reminded of an aunt who had once told her, "It is easy to be grateful to God when one has everything, but beware, lest you become one of His fair-weather friends!"

The Lochearn was badly damaged in the collision, and by then, more than two hours later, the ship had taken in a lot of water. In 1873 the wireless telegraph had yet to be invented so no distress signal could be sent. The only hope was that another ship might pass by and catch a glimpse of the distress flag which had been hoisted. Miraculously, another ship did come across the site of the accident some hours later; it was the Trimountain, a small sailing ship. In the meantime the wind had picked up fiercely. The passengers from the Lochearn were transferred safely to the Trimountain, but it was a complex manoeuvre which took some time. A number of the passengers had been hurt, some of them so seriously that they could not be moved. By chance the Trimountain was not carrying a full cargo which meant that there was plenty of room for them on the middle deck, and since the cargo which they had on board consisted of tinned food they were not short of finding something to eat.

Although the captain of the Trimountain changed course and set sail for Cardiff in Wales, the journey still took another nine days. Anna Spafford seemed to settle down. "God gave me four daughters," she said to Pastor Weiss, "Now they have been taken from me. One day I shall understand why."

News of the loss of the Ville du Havre had yet to reach the world, and in Chicago Horatio Spafford found comfort in the thought that no news was good news. Three days after the catastrophe he sat down to write to his wife:

Day after tomorrow will be Thanksgiving Day. I will not say how much I shall miss you and the dear children. But I will not think too much about that. Let us instead strive to profit by the separation. I think that this separation has touched me more deeply than anything else which has ever occurred in my life...

I feel more and more that the absorbing pursuit of anything earthly is not well for one's spiritual life...Oh, it is a long trip across the ocean! But, never mind, my heart. If the Lord keeps us, we can hope before many months to be all together again, better understanding than ever before the greatness of His mercy in the many years of the past.

When you write, tell me about the children. How thankful I am to God for them! May He make us faithful parents, having an eye single to His glory. Annie and Maggie and Bessie and Tanetta - it is a sweet consolation even to write their names. May the dear Lord keep and sustain and strengthen

you....

When Anna Spafford landed in Cardiff on December 1st 1873, she sent a short telegram to her husband in Chicago: "Saved alone". Nothing more.

The survivors were transported from Cardiff to London and taken to a shop dealing in mourning attire. As Anna stood looking at the sombre clothing - the black dresses, hats and veils - she could almost hear her little girls saying: "Heaven is wonderful, it is a joyous place." Anna felt that she would be failing the children if she were to abandon the belief that their separation was only temporary, that they had not lost each other forever. She settled, therefore, on buying a simple black and white outfit that, although it suited her mood, hardly met the criteria of what was fitting for a grieving mother.

To Horatio Spafford, news of the catastrophe at sea, along with the telegram from his wife, were the culmination of a long string of tragic events in his life. Once he had known only spiritual harmony and mortal comfort; now it appeared as though one accident led to the next. The wealthy, respected lawyer and church leader had been ruined when the greater part of Chicago burned down in October 1871. On that occasion too he was away from the family; on a business trip to the neighbouring state of Indiana when his property and the offices of his legal firm burned to the ground. He had also lost all his other property investments in the fire, and now, all four of his daughters! All he had left was his faith, and this, although shaken, remained firm. Why had God inflicted so much pain on him?

Horatio Spafford departed from Chicago as quickly as he could to join his wife, who in the meantime had travelled on to Paris - their original destination. He asked his sister to go to their house, on the outskirts of Chicago, and pack away all of the children's things. From New York he continued his journey to Europe by boat. His neighbour, Mr Goodwin, whose wife and three children had perished on the Ville du Havre accompanied him on the voyage.

One day the captain informed them that they were passing the spot where the Ville du Havre went down. Horatio Spafford gazed down into the dark ocean for a long time before descending to his cabin, where he wrote the hymn, "It is well with my Soul":

When peace like a river attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea-billows roll,

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say;

"It is well, it is well with my soul."

Tho' Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come,

Let this blest assurance control,

That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
My sin - oh the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh, my soul!
And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend-
"Even so-it is well with my soul."

Philip Bliss, an American composer and writer of hymns, who at that time had been a member of the religious community in Chicago for nearly ten years, was later to compose a tune to accompany this hymn, which is still sung today, both in America and in Sweden.

A few days later, Horatio Spafford wrote to his sister:

On Thursday last we passed over the spot where she went down, in mid-ocean, the water three miles deep. But I do not think of our dear ones there. They are in safety, folded, the dear lambs, and there, before very long, shall we be too. In the meantime, thanks to God, we have an opportunity to serve and praise Him for His love and mercy to us and ours. "I will praise Him while I have my being." May each one arise, leave all, and follow Him.

Horatio Spafford reached his wife in Paris on Christmas Eve. That same day she had written to a friend in Chicago:

My dear Mary,

I received your letter this morning. It was sweet of you to remember me in this time of sadness for me - but joy to my dear children.

Yes, Mary - all gone home - so early. How thankful I am that their little lives were so early dedicated to their Master. Now He has called them to Himself. I thought I was going, too, but my work is not yet finished. May the dear Lord give me strength to do His will. The dear children were so brave. They died praying.[..] I have much to comfort me, Mary; they are not lost, only separated for a season. I will go to them - only a few years at longest.

Dear little Tanetta sang all the day before we were wrecked "The sweet bye and bye"... If I never believed in religion before, I have had strong proof of it now. We have been so sustained, so comforted. God has sent peace in our hearts. He has answered our prayers. His will be done. I would not have my children back in this wicked world....

At the start of the new year the couple returned to their home at Lake View, outside Chicago. Well meaning friends had had the last photographs of the children enlarged and placed on easels in the living room. In the treehouse in a large elm they found Maggie's last words of farewell:

Goodbye, dear sweet Lake View. I will never see you again.
Maggie Spafford

2. ANNA AND HORATIO SPAFFORD

Anna Spafford lost her four children when she was thirty one years old. Her adult life had been spent within the circle of well-heeled citizens of Chicago who combined firm religious conviction with a strong business orientation.

Her standing in society was entirely due to her husband Horatio. Anna Spafford, born Anna Tubena Larssen, came from a poor family of Norwegian immigrants who arrived in Chicago from Stavanger in 1845. They were just one family out of around 2.5 million people who emigrated to America from Sweden, Norway and Denmark during the 19th Century. Sweden and Norway, in particular, contributed in great numbers to the wave of emigrants who were often poor people whose life was burdened by want, sickness and hunger. They were easily lured by the enticing talk of The Promised Land, America, where the endless plains were said to be covered with lush fertile earth - with neither stones nor rocky outcrops to mar them.

After a somewhat hesitant start, emigration really began to get under way in the 1820s, and rose almost to fever pitch in the last twenty years of the 19th century. By this time there was a considerable flow of people arriving from Europe. More than 50 million people migrated from Scandinavia to all corners of the earth, the majority of them to America.

Anna Tubena's father was a farmer and carpenter who, along with his wife and three small children, was set on building a better future for himself in America. The Larssen family - who almost immediately changed the spelling of the family name to Lawson - settled in Chicago. At the time, Chicago was a small town of less than 10,000 inhabitants, but it was expanding at a phenomenal rate, and within the space of a few years it had multiplied several-fold in size. Chicago's central location, in the Middle West United States, made it an ideal transit point; a bustling city in the westward expansion of the United States. Back in the 1840s, however, the city was little more than an overgrown town of single storey wooden houses, with dusty or muddy streets and an unhealthy climate. Chicago lies on the edge of the Great Lake Michigan with the Illinois Canal running through the town and into the Mississippi. The swampy, low lying area provided perfect conditions for the spread of malaria and often the immigrants were those worst hit by it. In around 1850, the town was further hit by an epidemic of cholera and the Lawson family were to consign two of their loved ones to the grave; the mother, Mrs Lawson, and Anna Tubena's younger brother.

Then the father went down with tuberculosis. The family was on the verge of disintegrating and Mr Lawson decided, in one final and desperate bid, to leave the town. Along with Anna's older brother, he travelled to Minnesota to try his hand as a settler and farmer. Anna Tubena, who was ten at the time, was lodged with acquaintances in Chicago.

Over the following years Anna Lawson attended school; she was hard working and fastidious, and she also showed an aptitude for music and had a good singing voice. Considering the

circumstances she seemed to thrive in the hands of her adoptive family, and she formed a particularly close relationship with the mother of the family, Mrs Ely. This period of stability and comfort was brought to a sudden end by the arrival of a letter from her father informing her that his condition had deteriorated, and that he needed her to take care of him. Anna's older brother could not manage both to run the farm and take care of their sick father at the same time.

Anna was now fourteen years old. She responded dutifully to her father's plea and travelled out into the wilds of Minnesota to live in his primitive cabin. Here she nursed her father and took on the role of mother to the little household; she cooked, did the laundry, took care of the house, milked the cow and chopped firewood. It was a hard life, added to which there was the constant threat of being attacked by wolves, or, worse, by marauding Indians, who were known to kill and scalp settlers. Lawson's health continued to deteriorate and a few months later his two children were to bury him in the wilderness.

There was nothing more to keep her in that desolate part of Minnesota and Anna decided to return to Chicago. She bid her brother farewell, for what was to be the last time - she was never to see him again - and set off on the long journey by horse-drawn wagon and train, back to her adoptive family in Chicago.

One day, one of Anna's friends persuaded her to go along with her to Sunday school. The teacher at this particular school was quite remarkable, her friend informed her; he was never condescending to his students, and he loved eager debate. "You'll enjoy meeting Mr Spafford," she said. Reluctantly, Anna went along.

Despite her being only fifteen years old, Anna already looked quite grown up. She was pretty, with clear blue eyes and a good head of blonde hair, a pleasant mouth and chin, and fine white teeth. People remarked on her ears as being so pretty that they resembled seashells. She was cheerful and friendly and easily won people over - but she also had a well developed sense of humour which meant that she could be a little mischievous.

The Sunday school teacher was Horatio Gates Spafford. He was fourteen years older than Anna and came from a wealthy family whose roots could be traced back several generations to a titled family in Yorkshire, England, who occupied a number of high posts in both the church and the state. On Spofford Hill, which lay in nearby Georgetown in Massachusetts, there was a granite stone erected in memory of John Spofford who, along with his wife Elizabeth Scott, had established the "Spofford clan" in America.

Horatio Spafford grew up in the secure and comfortable surroundings of New York State, where he attended the best schools. He travelled west after completing his law studies and settled in Chicago where he soon found a place among the ranks of the town's professional and political community. He was twenty nine years old when he first met Anna Lawson and was attracted by her forthright manner and her thoughtful contributions to their discussions. Using his contacts in the town, Spafford made enquiries to find out who she was. It was, however, only in the following year, when proposing to her, that he discovered her age; she was far too young to get married. The decision was made for her to attend a school for young ladies in Lake Forest, forty kilometres outside Chicago.

Anna Lawson wrote to Mrs Ely from Lake Forest:

I wish you were acquainted with Mr Spafford. He is a true, noble man. I owe him a great deal, but would still not marry him from gratitude. I have often wondered what he could see in me to like for I am so simple and ignorant, while he is so strong and learned, I pray to God that I may be worthy of him.

Among the wealthy families of Chicago who had daughters of a suitable age for marriage, the decision by the promising young lawyer to marry a girl whom they not only did not know, but who was also an immigrant, was met with widespread dismay and resentment. Horatio, however, remained true to his feelings and the two were married in September 1861. These were difficult times for America with the outbreak of the Civil War, and so the pair decided that the wedding should be a quiet, simple affair. Anna's wedding gown was made of dark blue taffeta, and was tailored with the idea in mind of it being put to ordinary use after the wedding.

The first years of the marriage were overshadowed by the continuing war between the Northern and Southern states. Although the city lay on the periphery of the region where the war was being fought, the town's Christian organisations in Chicago provided volunteers to help the victims of the war, and both Anna and Horatio Spafford were active in this effort. One of the central issues in the war was the dispute between North and South on the issue of slavery. As Northerners, the Spaffords were supporters of the "abolitionist" call for an end to slavery.

The Spafford family also grew somewhat larger during the 1860s. Anna Spafford gave birth to four girls; Anna, Maggie, Elisabeth (Bessie), and finally, little Tanetta, who was born in July 1871. While things proceeded smoothly and quietly on the family front, Horatio Spafford, who was an ambitious man, managed to successfully expand his legal business through a combination of talent and hard work. The Spaffords lived in a villa on the idyllic Lake View, outside Chicago. At the time Lake View was quite a wild and remote area. Every morning Horatio would ride to the station in a small buggy driven by the family's handyman, Peter. From there he would travel by train into his office in Chicago.

In 1871 Horatio Spafford decided to cut down on his work so as to leave himself more time to devote to the more spiritual aspects of life, to philanthropic and Christian matters. By dealing in real estate and property he felt that he could easily make enough money to ensure a good living for his family. Along with a few friends, including the revivalist preacher, Dwight L. Moody, he invested in land on the outskirts of Chicago. Since the city was bound to expand it seemed fairly certain that land prices would rise. They put all of their liquid capital into the project and borrowed a further amount to add to their investment.

In many ways, Horatio Spafford was a typical product of his age, a Yankee. A hard working and enterprising businessman with a great deal of energy whose ideals were founded on the Bible, the constitution - and the principles of business. He travelled a good deal, made financial transactions, and

yet, Horatio Spafford could hardly be described as a hard nosed, money grabbing mercenary. He was, despite everything else, aware that life consisted of more than just the pursuit of material happiness. He was able to see the dichotomy between large financial rewards and the Christian message, and as time went by he became increasingly drawn to the latter.

The summer of 1871 was unusually hot and dry, and the northern United States were to witness one forest fire after another. In early October a prairie fire was swept towards Chicago on strong south-westerly winds. On the 8th of October the papers were filled with alarming headlines: Chicago in Ashes. Southern, Northern and Western Parts of the City Burnt Down. Anna could see the fire clearly from the veranda of the villa on Lake View. She was alone and responsible for the four children, the three maids and the handyman Peter. Horatio Spafford read about the catastrophe while on a business trip to the neighbouring state of Indiana and decided to return to Chicago immediately.

There was no immediate threat to the Spaffords or their property, but the city was in chaos. Chicago was fleeing; the streets were packed with every manner of vehicle loaded with people and belongings; elegant ladies watched over their pianos, people rushed hopelessly back and forth, chased in every direction by flames and explosions. Valuable property had to be abandoned and a certain degree of unscrupulousness entered the proceedings - often imaginatively - such as in the case of the undertaker who hired half a dozen children, gave each of them a coffin and sent them out to gather up valuables that had been left behind. This was only one of many bizarre sights to be glimpsed in the mêlée of the catastrophe in which women and children were trampled underfoot by the stampeding crowds. Handicapped people were left helplessly lying on mattresses on the pavements; A woman in a burning dress was kneeling down in the middle of the street clutching her crucifix, only to be hit by a runaway truck; a little girl was running down the street, her blonde hair on fire, when a drunk, attempting to douse the flames, poured a glass of alcohol over her, instantly enveloping her in bright blue halo of flame. Many people lost their lives and thousands were made homeless; 17,500 buildings burned to the ground.

A few days after the fire, a forlorn and soot covered group made their way up the drive to the Lake View villa. Anna recognised one of her school friends, Mary Miller, along with her husband, their two young children and her old mother. For several days they had fought their way through the smoke and flames. Mary Miller carried a trunk which she would not let out of her sight. This contained the family's valuables, at least, so she believed. It subsequently emerged that in her haste she had seized the wrong trunk. She had been carrying around a trunk full of old shoes.

Anna sent Peter off to fetch supplies before attending to the business of cleaning and dressing the guests' wounds. Then their neighbour suddenly came rushing over to tell them that they had to flee, the fire being now dangerously close. In all haste Anna managed to get the guests to their feet again, and since Peter had taken the family horses they were forced to fix their carriage to the back of the Millers' wagon. The tired and wounded horses now had to drag a double load.

With no destination, and with great haste, they joined the flow of refugees. All manner of vehicles were to be seen, some drawn by horses, others by people, some had even hitched dogs up to pull small wagons. Mothers clutched babies to them and children clung to their dolls. A strange silence hung over them, and only the roar of the fire could be heard.

As they were fleeing from the catastrophe, Anna Spafford met an acquaintance who offered them shelter in his house in Jefferson. The house was already filled with people who had fled from the fire. The following morning they returned to Lake View where they discovered that Peter had spent the night dousing the roof of the villa with water. The fire had fortunately halted its advance a few streets away.

On his return Horatio Spafford found his family and home safe and sound. His legal firm in Chicago had, however, fallen victim to the fire. Worse still, land prices on the outskirts of Chicago, the area that he had invested so heavily in, fell drastically. The property speculation that he had hoped would provide the basis for a life of comfort and philanthropy had instead resulted in financial disaster.

3. RELIGIOUS REVIVALISM IN AMERICA

During the 1860s and 1870s, the Spaffords became increasingly involved in the revivalist movement that was sweeping through the country at the time. This was the "second great revival" in America, and was rooted in events that took place in the first half of the century. An earlier movement had actually existed in the 18th century. This was, however, broken up by the colonial wars, the Declaration of Independence, and the building of the new nation, which in the United States gave rise to something of a period of enlightenment in which there was little room for religious preaching.

The second revival was connected to the colonisation of the untamed wild lands to the west. A harsh life of isolation, sickness, hard work and premature death was more often than not the fate of the settlers, and this often encouraged strong religious beliefs. The revivalist preachers, who made a living travelling about preaching the gospel, discovered that this was very fertile ground for them. They promised eternal salvation to those who joined them in being willing to listen to Jesus, and swore eternal damnation for all those who refused to join them.

In America, in contrast to the situation in Europe, the church and the state were kept separate. This separation was a natural consequence of the founding principles of freedom in the new state. Religious persecution could never be allowed and, therefore, it had to be a matter of choice for the individual to decide whether they wished to belong to a church or not. This voluntary aspect provided a firm foundation for the preachers of the various religious faiths to work on, as they competed with one another to recruit - in particular - the souls of the religiously uncommitted.

Countless religious denominations flourished. Around the middle of the century the Methodist church was the largest in America, followed by the Baptists and the Presbyterians. A large number of immigrants often brought their own faith with them, to be re-established in their new and unfamiliar home. It was an ideal platform for the revivalist preachers who often lacked any theological background. They made use of a simplified grasp of religion and rousing slogans, which were commonplace. In Illinois, in 1850, the Methodists claimed that "the revival is as important to the health and wellbeing of the church as fresh air is to the sick, or as salt and soap are to the health and purity of a civilisation." Using this kind of argument it was the task of the revivalist preachers to seek out each and every individual who was not a member of any religious group and coax him or her into the Christian fold. An important aspect of their preaching comprised an unwavering concern for the "welfare of the soul".

Dwight L. Moody was one of the great revivalist preachers. A man with no formal education but who, nevertheless, was charismatic and eloquent. He moved to Chicago from Massachusetts at the age of nineteen, at a time when, in terms of business and industry, the city was developing at an astonishing speed. As a travelling companion of his noted, "It is as though the people here think of nothing but trade and earning money. They have no higher thoughts about life." The young Moody, however, thrived there and was employed as an office assistant in a large shoe company.

The shoe company was an establishment which offered very good possibilities for swift promotion, and of earning a good deal of money. Within a few months the young man was already able to invest in real estate, and shortly afterwards he was to turn his hand to lending money out at high interest rates. Moody became a travelling salesman for the shoe company and was soon writing letters home to his family informing them that he "had one of the best positions in town". This was certainly something of an exaggeration, but, since he was hard working, gregarious and inventive, he continued to make money.

Moody would appear to have been the prototype of the kind of businessman who was to become characteristic of Chicago: Young, with unlimited amounts of physical energy, self confidence and optimism - in addition to what appeared to be a natural lucky streak.

From around 1860, however, Moody began to be seized by thoughts of religious revival. By that time he had already been incorporating religious sayings into the language he used in his work selling shoes and boots. He could not have failed to notice the revivalist movement in Chicago and did indeed admire a number of the preachers. Shortly after his arrival he had joined the Plymouth Congregational Church in Chicago. And in 1860 he joined the YMCA and became the head of one of the association's committees, which placed him squarely in the middle of the road which, unwaveringly, was to carry him straight to the heart of the American revivalist movement. Here, he discovered himself to be well suited, equipped as he was with the talent for eloquent expression which he had developed through his experience in the business trade.

Moody soon became convinced that his mission in life was to preach Christianity to the entire American nation. In this the YMCA was a good starting point for him. The emphasis placed by the organisation on the principle of using laymen, without too many church rules and regulations, suited him very well; the YMCA was an organisation that was run in a pragmatic manner. Working among the poor in Chicago's slum areas took up a lot of Moody's time and he began holding sermons at some of the most deprived schools in the city.

After a short span of time the young man, never lacking in initiative, had founded his own Sunday school, a Sabbath School, in Chicago. Sabbath schools were becoming quite common in the religious movements as a means of spreading Christianity - either as "A valuable help to Christian parents in the religious upbringing of their children" or, something that was equally important, "as a help to children whose parents are not Christians, and whose homes are not always Christian."

Moody's Sunday school was an enormous success. From its earliest beginnings with only twelve students, it soon grew to have an attendance of over a thousand. It was indeed so well known that Abraham Lincoln, who hailed from Illinois, paid an official visit to the school on his way to Washington to be inaugurated as president of the United States in 1861.

Moody had now reached a parting of the ways. He was - also for reasons of time - forced to choose between his business ventures and his religious work. He decided, early in 1860, to devote himself to the latter. Feeling that he could "leave it to Jesus to show me the way". This did not, however, mean a complete break with Chicago's lively business community - a year later he was to

meet a successful young lawyer, Horatio Spafford.

The Civil War between the Northern and Southern states was laying waste to the land and there was a need for help. Horatio Spafford was one of those who offered his resources to assist the victims of war, and as did Dwight L. Moody. His contribution went through the YMCA, the preacher now being president of the organisation's Chicago section.

Moody was still itching to preach and so decided to set up his own church. The Moody Church, or Illinois Street Church as it was known, was an independent church run along quite informal lines. There were Sunday evening tea parties and a variety of meetings for the congregation, interspersed with prayers. The Sunday school was revived, this time with room for adults in the so-called "Bible classes". He introduced "mid-day prayer meetings" to cater to the business community and other well placed people, among whom was Horatio Spafford, who was active both as a participant and an organiser. Spafford and Moody became acquaintances and later friends when Spafford stepped in to finance some of Moody's activities. Horatio Spafford admired the irreverent, energetic young man. He listened to Moody's speeches and was moved by his fierce talk of Satan, the Millennium and Christ's damnation.

At some stage it occurred to Moody that the meetings were lacking in one respect; they needed music and song. He himself was entirely lacking in talent when it came to musical matters, but he was convinced that if they were to reach out and win over more souls then some extra effort would have to be made. One of his preacher friends in the town had engaged the services of a musician, Philip Bliss (the composer of the music for Spafford's hymn, "It is well with my Soul"), to take care of the musical side of his meetings. Moody hired a singer, Ira D. Sankey, who went into partnership with him. A considerable portion of the success which was to come Moody's way can be ascribed to Sankey's music and singing.

Moody had travelled to England in 1867 on a revivalist mission, and this had given him a good deal of confidence. Many people had been won over to the cause. By around 1870 he was beginning to feel the constriction of the bonds which tied him to the Midwest. People began to talk of bigger things being in store for him. A review of his preaching in 1867 contained the following passage:

When Moody speaks, everyone listens. Even those who do not like him. His sentences are short, succinct and pragmatic, and his exhortations make an impression, at times they move one to tears...the words always have a warlike tone to them...he wants to wrench this nation from the grip of Satan and take it, and hold it up to Christ. And he wants to do it NOW.

Moody wanted to return and tour England again. He wished to make a fresh start and wanted to become the greatest revivalist preacher in the entire world. The Chicago fire of 1871 delayed his plans, however. The Moody Church and Moody's Sabbath Church were both burned to the ground. He lost everything: what had taken him a decade to build up had vanished in the space of a few short hours. The insurance cover was insufficient. Within a few months, however, a temporary building was erected on the old site to replace the burned down church. Nothing more was to become of it; in the summer of 1873 Moody left, along with Sankey, to travel on a tour of England and Scotland. This was to prove to be his breakthrough, finally, as a revivalist preacher. He reintroduced the old gospel, interpreted the

Bible literally, and announced the return of the Messiah. In England he was also to be reacquainted with his friends, Anna and Horatio Spafford, who had just lost their four children in the wreck of the Ville du Havre in November 1873.

4. EXODUS TO JERUSALEM

Following the catastrophe at sea, Anna and Horatio Spafford's only wish was to return as swiftly as possible to Chicago. Their friend Dwight L. Moody, however, contacted them by telegram in Paris. On his tour of England he had read about the shipwreck and suggested that they meet in London.

Moody tried to comfort the badly hit couple to give them the strength and the courage to see their ordeal through. He was aware that on their return to the house in Lake View they would be overwhelmed by despair, and could perhaps even break down. He was most concerned for Anna. Had she considered the idea, he asked, that meaningful work for the soul might help her to come to terms with her grief? On the strength of his standing and connections, Moody could easily find mission, or charity work for Anna.

Anna accepted the offer and the challenge. On her arrival back in Chicago, she set to work organising mothers' groups where women could talk about their problems and at the same time learn to pray. She became leader of an aid project for so-called 'fallen women' and other society rejects and it was here that she was to observe society's indifference to the suffering of their fellow man. It came as something of a shock to her.

Three years after the catastrophe, in November 1876, Anna gave birth to a son whom they called Horatio, and less than a year and a half later, in March 1878, a daughter, Bertha came into the world.

In February 1880, Anna set out on a train journey with her two children to visit friends. On the train she noticed that both children were running a fever. At the first station they came to, she got off the train and hurried back to Chicago. Both children had scarlet fever. Horatio was worst hit as he also had a bad cold, and he soon lost consciousness. Once again she was on her own when it mattered: Her husband Horatio was on a business trip. A telegram was sent and he hurried home, just in time to see his son pass away.

The parents clung to their faith: "I will repeat, over and over, that God is love, until I believe it," Anna said. They did not wish for pity, but the Evangelist congregation was by this time more prepared to express their suspicions; What, they asked, could the Spafford family have done that God should punish them so harshly? A friend of the family offered one day to adopt their daughter Bertha. The offer seems to have been inspired by the thought that in this way she might be spared God's wrath.

The Presbyterian church of Chicago, which Horatio Spafford helped to build, of which he was one of the oldest members, and in which all of his children had been baptized, was deeply divided by crisis. Anna and Horatio Spafford, who spoke of, and believed in, the love of God refused to accept that the death of their children was God's way of punishing them, and that the small children would suffer in Hell. They believed, rather, that Jesus took the sins of all men unto himself through his death, or, as

Horatio wrote out in the Atlantic Ocean in the hymn, "It is well with my Soul":

My sin - not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more;

The gentle author hoping that the atonement would be of such a great magnitude as to banish even Satan.

But such humble faith found no resonance among the congregation who were instead ruled by dogmatic belief in such things as a punitive God, Satan, and eternal damnation in Hell. The conflict came to an end when Anna and Horatio were expelled from the church. A few of their friends decided to leave the church in sympathy, and together they founded the sect of "The Overcomers". The name was a reference to their intention to overcome the desire towards sin by living their lives in the manner of the very earliest Christian communities. The sect conducted their services on the Spaffords' property and there was little to distinguish their religious ceremonies from those of any other church congregation, apart from the fact that baptisms were never performed. Instead of baptism, one had to be at one with the will of God.

Horatio Spafford had, however, begun to go down a path that was to separate him markedly from the established church.

For a number of years he had been concerned with eschatological questions, matters related to Day of Judgement and the belief that the Messiah would come back down to earth. In 1870, he had been in contact with a particular religious group in Scotland under the leadership of Piazza Smith, a professor and astronomer, known as a "pyramidologist" who believed that he could prove that the Cheops pyramid in Egypt was built in accordance with divine specifications and design. By means of a complicated series of measurements and calculations, Smith had pinpointed the year of the reappearance of the Messiah as being 1881.

Horatio Spafford's thoughts on these matters had been given a good deal of encouragement by Moody's sermons in recent years, although Moody himself had never given a specific time for when the Messiah was due to return. The Spaffords had, previously, given some consideration to the idea of going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. What greater experience could there be than to stand upon The Mount of Olives when the Messiah made his appearance?

In the meantime, their expulsion from the church drew some attention in Chicago, as well as in the press. The Spaffords were notabilities in town. At first the interest was of a positive nature, but an event was to change that. A child of one of the sect members fell ill. In their faith in divine healing they did not summon a doctor, but instead chose to pray over the child. The child died, and instead of burying it they tried to bring it back to life, just as Jesus had done in the case of Jairi's daughter (Mark 5:22). News of the case spread and aroused a scandal. The authorities were forced to intervene to ensure that the child was buried. As leader of the sect, the blame for what happened fell squarely on

Horatio Spafford, and while he defended himself against the accusations, the whole affair created so much fuss within the sect that it was finally disbanded.

The journey to Jerusalem now became more than mere speculation. "Jerusalem is where my Lord lived, suffered and triumphed, and I wish to learn how to live, suffer, and in particular, to triumph," wrote Horatio to a friend. The Spaffords decided to travel to the Holy Land along with a group of friends and people of like mind. Partly to get away, and partly to come closer to Jesus. The belief that the Messiah was shortly to descend to earth played an increasingly important part in this.

One Chicago paper wrote the following about the group:

A singular sect of Christians which has recently arisen in one of the northern suburbs of Chicago is known as the "Overcomers." They believe in personal inspiration, in direct communication with God, and in the literal rendering of the Scriptures as applied to mundane affairs, and in the final salvation of all the universe, including the devil. A party under the leadership of Mr Spafford is about to go to Jerusalem to build up the ruined places.

The Chicago newspaper "The Daily Inter Ocean" published an in-depth article on the sect on the 17th of August 1881, including an interview with Horatio Spafford. The emigrant group were described as belonging to some of Chicago's wealthiest families, and Horatio Spafford was one of the leaders. He explained that those who overcame lust (The Overcomers) would never be cast into the infernal fires of the Kingdom of the Dead, but would achieve immortality already in this life.

In the course of the interview Horatio Spafford informed the paper that they had a large group of followers in Indiana, who, along with the Chicago group, totalled around one hundred members. The journalist wanted to know what would happen to those who did not accept their teachings and Spafford explained that those who would not be ordained in harmony with God's will, but who persisted in resisting the "The Higher Light", would end up in inner spiritual obscurity. They would not come to bid the Messiah welcome and would not, therefore, be "Wedded to Christ", not be blessed, not go to heaven and not "rest in the lap of Abraham". They would, however, not be plagued by eternal damnation. After their death they would have an opportunity to be pardoned because "the Lord follows his lost sheep like a shepherd, until they are found". Finally, the journalist enquired as to whether Horatio Spafford had any plans about travelling to Jerusalem. "I hope one day that I will be able to," he replied. The journalist pressed him on this, asking whether they were planning to depart that week. At this point, however, Horatio Spafford got to his feet and suddenly declared the interview over.

It was a curious reaction for Spafford the lawyer to have. Only two days later he and the congregation left Chicago for Jerusalem. The reason why he was unwilling to announce the emigration in the paper is not clear. However, fifteen years later, during a courtcase in Chicago in which Anna Spafford was implicated, it emerged that there might have been an embarrassing, even criminal, reason why Horatio Spafford insisted on keeping the date of their departure secret. A witness told the court that the Spafford congregation had gone to Jerusalem so as to avoid being arrested on charges of embezzlement. Horatio Spafford had suffered great financial losses in the Chicago fire - his finances never in fact recovered - and he was suspected of having taken eight thousand dollars of entrusted funds to cover some of his own personal losses. The case was never resolved.

On the 17th of August 1881 at ten past nine in the evening the Spaffords departed from Chicago. The family had, in the meantime, expanded with the arrival of yet another daughter, Grace, who was born in March. The Spafford's little girls were, respectively, three and a half, and six months old. Their journey took them first to Quebec in Canada. A northern route was chosen so as to avoid crossing over the site where the Ville du Havre went down. In addition to the Spafford family there was a nephew, Rob, who was nineteen and Horatio's sister Maggie Lee, who had recently been widowed. Maggie Lee's prophetic visions had had a great influence on the group in the United States and had undoubtedly urged them into making the journey to Jerusalem. There was also Mrs William Gould, The Whitings and their baby Ruth, Mr William H. Rudy, Mrs Caroline Merriman, Mr and Mrs Otis S. Page and their daughter, and, finally, Nora, the daughter of Mrs Spafford's washerwoman in Chicago, who went along to act as nanny to the small girls. In all they were sixteen people. They carried little baggage with them. The Spafford family only had a large clothes chest, the contents of which included a bunch of withered flowers from their little boy's funeral. This was Horatio Spafford's doing; his wife never so much as mentioned the child's death. They left behind them in Chicago a house full of furniture, paintings, silverware, table linen and a collection of several thousand books.

They travelled via London, where, once again, the group was the object of attention. A London paper wrote;

H.G Spafford of Lake View, leader of the new sect of "Overcomers," arrived in London with a band of these peculiar believers, including several children, en route to Palestine. They will proceed to the Mount of Olives where they expect to receive a new and direct revelation from the Lord.

In London, a Mr and Mrs W.C Sylvester joined their company. The group arrived in Jaffa, Palestine, on a hot September day in 1881. From here they continued their journey in comfortable carriages belonging to a group of American Latter-Day Saints. In Jerusalem they settled into a European hotel inside the Jaffa Gate, The Mediterranean. The first days were spent sightseeing in the Holy City with trips to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Wailing Wall, but first and foremost to The Mount of Olives which was to become the site of regular trips. It was here, they hoped - perhaps that very year? - to welcome the Messiah with "a nice cup of tea". As a rule, the group took a picnic basket with tea along with them.

After a time the Colony began to look for suitable accommodation for them all. They settled on a house situated high up, between the Damascus Gate and Herod's Gate in the Old City. From here there was a view over both the old and the new Jerusalem. The house belonged to an officer of the mounted Turkish Police; for the last four hundred years Palestine had been under Turkish rule.

In his book, "The Holy Land and its Neighbouring Countries" (Det hellige land og dets nabolande) in 1878, the Danish travel writer Johannes Kok describes the city that the Americans arrived at:

The number of residents in the Holy City does not lend itself to accurate estimate. In regard to the

population it has also fallen a long way from its former glory and the inhabitants are thought to number around 35,000, of which around 15,000 are Mohammedans, 14,000 Jews and the remainder Christian. The language of the country is Arabic. Alongside which one does hear the various languages of the Orient and the Occident being spoken, these include Hebrew, Coptic, Armenian, Turkish, Modern Greek, Italian, English, French, Spanish, and German. Life in the town has all the simple, destitute character of what is common throughout the Eastern lands; only the Europeans, who are increasing in number day by day, arrange their daily life according to the manner of the English, with all the luxury items which Jerusalem seeks increasingly to have at hand.

Trade and industry are in a very primitive state. Oil and wine are produced, but at a very low rate since the quite unfertile nature of the region hardly produces more than the town itself has need of. Rice, which is the staple diet, is consumed in vast quantities. The products of industry and handicrafts cannot be compared to what is to be found in the large towns of Syria. Here they only suffice to meet the rather meagre needs of the inhabitants and the Bedouin. While the Easter market is quite a lively affair with all the many thousands of pilgrims, they usually tend to purchase little more than token souvenirs such as rosaries, crosses, paperweights and pictures of saints manufactured from olive wood, mother-of-pearl, or black asphalt from the Dead Sea. Three printing presses produce books; one is Jewish, one Latin, and one is at the Armenian convent.

A good proportion of the inhabitants sustain themselves by begging; one is greeted everywhere by the cry "Bakschish" (alms), and the many wretched children who wander the streets in rags are sad testimony to the poverty and lack of supervision and care.

Much of the misery is explained by the writer as being a result of the inhabitants' faith:

The teachings of the Mohammedans have accentuated their inherent indolence and laziness and seems to have a numbing effect on the spirit of enterprise. Why exert oneself when it is Allah who decides and controls all things? Should the walls crack and the roof collapse, then, if there is no immediate threat to life, the Mussulman sits calmly with crossed legs, smoking his pipe and looking on, his opinion being that if Allah wished for the house to be repaired then it would no doubt happen.

Mohammedanism would have vanished in its entirety, just as swiftly as Arabic culture was withering away, if it were not for the fact that the new arrivals, the Turks, arrived to hoist up the crescent moon just as it was about to expire.

The Americans did not bring with them the prejudice of the Europeans towards the Muslims; they themselves had fled from Christian intolerance. On the contrary, they settled into the city well, and Spafford's nephew, Rob, wrote home to America:

Our house is on the highest point in the city and so we have delightful air and are not troubled by the terrible filth of the low portions of the city...

We get along amazingly well, considering that we came to Jerusalem with scarcely one housekeeping article....

We are having bedding made and other articles. I have had several Arab women to watch from sunrise to sunset. They are a curious but interesting set of people, and I have a good deal of amusement with them. I am learning Arabic gradually and hope soon to "carry on" at least a limited conversation. Here everyone speaks two or three languages, and many can use parts of eight or ten, for it is absolutely necessary in order to be tolerably conversant. In Jerusalem you can find every nationality under the sun represented, so you can see how many tongues can be used.

We have been very fortunate in our relationship with the Arabs, and while the other Europeans and Americans complain about the Turks and Arabs, and warn us against them, we go straight into their gardens and find people who are willing to carry out any kind of task for us. We have encountered the greatest kindness, bankers and traders are willing to give us credit without asking for assurances, and not only do they give it to us, they offer it voluntarily.

The Arab women are good workers, so long as one keeps an eye on them and yells "Yallah - get on with it!"

In every respect, the American Colony functioned like a commune. Everything was common property, just as it was among the earliest Christian communities. On the other hand they did not wish to do mission work, and this was to be one of the reasons why they found themselves on the periphery of other Christian communities in Jerusalem, all of which were missionary in outlook. Since they were not church goers either, but held their own religious services instead, they were, to some degree, regarded as outsiders.

But with the Millennium in sight, all of this seemed quite unimportant. Jesus was to return soon, to rule the world for a thousand years. And there were many portents of his imminent return. An almond tree was in bloom from November to January, three months earlier than normal; several hours of rainfall in the summer, which was claimed never to have happened previously in the history of the country. And last but not least, they attached importance to the arrival of a group of Jews from the Yemen who were apparently Gaddites, descendants of the tribe of Gad.

This group of Yemeni Jews had suddenly felt the urge to return to The Holy Land. Just like the Spaffords, they had given up everything they owned and simply set off, around five hundred of them. They were greatly disappointed when the Jews of Palestine refused to have anything to do with them, accusing them of being Arabs. One explanation for this rejection may have been that people were not impressed by the sight of yet another group of poor Jews turning up in the queues to demand their share of the Halukkah, the money which, since the 17th century, had been sent by Jews in Europe to the Jews of Palestine. Some of the Gaddites were put off and set off back to the Yemen, others carried on further, to India, but one group remained to stand their ground. They were convinced that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy described in the book of Joshua, that the Jews would return to Palestine to receive their inheritance. They stayed.

The Spaffords saw the arrival of the Yemeni Jews as being a clear indication of the imminent arrival of the Messiah. It was therefore a matter of course that the Americans should assist these poor people in every possible way in terms of lodging, provisions and helping to tend the sick. Horatio Spafford was fascinated by these people, with their sharp features and their strange manners they were

quite different from the Jews they had previously seen. The Gaddites were a thoroughly pure tribe who, according to tradition had not been taken into captivity in Babylon during the expulsion, nor had they returned to Israel with Ezra to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. They remained in Yemen for thousands of years. The friendship between the Colony and the Gaddites continued until the partition of Palestine in 1948. The Gaddite rabbis expressed their gratitude for the help they received by sending the following prayer to God each Sunday:

He who blessed our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, bless also and protect and support and help Horatio Spafford and his house and all who are with him, since he has shown compassion to us and our children. For this reason may the Lord make his day rich with justice and joy, and the Lord watch over him with his mercy.

A couple of years after their arrival in the Holy Land the Spaffords adopted Horatio's nephew Rob and his best friend Jacob Eliahu, whose parents had died. Jacob was born in Ramallah in Palestine in 1860, the son of Turkish Sephardic Jews who had converted to Christianity. It was, however, not the American Colony which converted Jacob and his family; They had only scorn for the missionary enterprise which they found in Palestine.

The Spaffords decided to put the ideals of the Chicago congregation into practice in real life and to live as pure Christians, including living in accordance with Matthew 19:12: "And there are those who have deemed themselves unsuited (to marriage) for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." This was how celibacy was introduced in the Colony. It implied that man and wife should cease living together in matrimony, and that new relationships should not be entered into. The decision was, perhaps, a logical consequence of the rather cramped living conditions. Alternatively, it may have been prompted by the divine revelations which Anna Spafford now had begun to receive. "Mrs Spafford claims that she is a prophet, and that she has had a wonderful vision, that they shall live as Adam and Eve did before the Fall, and that those who are married shall live as though they were not," wrote the Chicago Daily News in an article on conditions within the Colony.

In order to be sure that celibacy really was a form of deprivation, Anna Spafford began to put the members to the test. She encouraged married men to associate freely with the younger women of the Colony and, likewise, the women were encouraged to mix with the "brothers" as they were called. At times she would pick out a particular woman to draw a husband away from his wife in an attempt to break their marriage down. Anna Spafford herself may well have had a temptation to hand, since her adopted son Jacob Eliahu would at times remain with her for several days and nights in succession. Rumours had it that she even exposed herself to sexual temptations among which were such things as her relationship to "brother Herbert, a refined Englishman". She was suspected of infidelity, and Horatio suffered a good deal. Her explanation was the appearance of a divine message telling her to become one with another man, and that this was for the sake of her and her husband's spiritual training.

Resisting the temptations of the flesh applied to everyone, and those who did not have the strength to do so had to admit their sin to the entire group at the morning meetings. It was, indeed, a peculiar environment in which to grow up as a child. The youngest one, John Whiting, was born less than a year after their arrival, but from then on, and for the next twenty three years, no children were born in the Colony.

There were those who took exception to the rule of celibacy; Mr and Mrs Otis Page declared that they wished to live as a married couple. They were the first to experience the Colony's sacrifice of people who refused to toe the line. In Old Testament fashion they were expelled from the Colony. It proved not to be that easy to survive as an American alone in a foreign land. Mrs Page contracted pneumonia, which developed into tuberculosis and she subsequently died. Mr Otis Page returned to the Colony asking to be allowed to make shoes for them. He asked that he be paid for his work however, and so was turned down. Wages were against the ideals and beliefs of the Colony; the members were to live in an unpaid, comprehensive community.

The Americans engaged a number of staff. They employed some local Arabs in the Colony, and it was in this way, in particular, that the two sides - the new arrivals and the locals - began to get to know one another. The staff took part in the Americans' morning prayers - despite the difference in their religions - and one day a Muslim named Maarouf informed them that he wished to convert to Christianity. Horatio Spafford received the news without much enthusiasm, only too aware that Maarouf's wish could give rise to a lot of problems, first and foremost for the young man himself. Maarouf, however, stood firm by his decision, and he received instruction in Christianity and was subsequently christened. The consequences proved to bear out Horatio Spafford's worst fears. Maarouf's entire family, apart from his mother, turned their backs on him and expelled him from the family.

Maarouf's stepfather was a muezzin who called people to prayer five times a day from a minaret close to the Dome of the Rock. He viewed Maarouf's conversion as an insult to the family as a whole, and to himself in particular. In order to get the fallen boy out of the way, the stepfather decided to request that the Turkish authorities call Maarouf up for military service. The period of service was five years.

Maarouf was collected by a Turkish soldier accompanied by a representative from the American Consulate. The head of the consulate was Selah Merrill who had never had much regard for the members of The American Colony and so the stepfather's case immediately received the full support of the consulate. Maarouf was taken to the Turkish barracks just inside the Jaffa gate. On the April the 1st 1884, as the Americans were having their evening meal, a message arrived from Maarouf which began; "Dear brothers and sisters". The message explained that he and his fellow prisoners were about to be moved away. The Americans hurried down to bid him farewell. They stood and watched in silence; most of the prisoners had their hands bound behind their back, but Maarouf had his thumbs tied together. This rough treatment later caused his fingers to become infected.

His hands tied behind his back, Maarouf was to walk, with the other prisoners, the roughly five hundred kilometres to Damascus in Syria. Here he was placed in isolation. In an effort to induce him to denounce his faith, he was beaten. The Turks later changed their tactics, however, and sent him to Beirut where he was greeted with lavish attention. He was offered an administrative post and an advantageous marriage on condition that he renounced his Christian faith.

But Maarouf remained firmly bound to his convictions. He wrote to Spafford:

...The Lord is teaching me many lessons and bringing me close to Him. They said to us that they are going to send us away to the place where the war was. But I am not attending to what they say. I am waiting to the dear Lord for deliverance. Anyway He want it only may I glorify His name in this thing. Salute the dear ones at home and my earthly mother comfort her for me. Salute the children.

Your son, Maarouf

Maarouf was sent to Yemen, where there was constant warring between rebel Arabs and the Turkish regime. The climate of the region is unhealthy and it seemed unlikely that he would last out the five years of his military service.

Maarouf did, however, survive and one night there was a knock at the door of the Colony's house in the Old City. Outside stood a dirty, tired and exhausted Turkish soldier. It was Maarouf. He was given a warm welcome.

When news of Maarouf's return reached his stepfather he once again contacted the Turkish authorities, and six months later Maarouf was once again sent off on military service. This time it was to Crete, to help put down the Greek rebellion. His military papers were supplemented with a note indicating that, being an infidel, he was not, under any circumstances, to be set free.

Maarouf spent two years fighting in the mountains of Crete. But when the Greeks began to gain the upper hand over the Turks, Maarouf took advantage of the opportunity to make his escape. He managed to reach Jaffa and from there made it to Jerusalem. Once again the American Colony opened its doors to him.

The stepfather was devastated. He had been counting on Maarouf being out of the picture for good. He now set off for The American Colony along with Maarouf's mother and brothers and sisters. "I realise now," he said to Maarouf, in all humility, "that you have not simply changed on the outside, but in your heart. To continue to oppose you now, convinced of this fact, would be to fight against God. I am now your friend and I respect you."

The Bedouin, who used to strike terror into the hearts of most foreigners, were to become some of the Colony's best friends. Anna Spafford wrote of paying them a visit:

The scenery about the Jordan was beautiful. The weather was hot although late in November. We remounted on the other side and rode for another hour and a half across the plain, then the son of the sheik rode on before us to announce our arrival...

The tent we were ushered into was 150 feet long, woven out of goat's hair and quite waterproof. Nora, Bertha and I were taken into the women's compartment and the men were taken into the sheik's compartment. A beautiful Kelim carpet hung down, dividing the tent.

The wife of the great sheik met us with the gracious dignity of a queen. She stood at the door of the tent welcoming us in a dress of dark blue material ten feet long (we measured them). The dress is the same length all round, and it takes an experienced person to walk inside this bag with the dress

trailing behind her. It is let down on state occasions, otherwise it is tucked up around her waist in several folds. She stood there commanding her servants and handmaidens who in response brought out mattresses covered with rich red satin. Our shoes were taken off and we were given water so that we might wash. Then the handmaidens hurried to bring us lemonade, sweets, and coffee. Directly the whole encampment was astir. The fatted lamb, or kid was to be prepared, the bread was to be baked. Butter and "laban" (clabbered milk) were brought with the cooked meal and set in huge trays and bowls on the ground. Rich Persian rugs were laid round for us to sit upon. After we had partaken of the evening meal, all the retainers were served according to their rank. Even the casual passer-by, no matter how ragged, was fed. After the remains of the meal and the dishes were removed, the evening fire was rekindled. The sheik and the male part of his family and retainers surrounded it. Then the court joker and singer came forward and sang the praises of the great sheik - telling about the numerous battles he had fought and won, and recounting the many enemies he had killed. He threw up the dust with his hand and said "so many more than could be counted." The women sang in companies, one side answering the other like the women who sang in the first book of Samuel 18:7: "And the women answered one another as they played. Saul hath slayed his thousand and David his ten thousands."

These people live just as Abraham did. Their customs have not changed. They have two or more wives and each wife has her handmaidens and servants. It is interesting to see actually with one's own eyes how Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived.

The Bedouin are feared by all, especially by travellers. The Turks have not been able to subdue them. No one dares to travel in their country. And here we were being entertained by them.

One day the Colony went on an outing to Wad ez Joz, the Valley of Walnuts. A young Muslim man, hearing their voices, came over to them. The land they were on belonged to his father. He was, however, friendly and was invited to join them to eat. Anna Spafford was feeding little Grace with a bottle and the young man told them gravely that his mother had twin girls whom she could not suckle, and that she had tried, unsuccessfully, to feed them by artificial means. Anna Spafford immediately went to the woman's house and using an interpreter told of how sick Grace had been until she had discovered what kind of food she could take. The Arab twin girls were immediately put on Nestlé's tinned milk, the only tinned milk available at the time, and this they drank.

This advice was to mark the beginning of what became a quite extensive contribution to baby care in the Holy City. The news spread quickly, and soon after their outing the Americans were asked to hold a course on child care in the schools. Anna Spafford, Mrs Gould and Mrs Whiting taught the Arab and Jewish mothers new methods of child care. Meetings were held in the Colony for young mothers, and Horatio Spafford and the other men began to give lessons in English. In time a number of people also began to attend Horatio Spafford's Bible readings as well as the hymn singing.

The Americans had now begun to draw some of the comfort and spiritual relief that they had hoped to find in Jerusalem.

Arabs and Jews flocked to the house:

Last Saturday 220 Jews came and among them were three learned Rabbis. About 20 of them

surrounded Horatio, with the three Rabbis, for discussion. Horatio would not enter into any argument with them. He said that only love would conquer the world, and before they left they seemed melted. Their questions made us realise so clearly how Christ had to answer them. They talk in the same manner now. "Do you keep the law?" That is their great question. They are exceedingly polite to us, which they are not to everyone. They have invited us to their synagogues and to their Feast of Tabernacles... One Sunday we had two Moslem Effendis, rich and learned men who came to enquire about our religion. They took dinner with us. At the same time we had two Greeks. They sat down together as happy as could be, Sheik Racheed Arakat and Abou Nasib came too. Miss Brooke can speak to the Jews in French or German, and Jacob can speak to them in Spanish, Rob can speak Arabic, so we get on beautifully.

Miss Clara Johanna Brooke had been an English kindergarten teacher in Jerusalem and had joined the Colony as early as 1882, after having developed an interest in Horatio Spafford's Bible readings.

The Colony's aversion to missionary work was kept alive. One day Anna Spafford visited a mission hospital in Jaffa where men, women and children lay dying, shivering with fever while a nurse in an immaculate uniform stood reading aloud from the Bible in classical Arabic. Anna Spafford described her feelings at the time:

A full hour of Bible reading - the price the patients had to pay for receiving medical treatment. In a corner a sheik lay in dirty rags stuck fast with dried blood, with many severe wounds from a village fight; his leg seemed fractured....All around sick people were only waiting for the Scriptures to end.

Christ would have relieved the suffering with gentle fingers and tender words and allowed the spirit to do the preaching.

Relations between the various Christian groups in Palestine were not particularly good. They were suspicious and envious of one another. One evening Anna Spafford attended a meeting with a group of Christian sects in Jaffa:

I spoke concerning our faith and belief that one day God would unite the entire Christian world. I cannot describe to you the strange feeling that I had. Here we were, all practising Christians and yet so separated and divided. It was so evident that each one of us was worshipping God from behind the little fence that he had made to enclose himself in...How I would like to see all these man-made "walls of partition" broken down. I asked if they could explain to me these separations between Christians, each claiming that the Holy Spirit has taught them, but they could not attempt an answer. Someday the Episcopalians and Methodists, and even the man from Ramallah and the Plymouth Brethren will all join in a great world power for unity. We must press forward and pray that such power will unite all Christians.

The most jealous and contentious of the Christians in Jerusalem was the American consul, Selah Merrill. He had been a priest of the Andover congregational church in Massachusetts and his tolerance towards people who were not of a like mind was very low. A member of the established church, he did not like the kind of Christianity advocated by the strange new group from Chicago.

Shortly after their arrival in Jerusalem, Merrill reported home to the State Department in Washington:

There has recently been an arrival at Jerusalem, of eighteen persons for permanent residence, from Chicago, under the influence of some strong religious impulse, sustained by their interpretations of unfulfilled prophecies. They are praying, watching, waiting for, the grand events soon to transpire in this land, as they suppose.

Merrill was a keen amateur archaeologist who wrote articles on Palestine's archaeology. In his archaeological zeal, and out of contempt for the Colony he desecrated the graves of the small graveyard which he had let to the Americans. He committed a more gross violation later when he sold the land and allowed the graveyard to be demolished, not informing the Americans, who received quite a shock when they discovered what had happened.

Merrill lent a benevolent ear to those Americans who chose to abandon the Colony, and sought him out to enlist his help in getting back the money they had invested. Merrill was an avid rumour monger and not too discerning about his sources, who were invariably people with a grudge who felt they had been badly treated by the Spafford family. Shortly after arriving in Jerusalem, Horatio Spafford paid a courtesy visit to the consul. Merrill, however, never returned the gesture. And Merrill did everything that he could to damage the Colony. At one point he accused the group of being spiritualists and of communicating with the dead.

The accusations of spiritualism were also propagated later by Alice E. Davis, an American resident of Jerusalem. She wrote to Consul Merrill to inform him that the religious leader of the Spafford group, Horatio Spafford, had fallen out of grace with the Colony since its entering into a "spiritual phase". According to Alice E. Davis, this was why he had lost his status as leader and had been "condemned for faithlessness and banished from the occupants' sight and sound for a period of 40 days, been chastised most shamefully and treated with a contempt that was personally degrading. And all this by the person whom he had elevated from childlessness, educated and married!"

Four years after the family's arrival in Jerusalem, their adopted son, Rob, died of sunstroke. Ignoring the sun while helping some friends to plant trees, he collapsed in the baking heat and had to be carried home on a stretcher. By the time they reached the Damascus Gate he was burning with fever, he never regained consciousness. His death was a hard blow to the Colony; everyone liked the young man who had managed to settle down so well in their new home. But Anna Spafford responded to the death with the studied calm which life had taught her, and she comforted her seven year old daughter Bertha, who had been so fond of her cousin by saying, "What a wonderful awakening, now he sees Him."

A few years later Horatio Spafford, who was approaching sixty, fell seriously ill with malaria. Bertha Spafford was ten years old at the time:

Father and mother had given up their "all" truly to come to Jerusalem. Father was the strong and compelling spirit. On his shoulders rested the responsibility of life. Mother was the follower; Mother felt "he knew". He was her counsellor and best friend. Together they had passed through many vicissitudes, dangers, sorrow, death, and calamity. Together they could face anything. Their love could

rise above sorrow. As long as they had each other they were masters of every situation, they had proved this. Now Mother, as she looked down on Father's unconscious and emaciated face, realized that she must face the work, future sorrows, and whatever was ahead of her alone. I stood beside her; I was conscious of her struggle. As she listened to the measured breathing that became more labored as time went on, and felt the declining strength of pulse that was beating ever more irregularly, I could see she was being overwhelmed with anguish. But she must be worthy of this brave man - her lifetime partner. Her stand, though alone now, must be so close to heaven that she must still feel him near her.

She left the room and stood in the arbour, watching a waning moon rise red over the Mount of Olives. All was quiet, all was still - not a leaf moved in that second spell of sirocco that sometimes comes in October. She lifted her breaking heart to God; she quoted the Scriptures, not knowing chapter or verse: "I will dance before the Lord," she said, from the Psalms, meaning she would do that which was the most difficult to do. In that phrase she expressed her determination not to give in to overwhelming sorrow, It lifted her above natural inclination. It was the expression of her determination really to believe - "I am the resurrection and the life."

Nora was the only other person present. After a short absence, comforted and strengthened, Mother returned. Just at that moment Father opened his eyes, looked at Mother, and said; "Annie, I have experienced a great joy; I have seen wonderful things," and he tried to tell her, but weakness and unconsciousness overcame him, and he could speak no more. The end was very near. She turned to me and the nurse. "Bertha," she said, "stay with Father to the end. I must go away." It was only a short time, and I went to tell Mother. My sister Grace was with her. "He knows it all now," she said. "He has seen Him face to face. We must not sorrow like those who have not hope." She made me feel the truth of this, for she did not outwardly sorrow; she did not lament. I felt it was unworthy of her courage to cry. My heart was breaking, so I crept away from sight on the rampart wall, into one of the niches behind the house, and there I cried until my poor little heart broke. My sobs shook me; my sense of loss was almost too much for me. Father had been such a companion; we were such good friends, but my admiration for my mother was greater than all else at that moment. I felt that I must stand by her, so I dried my tears.

Horatio Spafford died after seven years in Palestine, thereby fulfilling the prophecy which Anna Spafford had received concerning him shortly after their arrival in Jerusalem: "Seven years in this land," she had said.

The Colony members continued to believe that they were immortal, as long as they believed in God and overcame all worldly temptations. Anna Spafford wrote in her Bible: "Christ has power over the devil, Christ has power over sickness, Christ has power over death". Only death did not seem to have heard these words.

After Horatio's death Anna herself fell ill with fever and was unable to attend the funeral. For several weeks it was feared that she too might die. Slowly, however, she recovered and a few months later was again active and at work.

From this point on Anna Spafford led the Colony with a firm hand, her natural authority strengthened by the messages which she claimed to receive from God. These messages were noted

down by her faithful lieutenant Elijah Meyers, and the book containing these revelations was to gain the status almost equivalent to that of a Bible. The adopted son, Jacob Eliahu, known as Brother Jacob, acted as her assistant.

By 1894, seven of the original members (plus four later additions) had died, among these four of the men - Horatio Spafford, Rob, Mr Whiting and Mr Sylvester - so that only two of the men from the original group of migrants were left. The Colony now consisted of six adults and nine children, four Turks with two children, and three Britons.

Their financial affairs were in a very bad state. The idea of the Colony, based on common property, a subsistence economy and a ban on earnings had put them into the red, year after year. The services which the Colony provided - language teaching and child care - were the basis for their harmonious relationship with the local population but, while important, they did not produce any capital. When, shortly after their arrival, the adopted son, Rob, wrote home to his relatives in America informing them that the Colony was "quite favoured by the Arabs", and that "bankers and traders alike give us credit", he hardly imagined that without this unique goodwill from the Arabs, they would have been forced to shut up shop. The Spaffords and their followers would have had to return to America had the local Arab population not made quite a substantial contribution to the daily costs of running the Colony, this was especially the case when it came to financial credit, the labour force and provisions. By 1894 the American Colony had amassed a debt of close to 8000 dollars, which in today's terms would be equivalent to about 200,000. Anna Spafford could not begin to decide what to do about the problems, although she was aware that something had to be done.

5. THE TRIAL IN CHICAGO

Rumours of the Colony circulated in the United States. The newspapers produced a stream of indiscriminate articles, which more or less portrayed the Colony as being a small community conducting an immoral way of life. The Americans in Jerusalem were accused of living a non-Christian life.

It was the consul, Selah Merrill, in particular, who blackened the name of his compatriots. With gleeful zeal, he continued to inform his superiors in Washington of all the negative aspects of the Colony.

Gradually, the mounting bad opinion became something of a burden for them. The rumours, which had long since cast a shadow on the honour of the Americans, now began to threaten their very existence. The bad reputation was a distressing factor and in the first half of the 1890s there was almost no increase in membership. The matter was, however, to resolve itself in a rather unexpected fashion.

It began with a death. John Whiting, who had arrived in Jerusalem along with the Spaffords as part of the first batch of immigrants, died in 1889. Shortly afterwards his mother passed away in America. She left a sizeable fortune in her will to John Whiting's two children, who lived in the American Colony. Whiting's widow claimed the inheritance on behalf of the children. The inheritance was administered by a businessman in Chicago who, for odd and complicated reasons decided to oppose paying out the money.

At this point another person was to enter proceedings; the mother of John Whiting's widow, Mrs Lingle, who lived in America, now demanded that her daughter and two grandchildren return home.

Life went on in the Colony. This affair was only one of many which was to make life difficult for the Americans. A further complication arose when the young girl Nora turned out to be disloyal. Nora had come to Jerusalem as a nanny to the Spaffords. The children having grown up in the meantime meant that Nora became simply an ordinary member of the Colony. One day Anna Spafford received a letter from her in which she wrote that she would be leaving them for good; she no longer wished to see them, or speak with them, and had moved to a hotel.

Anna Spafford went to visit her, only to be told that Nora had fallen in love with a Muslim. This was quite an unusual alliance for the time, what was worse was that the young man, who was immediately summoned to the hotel at Anna Spafford's bidding, informed her that he was unable to marry Nora since he was from a noble family. He also happened to be engaged to someone else. He did, however, give assurances that the relationship between himself and Nora had remained honourable.

Feeling quite humiliated, Nora decided to avenge herself on the Colony and so paid a visit on Consul Merrill. She informed Merrill that all the rumours about the Americans' way of life were true: They led an immoral and iniquitous life in the Colony. Merrill's suspicions were now confirmed. Nora returned to the United States - on a ticket paid for by the Colony - where she contacted Mrs Lingle and told her that her daughter and grandchildren were being held in the Colony against their will.

Mrs Lingle then persuaded her son - Mrs Whiting's brother - to go to Jerusalem, where, along with Merrill, he attempted to abduct Mrs Whiting and the children. Their efforts on this front failed, but this only made Mrs Lingle all the more determined and she now began to make new, rather alarming demands. She went to the High Court of Chicago to demand that custody of the children be withdrawn from her daughter and given to her.

Mrs Whiting was subpoenaed in January 1894 and was therefore forced to travel to America. She went in the hope that she might be able to solve both of her problems; to keep custody of the children, and to get hold of the children's inheritance - with them continuing to live in Jerusalem. The Colony's finances were in dire need of an injection of fresh capital. Their resources had sunk so low in fact that Mrs Whiting and her two companions, Mrs Gould and Jacob Eliahu were forced to borrow the money for the tickets. Mrs Gould was also hoping to get her inheritance from her late husband, which had been frozen, released. Jacob went along to help the women with practical things and in procedural matters. Mrs Whiting decided for reasons of safety that she would leave her two children, Ruth who was twelve and ten year old John, behind in Jerusalem.

In the Chicago courtroom, Mrs Gould managed to win back her inheritance with little trouble. Mrs Whiting's case, however, remained unresolved: The matter of the custody of the children was rejected due to the absence of the children, and the matter of the inheritance was not dealt with by the court.

The case rolled on. Mrs Whiting remained in Chicago. About six months later Anna Spafford and her two daughters, Bertha and Grace, joined her there. Mrs Whiting's two children also arrived with them. The main purpose of Anna Spafford's visit to America was to find a solution to the ongoing legal problems, but she also had another motive in mind; Bertha, who was sixteen at the time, had lost her heart to a young man back in Jerusalem and Anna Spafford was hoping that the trip would put him out of Bertha's mind.

In May 1895, Mrs Lingle resumed the case in the Chicago Probate Court making a claim to have custody of her grandchildren revoked from her daughter. A lawyer, who was once a friend of Horatio Spafford's, offered his services free of charge to defend the Colony. In his opinion the trial was about religious persecution.

The star witness against the Colony was Nora, and the young woman had a great impact in her confrontation with Anna Spafford: "She had a terrible power over me, but she does not any longer. I shall never seek her forgiveness again, only God's! She had better not think that I have need of her forgiveness!", Nora shouted from the witness stand.

Nora described how she had looked on helplessly and in great distress as families were destroyed as a consequence of the celibacy order, and that she had wanted to save the children. She had witnessed Anna Spafford's sombre prophecies, prompted by signs in the sky or on earth, which gave rise to all kinds of restrictions. Anna Spafford had claimed that she had prophetic abilities, Nora explained, and had demanded that the members of the Colony live their lives just as Adam and Eve had done before the Fall.

During the course of her lengthy testimony, Nora spoke of how no provision was made for the education of the children. Anna Spafford had told them that all of them would be "informed at a later time, when the Millennium comes". And that, despite this, Anna Spafford's two daughters consistently received education. Nora herself, had never received any kind of education, not even in language.

She did admit that the Colony had taken good care of the poor and the infirm. During the course of the cross examination she seemed uncertain about the allegations of loose living in the Colony, even when the defence produced an affidavit, signed by Nora in Jerusalem in May 1893. This was a document, a letter that she had written to a married couple in Jerusalem, in which she wrote that she, "regretted her outburst..and had never witnessed anything immoral of the kind described by Mr Merrill..."

Anna Spafford was also called as a witness and was kept on the witness stand for hours. A representative for the prosecution cross-examined her about her faith. Anna Spafford confirmed that she believed in the divine nature of Christ.

The prosecutor wanted to know whether she received messages directly from God. But Anna Spafford would go no further than to say that as a Christian who believed in prayer, she believed that God could guide and lead. She made no claim of having special or unique powers.

"You were not with your husband when he died," the lawyer snapped quickly. Anna Spafford replied calmly that she had been with her husband up until a few minutes before death occurred.

"And I believe that you danced when you heard he was dead," pressed the lawyer.

An anguished look crossed Anna's face. She looked straight at Nora when she spoke: "Not in the manner you imply."

Consul Selah Merrill managed to avoid making an appearance on the witness stand, instead he sent a deposition which was read out in court. In his letter he accused Anna Spafford of wielding a hypnotic power over the other members of the Colony. On a more basic level, he explained that she had bought goods and other things for the Colony by promising the suppliers that the money would later be sent from America. On this point he mentioned the Colony's outstanding debt of around eight thousand dollars to traders in Jerusalem. Selah Merrill's written testimony went on to claim that members of the Colony lived together in such a way as to arouse some suspicion. He also regarded it as disgraceful that the members had no regular employment. As regards the children, they did not get enough to eat, only cracked wheat, bread and oranges. This last comment drew a ripple of laughter as everyone could plainly see the three children from the Colony sitting in the courtroom and how well nourished they

were. In concluding his affidavit, Mr Merrill admitted that he had never actually been inside the "so-called American Colony"; everything that he had written down was simply what he had heard.

A second affidavit arrived from Mr Henry Gilman, the man who had replaced Merrill after his first term as consul. He wrote that he had been a frequent guest at the American Colony, that he had studied the Colony and was certain that the members conducted their lives in a manner that was above reproach. But for some mysterious reason this testimony vanished from the court records. It never turned up again, but since it was the prosecution who had buried the document, its disappearance was to work in the Colony's favour.

The case was followed with a great deal of interest because the question at the heart of the trial was whether or not two children could be taken away from their mother because of her religious convictions. The prosecution was not able to prove that there was anything at all about her religious beliefs which would cause her to contravene the constitutional right to religious freedom.

The case was dismissed and Mrs Whiting was allowed to keep custody of her two children. The question of the inheritance, which the court records note as having been 3000 dollars a year in income from national bonds and real estate, was only partly resolved. It was confirmed that the heirs, Whiting's two children - who were minors - had never seen so much as one cent of the money. The mother was given permission to administer the inheritance that was due her children; however, the sum, a total of 60,000 dollars to which interest had to be added, could not be paid out immediately.

There was massive coverage of the trial in the press, many of the Chicago newspapers poked fun at the Colony during the course of the case. In the end, however, the headlines all carried a similar message; "Colony A Winner!" Victory was of course not complete, the Colony's financial situation was still a catastrophe. On this point, Merrill's information was correct, and Anna Spafford again made no attempt to deny this side of the matter. Anna Spafford and her group had been away from the Colony for more than six months - some of the other members had been away for even longer - and for all that time they had been staying in a small, run down house in her old neighbourhood of Lake View. The house was cramped and had few facilities, and as the weeks and the months passed it became increasingly hard to find the money to purchase even daily necessities. A further problem arose when the health authorities threatened to evict them because of the cramped conditions and the lack of sanitary facilities.

The group stayed on in Chicago after the court case was concluded, probably in the hope that they might be able to recruit some new members for the Colony. Anna Spafford tried to find a way into the circles of influential, philanthropic and religious liberals in Chicago - partly with the intention of creating the possibility of tourist visits to the Colony which would be a new source of finance. The trial helped her on the moral and religious plane, but only provided limited solutions to the Colony's dire financial situation.

Among the many people who followed the trial against the American Colony with interest as it appeared in the newspapers was a small group of Swedes. A small Swedish community living in the southern part of Chicago.

6. OLOF HENRIK LARSSON

The leader of the little Swedish parish in Chicago was Olof Henrik Larsson. Originally from Grundsund, a small fishing community in the Bohuslän Archipelago on the west coast of Sweden, he was born in 1842, the same year as Anna Spafford. He was of average height, but gave the appearance of being short and stocky on account of his remarkably broad shoulders. His build testified to his great physical strength and there was a determined look about him. His clear blue eyes inspired confidence.

He had been a fisherman, like his father and his father before him, living with his parents in a small house on the outskirts of Grundsund. While still in his twenties both of his parents passed away within a year of one another. In his solitude he was seized by a strong desire to travel. For many years he had read about foreign countries and had dreamt of a life at sea. On the death of his parents he determined to fulfil this dream, and so gave up fishing to attend navigational school. One day a letter arrived from a friend who had migrated to America; this was the immediate spur needed for Larsson to set off.

His journey, though, did not take him straight to the United States. Olof Henrik Larsson first went to Liverpool where he remained for a time, working in a shipyard. But this was only a stop along the way and in September 1869 he arrived in Boston.

One day a man staying at the boarding house where he was lodging asked him if he would be interested in accompanying him to a religious meeting that evening. Olof Henrik Larsson went along and the meeting convinced him that, despite his strict upbringing by his mother in Lutheran teachings, he had lapsed in his religious beliefs. After the meeting one of the elders came over to him and asked whether he was a Christian. "I thought I was," he replied, "But I realize now that I am not."

Olof Henrik Larsson began sailing as an officer on a variety of merchant ships. He began as first mate on routes that took him up and down the east coast of the United States. After a time he was made captain of a freighter that sailed to foreign ports.

The question, "Are you a Christian?" continued to haunt him and one night, far out to sea, he dreamed that he could hear a voice calling to him: "You have now achieved what you wanted in the world, but what about your soul?" The dream lodged itself so deeply in him that he was driven to desperation. He decided to do something and one day he tossed the old pipe which he had treasured and which had always brought him comfort, overboard. The pipe had been a constant companion throughout the years spent fishing in Bohuslän, talking to friends, or when sitting alone, reading and dreaming of foreign places.

One evening, up on deck he prayed silently, asking God to show him the way. As he prayed, he felt a force flow through him which he was certain was the Holy Spirit because he had never felt such strength and joy. It was as though a burden had been lifted from his shoulders and all his doubt

vanished.

This was to be Olof Henrik Larsson's final voyage as captain. The moment he came ashore he turned in his Captain's log, resigned and started a new spiritual life. For a short time he joined the Methodist Church in Chicago, but left it again and for a long time did not belong to any church congregation.

In the Methodist Church he had made the acquaintance of a number of compatriots, and after a time he married a Swedish girl who, in 1876, gave birth to their daughter, Hulda. Their happiness was, however, to be short-lived. While giving birth to their next child, both his wife and her child were died. This was a serious blow to Olof Henrik Larsson who once again felt that he had to start all over again with nothing.

He had some talent for trade and organisation, and this led him to a well paid job with an estate agent in the rapidly expanding Chicago. Olof Henrik Larsson began to earn a good living. Gradually he built up a good network of contacts among the lonely Swedes in the city; people who did not speak English and who had no means of spiritual release. Their fate touched him and he rented a house where he could hold meetings for them. The house proved very popular and, indeed, was soon too small. His growing income allowed him to purchase a piece of land on Madison Avenue Hyde Park, and here he built a church with an adjoining house. The church was Olof Henrik Larsson's; privately owned churches were not an unusual thing at the time. He called it The Swedish Evangelical Church, and the members became very closely attached to it. The church's small congregation all lived in the house and all their incomes were pooled together. They lived like one large family. Olof Henrik Larsson acted as priest and spiritual guide to his congregation, and he put all his energy and focus into the project at hand. He gave up his job in the real estate business.

Olof Henrik Larsson ran his church from 1880 to 1896, providing for his congregation of 30 adults and a number of children. He had a natural talent for raising financial resources, and there was also a well established tradition for church communities to be as active as possible in doing so. The constitutional divide between church and state meant that there was no public support for the churches, and this explained the growth of preaching seminars, study groups, Sunday schools, youth projects and so forth.

During the 1890s, America was at a low ebb. The start of the decade was marked by a crisis in the agricultural and currency markets. The crisis culminated in a serious depression in 1893 when corn prices fell, a large number of businesses went bankrupt and several banks were forced to close. Larsson's congregation managed, however, to survive all the financial troubles, the bond between the members grew very strong.

One Sunday morning towards the end of the 1880s, a strange woman appeared in Larsson's church. After the service Olof Henrik Larsson greeted her and bid her welcome.

Her name was Mathilda Helgsten and she was the daughter of a foreman in an iron works in Lindesnäs, in the parish of Nås in Dalarna, Sweden. She had arrived from Sweden to look after her sister's children while her sister, Anna, was convalescing following a protracted period of illness. But

Mathilda felt somewhat isolated in this unfamiliar country, and she missed her friends and relatives back home. Realizing this, Annie had told Mathilda about Larsson's group, feeling sure that her sister would be able to find friends there to help alleviate her loneliness.

Mathilda Helgsten was deeply religious and had often participated in revival meetings at home in Sweden. Her mother was a Free Baptist, while her father was extremely sceptical about religious movements. Hearing Larsson preaching brought a great feeling of calm over Mathilda. Within a week she had joined Larsson's congregation.

Olof Henrik Larsson found himself drawn to the new arrival and one day, without warning, went to her and said; "Mathilda, it has been revealed to me that we shall be married." Mathilda's shy, withdrawn nature caused her to regard the preacher with respect and esteem, but nothing more. She was overwhelmed by the privilege of being chosen to be his wife. Without a moment's hesitation she said, yes.

Mathilda had never dreamt that she would be so happy. Not only had she found spiritual comfort, but her love and respect for her husband grew by the day. And Olof Henrik Larsson showed great devotion towards his wife. "I have chosen you from among all the others," he said, "call me Henry." But she could not bring herself to do this, however, and so continued to call him Larsson.

Some months later Lisslasses Karin, one of the congregation sisters, received a calling to travel to Sweden to spread the news to relatives and friends at home in Nås about the congregation in Chicago. She suggested to Mathilda that the two of them make the journey together and Larsson applauded the idea: "Yes, it would be good if you travelled and taught them of our faith."

Lisslasses Karin was accomplished at preaching in a mild manner, and in Nås she held regular services and at the same time spread the word about The Swedish Evangelical Church in Chicago.

In the autumn of 1889 Olof Henrik Larsson unexpectedly appeared to join the others in Nås to preach the gospel in the small parish. He went straight into action, delivering a series of hard hitting revivalist sermons which had a powerful effect on the people of the parish. He encountered problems in finding a place to stay because Mathilda's father, the blacksmith of Lindesnäs, would not have people who preached new religious ideas living under his roof. Lisslasses Karin's mother, a widow, had to put him up, and the house soon became quite cramped, all the more so since Larsson had to hold his revivalist meetings there too. On account of his rather ill-mannered performance in the pulpit he was soon refused access to the mission houses and was therefore forced to adjourn his services to various farms and parish schools.

Larsson's brand of preaching was widely condemned. Many people came to hate him, and his meetings were often interrupted by stones being thrown through the windows - but this only served to encourage Larsson further. He spoke in a manner that provoked anxiety and dissent. One witness put it as follows:

He arrived, dark and lean, with burning eyes and began to preach at the mission house. It soon became clear that this was not the person who had taught Karin her peaceful manner of preaching. The new

preacher explained that his little following had been picked by God. Those who remained members of the Mission Society would vanish straight to hell when the judgement of God reached Nås.

And another recalled:

He shouted out, prophesising that: "A spirit of untruth entered the mouths of your prophets, and I alone am God's prophet." He had an overpowering look to him, and he was strong, and he could be brutal.

This brutality was to come to the surface in the following story: One day Larsson happened to be walking across the bridge over the river Våsterdalselven which ran through Nås. He met a little boy and asked him where he was going. "I'm going to school," replied the boy. "No, you are not," growled Larsson, "you're on your way to hell."

Another event on the same bridge underlined Larsson's alleged links with supernatural forces: Some boys were sitting on the bridge railings when Larsson came by one day. As he walked past they shouted insults at him. A moment later the railings collapsed underneath them.

Both these stories are alarmist, but there were other, more positive reactions to Larsson's presence. One day Maria Lund of Mora, while visiting Nås heard that a Swedish American Anabaptist was to preach at Tipersgård that evening. She entered the tightly packed room where Larsson was preaching and decided that he did it well, and that he sang well too:

With his powerful seaman's build and his glowing eyes he seemed quite impressive. Lisslasses Karin engaged me in pleasant conversation afterwards and told me that I would be welcome to attend a meeting which was to be held in her house the following day. Lisslasses Karin had worked for several years as a nanny for an American millionaire, and she appeared not just friendly, but also far more cultivated than most of those around her.

Her attending the meeting the following day with a friend, was to be a turning point in Maria Lund's life: "We went down on our knees for Larsson's words of revival. We spent the night there and joined the Larssonite congregation."

Olof Henrik Larsson caused a division to form in the parish of Nås. In the course of the two years that he remained in Nås - from spring 1889 to the summer 1891 - he created his own Larssonite movement which was severely criticised and did not bring joy alone. The idea of revivalism, however, was deeply engrained in a lot of people at this time and whenever a new preacher made an appearance, he was greeted with enthusiasm. This was also often the case with Larsson.

His services were eschatological, and spoke of the judgement that would fall on the Last Day which was soon to come. He repeated again and again that those who did not join him for good were lost and would spend eternity swimming in the sulphurous rivers of hell. Those who joined him would be rewarded by God. They would receive this reward in that blessed hour when the Messiah descended from heaven to set foot on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. This message was delivered consistently and with great power, and made an impression on many of the people of Nås.

One episode was to do great damage to Larsson's reputation. In the summer of 1890 Mathilda gave birth to a little girl. The baby fell ill a few months later and Mathilda wished to summon a doctor. Larsson insisted that he would pray over the child to ask God to make her well again, and despite Mathilda's wish to call a doctor, he remained firm. Despite their prayers the child died in October. The episode aroused contempt in the little community; not only was the child never baptized, and cut off from any medical help, but the parents even refused it a decent burial. In the public records of deaths and burials (Nås Döds-och-Begravningsbok 1890), the case is noted as follows; "The parents, who claim to belong to an unfamiliar religious denomination, refused to let the child be buried in the legal manner. They buried it themselves after the child had been inspected by a public authority."

Actions like this were to create problems for Larsson with the Swedish national church which dissociated itself from him. The parish priest had been hostile towards revival movements prior to the episode, and Larsson's unchristian actions invoked the priest's condemnation. Larsson began increasingly to address his revivalist proclamations to the Free Baptists whose members seemed to show a positive attitude towards him. This, however, was soon to become a thing of the past when rivalry developed between the Larssonites and the Baptists. The conflict reached a climax at Whitsun in 1890, when the Free Baptists expelled ten people sympathetic towards Larsson and, furthermore, forbade Larsson to preach in their chapel. They were opposed to Larsson's talk of original sin and the wrath of God - and there was disagreement about the matter of baptism. The Baptists baptized people by immersing them completely in water - icy water in the winter - whereas Larsson settled for simply dipping peoples' heads - where the evil resided - indoors and in a tub of water.

Lisslasses Karin tried to prevent the split with the Free Baptists and wrote to their leader, Myr Halvar. She was so sure of her case, however, that what was intended as an outstretched hand looked more like a clenched fist:

Is it really impossible for you to see why we might compare you to the Jews considering how you also seek in your activities to charm God? We might also say that if you know God and his spirit then you also know us, his frail limbs, and the spirit which finds voice in Larsson, and should want to hear him. When God has after all sent him forth and offered you help, and you continue to show disdain. How then shall you defend yourselves when you see your works and the foundations upon which you build come crashing down? Could you really excuse yourselves by claiming that you knew no better?

At this time, Myr Halvar was an elderly infirm man who could hardly bring himself to respond. On a number of occasions, Larsson had called on him and his family and promptly set about rectifying what he saw as their lack of guidance. On one occasion he became so animated that, clenching his fist at Myr Halvar, he yelled: "You will all go to Hell, you yourself, Kirsti, Helge and the whole lot of you!"

There was to be no reconciliation with the Free Baptists, but this was, after all, to be of little significance since the majority of Larsson's new congregation were to come from among their ranks. The Baptists are often amongst the easiest of people to convert to new movements, since they have already changed faith once in abandoning that which they had been born into. One of the Baptists, a peasant named Josefs Lars Larsson asked why they did not follow the higher light which Olof Henrik Larsson represented. Around fifty people in Nås did just this and following the light became members

of Olof Henrik Larsson's little congregation.

In August 1891, the Larssons returned to Chicago accompanied by Lisslasses Karin and her mother, Anna Larsson. Maria Lund travelled along with them, her friend Karin Smidt had come ahead of her; these two girls had heard Larsson preach at Tipersgården and immediately felt the revivalism touch a chord within them. Olof Henrik Larsson was apparently not disappointed by the fact that only two people had been persuaded to join them in travelling to Chicago. It was never his intention to encourage people to emigrate with him, his preaching was aimed at creating an affiliated community in Nås itself. Upon his departure he had handed over responsibility for the small congregation in Nås to Tipers Lars Larsson, head of what was considered to be the leading family in the parish, along with Gästgifvar Mats Matsson, another local farm owner.

Over the coming years a good number of the members in Nås were to drop out until, in 1896, there were only about thirty left. Larsson remained in contact with the community by means of letters which he wrote; these were put together in a volume which was read from as a kind of communal edification, the letters being treated much as the teachings of the apostles had been to the earliest Christian communities. It did not, however, prove as simple to pass on to the community in Nås the idea of communal property - despite Josefs Lars Larsson's announcement that money was could be borrowed by any member of the congregation who was in need of it - without any form of receipt and with no added interest.

7. THE REVIVAL IN NÅS

Nås is a small parish in the Kopparbergs Län region in central Sweden. It lies in the Bergslagen area, around 80 kms to the west of the towns of Borlänge and Falun. In the 1890s there were around 3000 people living in the parish itself. The peasants of the region were independent and self-sufficient, and had for centuries depended on the land they worked and on the forest. The wealth of the region was in the fields and meadows, the woods and the river Västerdalsälven and provided them with their livelihood. During the 19th century they underwent a radical change when industrialisation began to have a serious impact on Sweden and mining became increasingly important. Bergslagen was rich in iron ore and copper and the mining companies laid claim to the region. The mining company Stora Kopparbergs Bergslag AB bought up a lot of land so that by the second half of the century they owned two thirds of the forest and one half of the farmland in the area. These developments had a destabilising effect on the peasant community as many of the smaller land holders went over to the regular wages paid by the mining companies.

At the time there appeared to be no stopping the expansion of industrial development. South of Nås, in Lindesnäs, where it was possible to utilise water as a source of energy, a large rolling mill and a Lancashire forge were constructed while further plans were in hand to build a blast furnace and a railroad to transport heavy loads.

The picture was, however, to change very suddenly. The plans were much too ambitious - their appetite had been too large for their stomachs. Running the big forges proved to be unprofitable, and everything was eventually closed down. By 1895 the boom was over and the small community was once again faced with change. Their hopes had fallen through and the workforce of former peasants was forced to relocate to places where mining was still a feasible business.

It was during this period that the two largest revivalist movements, The Free Baptists and the Larssonites, began to make inroads in Nås. Revivalists were nothing new in Nås. Just into the second half of the 19th century the great popular revival sweeping through Sweden reached Bergslagen and Nås. Travelling preachers arrived, many from the nearby regions, and the parish was soon split between those who chose to follow the new trend, and those who opposed it. In 1863 the Nås Mission Society (Missionsförening) was founded by a public school teacher named Falk, who, like most, saw it as his job to distribute printed spiritual material. The Mission Society was soon to come into conflict with the parish church, which was to come to a head with the arrival shortly afterwards of a priest who was a firm devotee of the Schartauanske movement, the strictest religious movement at the time. Henrik Schartau (1757-1825) had preached the "Order of Grace" and turned against all forms of visionary sentiment in the church; faith, he believed, was a matter of reason and volition. The new priest was therefore opposed to all ideas about a Free Church circling in the parish. He tried to prevent the mission from expanding and attempted to put a stop to their meetings. His efforts, however, only had the opposite effect; the population's interest in the new religion grew and the peasants united to keep the

mission alive in their homes and on their farms. In 1874 a mission house was built in Nås and this was to fuel the conflict even further.

One important aspect of the revivalist movement was the performance of the sacrament during their meetings. This was something the church was opposed to, and was forbidden under Swedish church law. Greatly concerned, the church was able to do nothing but look on, as "drinking, whoreing and mendacity flourish in the parish, and the children of the parish go from immorality to the Sacrament and back again." Immorality was widespread in these years, the parish priests reported during the years from 1860 til 1880.

This religious mobilisation happened to coincide with the apex of the wave of emigration from Scandinavia. Between the middle of the 1800s and the end of the 19th century more than 40% of the population of Nås were to leave. In the middle of the 1880s many young women, including Mathilda Helgsten, emigrated to Chicago. She was to forge the bond between Chicago and Nås which was to have a decisive impact when her husband turned up in Nås in the autumn of 1889 to start his judgmental preaching.

Olof Henrik Larsson preached the Parusi; the Greek word for the conviction that Jesus will return to the world. The Spaffords shared the same belief. In both cases this conviction came from the same source, namely Dwight L. Moody in Chicago, and Frederik Fransson, a Swedish Eschatological missionary who was very well known at the time.

Fransson was born in Nora in the Bergslags region in 1852. At the age of 17 he travelled to America and, in the 1870s, he became one of Moody's disciples. Here he learned the methods of revivalist preaching and he was soon to make a name for himself in a number of places in the world. Fransson, who travelled frequently to many countries, also went to Sweden, where he managed to make many converts through his proclamations about the coming of the Messiah. By means of a series of complicated calculations he had come to the conclusion that Jesus would return to earth at Easter 1897. The crucial element of his sermons was that time was essential, and that the choice between salvation and eternal damnation was at hand. Unless one made the right choice before Easter 1897, judgement would fall and one would be condemned to an eternal stay in Hell with no chance of salvation.

Fransson's conclusions appeared in his book *Himmeluret* ("The Clock of Heaven") where, in typical revivalist tones, he appeals to the reader:

....May you be in no doubt that the end is now in sight...rub the sleep from your eyes, light the lamp, examine the clock, look it up in your own bible and underline the passages to which I refer, and you shall soon understand the Heavenly Clock and realise that the time has come to rise up!

Fransson's method of argumentation consists of almost mathematical calculations, taken in particular from texts in the Revelations of St. John, the Book of Daniel and the first five books of the Old Testament. Predestination was a condition that underpinned his whole theory, that God had planned the entire course of events from the beginning, that He knew all things, including the course of history.

Moody held a large prophetic conference in Chicago in 1881 during which Fransson spoke of

his heavenly clock. Moody showed some interest in the Parusi aspect, but not for the precise chronology. Olof Henrik Larsson had not attended the conference, but with the great amount of attention which Fransson's contribution received, it is quite possible that he had some knowledge of his eschatological calculations.

Fransson travelled throughout Scandinavia holding revivalist sermons. He was expelled from Denmark in 1885 for having damaged the arm of a woman whom he attempted to heal through prayer. In contrast he was enthusiastically received in Uppsala, Falun, Norrköping and a number of other Swedish towns. He set up congregations which joined together in a mission society. The people of Nås no doubt caught wind of Fransson's efforts and were perhaps influenced by thoughts of the Day of Judgement and the end of the world, the return of the Messiah and the millennium. All of them matters of life and death and salvation. Such sentiments were to create divisions in the little community, but they also formed fertile ground for "the higher light".

8. A FATEFUL ALLIANCE

During the late summer of 1895, the court case against Mrs Whiting and the Colony drew to an end in Chicago's Probate Court. The newspapers had covered the case thoroughly and among those who had been following the case were Olof Henrik Larsson and the members of his Swedish Evangelical Church. They found that there were many similarities between their own beliefs and those of the American Colony. A friend of Mathilda Larsson knew somewhat more about the group and told them that they lived under difficult conditions and had financial difficulties. This friend also told them that Anna Spafford, the Colony's leader, was a wonderful woman with a compelling aura about her, and that she held all those who came in touch with her in her sway.

One Sunday in the autumn of 1895 the Swedes paid a visit to the American group. The Larssonites were well received and listened to Anna Spafford's powerful and endearing delivery of the day's reading. After this they were invited to lunch. They returned the gesture by inviting the Americans to the Larsson church the following Sunday. One of the Larssonites confirmed the description of Anna Spafford as given by Mathilda Larsson's friend:

...They had never set eyes on a more delightful and charming woman. She had large blue eyes, and her white hair was set up upon her head in a fashion that was modern now. Her face was perhaps not the most attractive of her features but her charm and pleasant manner endeared her to all.

The Americans' visit to the Larsson church the following Sunday was to prove decisive for both religious groups. Mathilda showed them all around the pleasant spacious rooms. When they reached the room where the church services were held on the first floor Larsson was waiting for them in the pulpit. At this point Anna Spafford lit up with joy. "This is the room," she announced, "that was in the message I received." She went on to explain that prior to her departure from Jerusalem she had received a divine message telling her that she was to meet some brothers and sisters in Chicago. After arriving in Chicago she received a further revelation; "I shall show you a furnished, upstairs room."

Anna Spafford's charisma had a strong impact on the Swedes. She told them of her life, including the story of the wreck of the Ville du Havre when she had received the message that she had been spared so that she might fulfil her calling. She went on to tell them about her work to carry out this calling in Jerusalem which "shall reign in harmony". She ended by announcing that they were in serious financial difficulty and that the Chicago authorities were demanding the group be disbanded unless they could find more hygienic accommodation.

Olof Henrik Larsson was quick to see where this was leading. He was well aware from reports in the press that the financial situation in the Colony in Jerusalem was at least as desperate as that of the Spafford group in Chicago. The Swedish congregation discussed what to do. Their religious and social convictions made it an easy choice and after some deliberation the majority were in favour of offering

the Americans shelter in the Larsson church. The Swedes had plenty of room and no shortage of financial resources.

The American group, having in the meantime grown significantly to around thirty people in all with the arrival of a group of farmers from Kansas, accepted the offer immediately. Anna Spafford's group moved into Larsson's church on Madison Avenue Hyde Park towards the end of November 1895. By this time they were so poorly off that they could only afford the streetcar fare for the women and children while the men had to walk, carrying the group's communal belongings.

Even on her very first evening in the church Anna Spafford opened the notebook in which she used to record all the divine messages she received and declared that; "God has predestined that they should meet and has now seen this come to completion." Soon she was also to be holding Morning Prayers, and within a remarkably short space of time she had pushed Olof Henrik Larsson aside. During morning worship shortly after this, Anna Spafford invoked a parable from the Bible which she was to repeat time and again: "John the Baptist arrived first, but he had to withdraw to make way for the clearer light." This was food for thought for the Swedish congregation - and for Larsson. Perhaps it was time for him to withdraw from his position as leader.

The two groups had much in common, including the idea of communal ownership of all property. At the religious level they were in agreement in their belief about the Messiah's imminent return and the millennium. Larsson's religious understanding was, however, far more restricted, prejudicial as he was; hell and perdition were elements that were central to his thinking. He expressed himself in rather crude terms and certainly did not possess the talents to match Anna Spafford's, nor her talent for tactical planning. He could not match Anna Spafford's adroitness and broad perception; and finally, of course, Larsson lacked her charisma.

Ruthlessly, Anna Spafford utilised every one of her skills to ensure that she gained complete control. She had the manner about her of a woman of the world. In addition she had the boost to her self confidence which she gained from having recently won her case in court. First and foremost, however, she had the divine guidance of the messages she received from on high, and which she continued to convey to her surroundings. Everyone was spellbound by her mystical powers. Larsson had in fact already by this time lost his position as leader.

Putting up the 30 Americans in the Swedish church was a considerable financial burden for the Larssonites and it became clear that this could only be a temporary solution. The problem was solved when Anna Spafford produced her "Message Book" one evening and announced that God had informed her that the two groups were to be merged. The message was received with enthusiasm by most. Olof Henrik Larsson was among the sceptics. He had some difficulty in accepting that this was what God actually intended for him. Uniting the two groups implied that they would all travel to the American Colony in Jerusalem, and that he give up everything that he had built up in Chicago.

Anna Spafford was soon talking openly about how they would use the money gained from the sale of Larsson's church. Most of the Swedes were on her side. Olof Henrik Larsson was to all intents and purposes completely marginalised, although still in charge of the Gospel readings. The comparison between John the Baptist and Larsson had begun to engrain itself in the minds of the Swedes, and

several of them turned on him, accusing him of having been too harsh. To what must have been their great surprise, he accepted their criticism and begged the congregation's forgiveness.

One evening Anna Spafford got to her feet and took over the meeting from Larsson. She said that God had revealed to her that the majority of those in Madison Avenue were prepared to follow the Americans to Jerusalem and to await Jesus' return there together. The only obstacle to this was Olof Henrik Larsson's agreeing to sell the church and property. This would provide the necessary capital for the journey and enough to buy a new house in Jerusalem for the larger united group. Anna Spafford appealed to the congregation, asking them whether they agreed that Olof Henrik Larsson ought to sell so that they all might go to Jerusalem. The reply came in unison with a cry of 'Hallelujah'; nobody dared to oppose God's will. Olof Henrik Larsson made some attempt at protest, but was outnumbered. He had no choice. He knew that there was little hope of there being a change in attitude, considering the tension that might arise if these problems were drawn out. He could neither afford nor did he have the time to be patient. Reluctantly, he gave his consent.

Larsson accepted an offer of 20,000 dollars for the property. The buyers were a Methodist group and it was agreed that a portion of the purchase price would be paid in cash while the rest would be deposited with the appropriate lawyer when the deal went through.

The date of departure was set as March 5th 1896. In February of that year, however, Larsson made one desperate last attempt to retain his position as leader. Secretly he wrote to his followers in Nås, the congregation with which he had kept in regular touch ever since he left Sweden, almost five years previously. The letter was addressed to Tipers Lars Larsson and Gästgifvar Mats Matsson. They had already heard about events in Chicago, about the Spaffords moving in, and he now suggested to them that they come along to Jerusalem. He may have held out the prospect of the returning Messiah, or of the millennium, to entice the people of Nås, either way they were offered the chance to join his and Anna Spafford's Swedish-American group when their ship called in at a harbour in England en route to Jerusalem. This would be some time in March 1896.

Larsson's proposal was completely impracticable. What he was asking in his letter was that the people of Nås sell up all their property, pack their belongings and set off - within the space of three weeks. It can only be taken as an indication of his somewhat distraught state of mind. Larsson appears to have been under the impression that the Swedish groups from Chicago and Nås could, together, help him to regain some authority in the Colony; together they would form a majority, and thereby force Anna Spafford to restore some of his authority as leader. So while they were unable to travel at such short notice, the people of Nås were nevertheless greatly excited by the arrival of Larsson's letter; several of them began to make practical arrangements and to prepare themselves mentally for The Holy Land.

In Chicago, meanwhile, preparations were underway for the journey. The money from Larsson's church had come in and the proceeds of the sale went firstly towards the cost of the journey - both for the Larssonites and the Spafford group. Altogether there were about 70 people, of which 40 were from the Spafford group - which during their stay in Chicago had managed to attract people to them from several states; around one third of these were children. They chartered a small vessel to carry them from New York to Liverpool. Here they set about seeking a passage to Jaffa, though it took them a

week to find a ship that sailed directly there. Most ships called first at Alexandria, which was unappealing since there was an outbreak of the plague in the Egyptian harbour at the time. They therefore had little flexibility in their choice of vessel and ended a week later on a poorly equipped ship that was moreover hit by foul weather.

One of the emigrants was fated not to enjoy a new life in Jerusalem. Mathilda's brother Carl-Johan Helgsten, who had changed his name in America to Charley Stone, fell seriously ill on board and lost consciousness. On hearing the news, Anna Spafford announced that she had received a message that he would not recover. Charley Stone was to die the day after the group landed in Jerusalem.

A small group of Americans awaited their arrival on the platform at Jerusalem station to greet Anna Spafford and her newly grown family. She had written ahead to tell them how happy she was with the way things had gone, and how her messages had come to fulfilment.

The group had now expanded to three times its original size. The house which the Americans had previously occupied, just outside the Damascus Gate was not big enough to house so many people. It was a lovely well situated house with a good view, but it was now cramped, even when they rented the house next door for additional space. People had to sleep on mattresses on the floor and on tables in every room of the house. The situation was untenable.

They set about trying to find something large enough for them all. A short distance beyond the city walls, on the road to Nablus, there was a large ageing house that belonged to a respectable Palestinian family. The house had been built in 1860 by the late Rabbah Daoud Amin Effendi al-Husseini, who had lived there with his three wives along with various relatives and domestic servants. When a fourth wife joined the household a new wing was built onto the house. The house was a perfect size for the Colony, with 25 rooms, of which 14 were bedrooms. The Husseini family were happy to rent the house to the Americans who, to the Arabs, seemed sympathetic and decent people. The group moved promptly into the house which, being in a state of some decay, required a good deal of repair to make it habitable. The house had one great advantage in that it was divided into separate wings which meant that the new occupants could easily be separated according to their gender; celibacy was still the order of the day.

Since everyone could speak English this was adopted as the language of the Colony. Anna Spafford led the meetings and for a time Olof Henrik Larsson acted as her assistant. This came to an end when brother Jacob Eliahu stepped in to take over that role. Anna Spafford asked everyone to call her "Mother", thereby making it clear that she was the one and only leader of the Colony. As a visible sign of her position she moved into the large room which had been the master bedroom of the previous owner and made it her own.

One day a letter arrived from Nås. All post had to go by Anna Spafford and that night at dinner she handed the letter to Larsson, asking him to read it aloud. It was from the group in Nås and contained their wholehearted acceptance of Larsson's offer for them to come and join them in The Holy Land as soon as possible. They wrote that they were in the process of selling their property and would soon arrive in Jerusalem.

The immediate reaction of the Swedish-American group was a spontaneous outburst of rejoicing at this sign of God's will being carried out.

9. FROM NÅS TO JERUSALEM

The spontaneous joy which the letter from the Nås peasants provoked among members of the Colony was not shared by Anna Spafford, who had very different feelings about the whole business. She had not been aware that Larsson had written to the farmers of Nås in February inviting them to sell their land and join the emigrant group in Liverpool on their way to Jerusalem, and it is very unlikely that she was not nettled by this news. Furthermore, it would have been very difficult for the Colony to cope with the arrival of an unknown number, possibly a quite large contingent, of Swedish farmers. The Colony had just moved into a new house which was perfectly suitable for the current number of members. How would they manage with perhaps double that number? Finally, the balance of power in the Colony would no doubt be affected by the fact that the increase in their number would give the Swedes a clear majority,

We have no clear indication of Anna Spafford's thoughts regarding the letter from Nås, but it seems likely that she was concerned about the matter, for in the month of May 1896 the people of Nås received a reply from the Colony which dashed all their hopes. The letter was written by Larsson, but his hand was clearly guided - Anna Spafford had dictated the contents. It clearly stated that it would be better for the Nås contingent to remain where they were.

Anna Spafford was, however, aware from the Nås letter that several of them had already begun taking firm steps in anticipation of their departure, and she was therefore far from certain that Larsson's letter would have the desired effect. So she asked him to travel immediately to Nås. At the same time she knew that she could not trust him. Larsson was clearly prepared to go to any lengths to win back his leadership of the group and Anna Spafford realised that he might, with assistance from the people of Nås, manage to oust her. She decided to outline very clearly the purpose of his mission to Nås: that he was to limit the number of emigrants to an absolute minimum and he was also to ensure that none of the emigrants who did undertake the journey were lacking in financial means. The trump card she produced to protect herself against a possible breach of loyalty was to ask Jacob Eliahu to accompany Larsson to Sweden. She gave Eliahu the authority to act on behalf of the Colony.

At the end of May the two men reached their destination. Brother Jacob soon won the farmers' trust. He learned a little Swedish and made himself useful helping out. He tried gently to dissuade the peasants from making the journey to Jerusalem. He paid compliment to the Swedish community and the nice weather, praising it in contrast to the unhealthy climate in Jerusalem. Larsson did much the same - albeit less adroitly. Both of their efforts were, however, to fail. As Anna Spafford's daughter was later to write, the fact was that, "these dear people were so enthusiastic and keen on coming to Palestine that no measure of advice or warning could deflect their resolute determination."

That Larsson had made some effort to try and persuade the people of Nås not to make the trip stood in stark contrast to his earlier stance when he had told the congregation of the imminent return of the Messiah and of the need to choose between Heaven and Hell. He became untrustworthy in their

eyes, a weather vane that could not be relied upon. In the few weeks that he spent in Nås along with Brother Jacob, all of the trust which he had built up previously was to evaporate. Why was he worried about the climate when Jesus was about to descend to the Mount of Olives? Olof Henrik Larsson was, it seemed to them, not being entirely truthful. What were Larsson's real motives? Was he perhaps hoping that they would indeed remain in Nås so that he might keep them as his Swedish congregation, perhaps even settling in Nås himself?

Jacob Eliahu and Olof Henrik Larsson did in fact succeed in their attempts to limit the number of emigrants. When it finally came to the moment of departure the group consisted of only four families, a married couple and five single people. The following 37 people set off: The Möckelind family including the father Erik Ersson (45 years old), his wife Karin (36), their seven children and the grandmother Brita Ersdotter (54); the Tipers family, with the father Lars Larsson (53) and Karin (56) and their two daughters Karin and Kerstin who were 21 and 23 respectively; the Gästgifver Mats Matsson family which included the father Mats (54), the wife Brita (44) and their seven children, along with Brita's sister Lisslasses Karin Larsdotter (42) who had arrived from Chicago to preach seven years earlier; Hol Lars Larsson's widow Israels Brita Ersdotter (44) and her five children, including Lars who was later to become Lewis Larsson, the Swedish consul in Jerusalem, his sisters Bessie and Annie and the twins Katrina and Kristina, born out of wedlock after the death of the father (Tipers Lars was the most likely candidate); the childless couple Josefs Lars Larsson (43) and Brita (43); and finally the five individuals: Hanses Anna Persdotter (40), Hemmings Katrina Persdotter (37), Johanna Johansdotter (35), Hollisbetes Jon Jonsson (26) and Jugas Jon Olsson (20).

Josefs Lars Larsson was the first to sell his farm. The buyer was his brother-in-law and the price was 3,700 Swedish crowns. The combined total gained from the sale of the farms and personal property came to 40,823 Swedish crowns. The four large families, the Möckelinds, Gästgifvar Matssons, Tipers and Hols Brita were the primary contributors to the total sum. Despite some misgivings, the large amount of money was entrusted to Jacob Eliahu.

During the course of July preparations were made for their departure. Jacob Eliahu made it a condition that everybody who was to join the Colony must have an inner calling, and that they must clearly settle all their financial arrangements with those relatives who were to stay behind. Only those who were able to pay their own passage were allowed to go along. The community spirit was waived when it came down to practicalities. 38 people were issued with travel permits by the rural dean, but one of them returned it, deciding at the last minute that he would rather stay on to take care of his ailing mother. The group thereafter consisted of 37 people: 14 adults of between 35 and 56 years of age, 15 children under the age of 15 and 8 young people between 17 and 26.

The farmers packed up their large, blue painted chests packed with summer and winter clothes; fur-lined coats, hoods with ear flaps to protect them against the cold in the forest and on the frozen river. They had no idea that winter in Jerusalem was at times warmer than summer in Dalarna.

The women packed their spinning-wheels and looms, along with their old bobbins and spools. The men packed various tools as well as seed, cornseed, seed potatoes, ploughs and wagon wheels.

On the eve of their departure all of the pilgrims gathered at Tipers Lars Larsson's farm, and on

the following morning, July 23rd 1896, a caravan of twelve horse- drawn wagons set off from there. Relatives took the group the thirty kilometres or so to the village of Vansbro from where there was a railway link to Gothenburg. It was a warm summer's day and everyone from the village was in the fields gathering in the hay. When the procession passed by, they set down their tools and came down to the road to bid them farewell. The atmosphere was rather formal. Many regarded the emigrants with suspicion, while others respected them for having the strength to follow their convictions. All, however, felt some sadness as they watched friends and relatives setting off for the unknown, wondering if they would ever see them again. One of those who stood there waving goodbye was Sara, the fifteen year old best friend of Matsson's daughter Maria. Although Sara had wanted to go along, as did her mother and five brothers and sisters, her father had been against the idea; the priest also involved himself in the issue by refusing to issue a travel document for Sara's older sister who was past the age of consent.

So the wayfarers were on their way to Jerusalem, waving goodbye and putting aside whatever doubts they might have harboured by singing a hearty rendition of "Vi Vandrar till Zion" (We Are Going to Zion)

Come you who rejoice in God and make your joy known

Strike up the merry sound of song,

Let the Heavens ring

We are going to Zion, blessed heavenly Zion

We are going to Zion, God's wondrous heavenly city

Larsson had once warned that those who chose not to follow him would suffer a hail of fire and brimstone. As it turned out, hardly had the caravan pulled out of the parish than a terrible storm broke over them. One of those who had stayed behind recalled the moment:

Then the train disappeared...just at that moment a huge black cloud rose up in the sky. It developed into a storm, the likes of which had never been seen before in living memory. Hailstones the size of pigeon eggs pelted down onto the rye, bloodied the faces of the men and sent new shoots of grain onto the roads so that it looked like the aisle of a church strewn with rice. It turned pitch dark. Those who had heard Olof Henrik Larsson predicting the destruction of Nås as soon as God's children had left the parish began to wonder whether he might, after all, have been something of a prophet.

The marks made by the enormous lumps of hail were still visible on some farms for years afterwards. The travellers on the other hand only encountered a refreshing summer shower on their way to the railway station at Vansbro. There, they said goodbye to their relatives and set off on the eighteen hour train ride to Gothenburg.

Jacob Eliahu had travelled on ahead of them. He had purchased the tickets for their journey onwards and had hired 6 cabs to ferry the group from the station to the harbour. Things were well

organised. Any suspicions that Jacob might have used any of the Swedes' money irregularly were now put to shame. The accounts all tallied up to the last penny. Whatever was left over was to go towards the common funds of the Colony.

Most of the Nås people had never seen the sea before when they climbed aboard the steamer, James A. Dickson, which was to take them to Antwerp. In a letter home, Hols Brita Ersdotter wrote that the ship was fine, freshly scrubbed with new beds, new mattresses, pillows and sheets. The food was very tasty, everything being set out for them so they could eat when they wished. To the peasant women, being waited on hand and foot was quite unusual. The first couple of days at sea were, however, a little rough, seasickness reared its head and they were all exhausted. They arrived, though, unscathed in Antwerp and there they transferred to another steamer, the Andros, of the Deutsche Levante Linie.

The journey almost ended here when the captain of the Andros asked to see their passports. The thought of obtaining a passport had apparently never occurred to any of them. Instead they presented the travel permits that had been made out by the dean of Nås. The captain had never seen anything of the kind before. However, convinced by their simple, honest faces of their integrity, he allowed them to continue to Jaffa with the papers signed by the Swedish priest. He also wrote out a certificate which they were to present to the Turkish high consul in Jaffa. This cost them five crowns and allowed the 37 Swedes to continue their journey to Jerusalem.

Of the voyage on the Andros, Brita Ersdotter wrote:

Here, too, we have plenty of room, new beds and mattresses, but we have to take care of ourselves. The food is decent, everyone is kind to us. The crew are German, with the exception of one, who comes from Finland, and one from Kalmar, 22 of them in all. We are the only passengers on board which means that we may move freely about the upper deck above the Captain's cabin. I am seated upon a silken sofa with a table in front of me. I never imagined that such things as I am seeing now ever existed. And you had better believe that where the Captain lives is a very fine room indeed; fine big lamps, silken sofas and chairs covered with brown velvet. I have seen almost all the rooms. It is quite a large boat, around 150 alen (300 feet), the one we were on before was only 100 alen. I cannot say other than that up until this moment this has been a pleasure cruise. .

During the voyage Brother Jacob made some effort to try and prepare both adults and children for the life ahead of them. He had continued to learn Swedish, so he was able to communicate with them. On board the Andros they received their first lessons in English. He taught the children English rhymes, such as, "White Sand and Grey Sand - who will buy my white sand?", and "London Bridge is Falling Down". Each morning he conducted a service on deck, along with Larsson, when they would sing their old Swedish hymns, such as "Nu äro vi på resa hem".

The only stop on the voyage was Malta. Tipers Lars' daughter Karin notes the event in her diary:

The 9th. We arrived in Malta last night and have spent the night in the harbour. The city of Valetta has a very beautiful harbour, with large fortifications and buildings around the harbour. A large battleship belonging to Spain was in the harbour. Along with a cluster of small boats. In the evening,

when we arrived it was dark, everywhere lights were lit, in the houses and the streets, and it looked lovely. We even sailed past the place where Paul was shipwrecked while being taken to Italy as a prisoner, but was washed ashore by the storm on the island of Melite (Malta).

Finally, one sweltering hot day in August, the people of Dalarna arrived in Jaffa. The ship dropped anchor only a few nautical miles offshore. Only small ships could enter the harbour at that time, as it was very shallow and full of rocks and stones. Hardly had they anchored before a swarm of light rowing boats and barges surrounded the ship and a strange 'swarthy' crowd swung themselves up over the railings on ropes and chains. Yelling and shouting, gesticulating urgently - they resembled a band of pirates more than anything else. The people from Nås were alarmed and somewhat taken aback by the sight of these hefty men in baggy trousers and red fez's, barefoot and wearing wide red belts with daggers stuck in them. But strong arms lifted them into the air and set them down unceremoniously in the small boats that brought them ashore.

The group continued their journey from Jaffa to Jerusalem by train. At the last stop before Jerusalem two of the brothers from the American Colony came aboard the train to greet, twenty others were waiting to greet them on the platform at Jerusalem station,

The group from Nås was exhausted by the time they reached the Colony, several of them were suffering from stomach pains thanks to some fruit which Brother Jacob had bought for them in Jaffa. But they were all thrilled at the sight of the Colony's newly acquired house, the restoration of which was just about completed.

This was the first time for them to meet Anna Spafford. She was 54 years old at this point, of average height, heavily built, with tinges of grey in her hair and eyes of the same shade of light blue that the Arabs use in the charms which they make to ward off the evil eye. Not strikingly beautiful, but possessed of great dignity, she bid the Swedes welcome and asked them to address her as "mother".

Brita Ersdotter wrote home:

We stepped off the train and settled ourselves in the wagons to be driven to the house where our sisters and brothers live. When we got there we had to wash and change quickly so as to sit down to eat, everything was well ordered and prepared for us.

We are all very happy and grateful to God for having led us to these devout people who have been through so much but who have endured by the power of God and come triumphantly through it all.

10. SELMA LAGERLÖF'S NOVEL

Selma Lagerlöf spent the summer of 1897 at Visby in Gotland. She was struggling with a novel called *Antikrists Mirakler* (The Miracles of the Antichrist) about Sicily where it was set. The work progressed very slowly only to finally draw to a halt. It occurred to her that perhaps she was not suited to write about the people of the South: "They remained alien to me, not the blood of my blood, not the flesh of my flesh. It was beyond my powers to bring them to life," she was later to write in an article.

One day her friend Sophie Elkan showed her a small paragraph in the *Gotlands Allehanda* which read; "The farmers of Nås in Dalarna who moved to Palestine for reasons of their faith have now begun to find their feet in their new home. They have leased a piece of land and have written home for a couple of Swedish ploughs with which to work it." Sophie Elkan felt that the subject might interest Selma Lagerlöf.

Her instinct proved correct for Selma Lagerlöf was immediately gripped by the story. She sensed right away that it had the makings of a novel. Her newly found passion rubbed off on her current work and the Italian novel took off again, the characters came to life and once more she felt the joy of writing. The story about the people of Nås took a firm hold on her imagination. She decided to undertake what was to become the longest journey of her lifetime, to Egypt, Palestine, and Turkey.

It was to be three years before this decision was eventually realised. Finally, in the autumn of 1899 while staying in Falun, Selma Lagerlöf began to prepare for her trip to the Middle East. Falun is around 80 kilometres from Nås, and the local papers regularly featured articles and reports on the life and fate of the Nås group in Jerusalem. The national papers also covered the emigrants from time to time, and from both these sources Selma Lagerlöf was able to learn about Nås and its people. Oddly enough, considering how close she lived to Nås, she had never visited the little community herself at that time. She declared this to be due to the fact that the journey from Falun to Nås would take an entire day by train followed by a good distance by road at a time of year when the country lanes were muddy. It was easier to go to Jerusalem! Whatever the reason, in order to research her story, Selma Lagerlöf travelled to Jerusalem first and then to Nås.

Along with Sophie Elkan she first visited Cairo, and went on from there to Jaffa. Upon arriving there safely she wrote to her mother, Louise Lagerlöf:

Happily, there was another boat the following day, and although somewhat cramped, we were able to travel on. All went well and when we arrived in Jaffa in the morning the sea looked calm. I am not certain whether you have heard, Mother, but the harbour in Jaffa is considered one of the most dangerous on our whole journey. It is quite unprotected and full of breakers. We have heard such terrible tales of people being simply thrown down from the steamers into the small boats. There is no chance of landing at a jetty, the steamers anchor far out to sea. Well, that little boat bobbed up and down like a cork when we climbed down into it, but eventually we came ashore.

In Jerusalem they went straight on to the American Colony. With the assistance of her brother-in-law, a state forestry warden in the Stora Kopparbergs Bergslag region, which included Nås, Selma Lagerlöf had obtained a letter of recommendation. In addition she had brought some weaving patterns from home as a present for the women.

Selma Lagerlöf wrote about The American Colony in a letter to her mother:

They live in a large stone house, quite far outside the city walls, and we rang at a small door. The boy who opened the door looked so Swedish that I immediately spoke in Swedish to him, and quite rightly he turned out to be a Nås boy. He led the way in. They had just held their services and were all gathered for the evening in a large room. As soon as they realised that we were speaking Swedish all the Scandinavians there came forward to meet us, old and young alike came up to greet us and bid us welcome. I cannot deny that I was quite touched to see so many Swedish faces, here, in a strange land, and to observe how happy they were to speak to us. We remained there for two hours, drinking tea with them. All the while they sat around us in a large circle and there was an unparalleled feeling of warmth. They asked us to come again soon, to have a proper look around so that we might tell the folk back home how well they lived and that they were good people, despite the bad rumours about them, they said.

Her next letter to her mother described yet another visit to the Colony:

I spent all of Tuesday this week at the Colony and have seen their schools and so forth. They are a quite remarkable group of people, I must say, but it is pleasing to see how clean, well kept and orderly everything is kept. They say that they are so happy, and the men seem healthy and vital, the women, though, somewhat less so. All of them have learnt English. Larsson has little to say for himself here, it is a Mrs Spafford, an American, who runs everything now.

Selma Lagerlöf spent two weeks in March 1900 in Jerusalem and during this time she visited the American Colony a couple of times. She received, on the other hand, Swedish visitors from the Colony at her hotel almost every day. This was the entire sum of the background material she gathered in Palestine to write her great novel Jerusalem.

On their journey back to Sweden, she and Sophie Elkan stopped off in Constantinople. Here they repaid the hospitality of the Colony by paying a visit to the Swedish consul general to put forward the Colony's case. They asked him to help stop other Christian groups in Jerusalem from bothering the Colony.

In a letter to a friend, Sophie Elkan wrote that the source of the harassment was due to other Christians who believed that the people of the Colony lived in an indecent fashion, that they had abolished the institution of marriage and lived as socialists. "Our compatriots seemed very trustworthy (reliable) and were touching to see and talk with, and they claimed that they were happy. We shall now try to form our own opinion of them and the movement which has gripped them," she wrote. Sophie

Elkan could not understand the contempt levelled at the Colony, on the contrary, she was quite attracted to fellow country men in foreign parts:

They were very touching towards us at the end. On the evening before our departure some of them came to our hotel (we had in fact taken our leave of them, having spent the entire afternoon at the Colony) and brought with them gifts for us to take back to their relatives in Dalarna; you can be sure that my trunk is heavy. We were also presented with flowers and the like, and when the following morning we rode through the gates of Jerusalem there were men, women and children, all of them Swedish, waiting to say "adieu" and "God bless" and "bon voyage" and "thank you"... We had tears in our eyes, just as we had on those mornings when we heard them in their hour of devotions singing hymns in Swedish after they had finished praying in English. All in all, Jerusalem left a terribly strong and wonderful impression on us.

Despite Selma Lagerlöf not having visited Nås, she was nevertheless able to gather the information she needed about the place. Her brother-in-law had given her a general idea about the parish. From time to time articles would appear in the papers about the emigrants, and her sister had employed a maid from Nås. Selma Lagerlöf also had access to many of the letters sent home by the farmers, although this was much later.

In September 1900 she visited Nås herself. Once again she was accompanied by Sophie Elkan, who describes the visit below:

On Sunday morning we visited the most distinguished farmer to whom these gifts were addressed. We delivered greetings and showed him a photograph of the women of the Colony. This we left with him and arranged for us to return at around five o'clock. At that time he would have gathered as many of the Colony's relatives as he could. It struck us that we had things addressed to at least half the parish; flower cards, photographs, objects made from olive tree wood, etc. Around twelve people turned up, the rest were too far away to be summoned at such short notice. And we sat there for almost three hours telling them about everything that we had seen and heard, and our thoughts and conclusions. I wish a painter could have captured those simple people while we were speaking - there was such a remarkable expression on their faces.

Listening to those farmers' questions was one of the most interesting things I have ever experienced: To watch them listen and ponder, falling silent to try and reconcile our account with what their relatives had written to them. They had been expecting us, we were the first people who had seen the Colony in Jerusalem to arrive with greetings to Nås, and their gratitude was very moving.

The two women learned a lot during their visit. However, Sophie Elkan could not talk about this since, as she put it, "most of it will emerge in some guise in Selma's book". And it certainly did. The novel, *Jerusalem*, was published the following year.

By all accounts Selma Lagerlöf proceeded quite systematically, taking notes both in Jerusalem and in Nås. In Jerusalem she noted the following:

Mrs Sköldberg redhead. Karolina Larsson. Jon Jonsson bread baker. Tipers Lars. His daughter

was the one with the hat who was friendly. Josef Larsson small with a goatee beard. Henning's Katrina garning socks. Israel's Brita weaving. Josef Larsson's wife. Carded. Tilda Holmström's sewing machine.

In Nås, she noted:

-Ti Pers Halvorson is a State Groundsman, now living in Laxsjön. Ti Per Larsson is his cousin. Is doing fine.

-The railroad is coming to Nås along the river.

-Collén the overlord died of appendicitis at Falun hospital. Things are going downhill for Granberg the dean, the parish will soon have to take charge of his glebe.

-Sundblad the bailiff has been ordered by the High Court to pay Carlin's widow 500 crowns to the state.

-Bergslaget now owns 80% of Nås.

-Good times, a farm hand costs 3 crowns a day, potatoes are up to 9 crowns, a load of coal costs 11 crowns in Vansbro.

-The priest is incapable to holding onto his staff. During the summer people of the parish have to help with the harvest.

-The floating bridge across the river was swept away during the spring. The forester was up there in the spring and there was so much water in flood that the carriage was swamped.

Several of these elements are to be found in Jerusalem; the fear of the river bursting its banks, for example; the town's useless priest; and the worry that the most powerful company in the region, Bergslaget, would take charge of everything in the town; a theme which was to become very significant when the largest estate in the area, Ingmarsgården, the real-life equivalent of Tipersgården was sold.

One might think that this was rather a short time spent doing research for a novel as extensive as Jerusalem. But it would not be true, strictly speaking, to say that Selma Lagerlöf wrote a novel about the migrants from Nås. What she actually did was to write a novel, inspired by the actual story, that presented the central conflict, and generally outlined the main themes of the story, but which dealt mostly with another group - entirely invented - of people and families. On the surface, the setting would appear to be based on her own birthplace, the Värmland landscape south-west of Dalarna where - in contrast to Nås - there are some very large estates. It is typical Selma Lagerlöf to very carefully avoid defining the geographical setting of events within Sweden.

The central theme of the novel, the story of the Ingmar family, and of the romance between Ingmar and Gertrud, is pure fiction. The story of the Ingmar boys appeared originally in an earlier short story by Selma Lagerlöf, "Gudsfreden" (God's Peace) from 1898, and the family reappeared in the story "Ingmarssönerna" (The Ingmar Sons) in 1900. Like Jerusalem, this story contains the theme of Ingmar collecting his betrothed from prison when she is released after having served her sentence for

murdering their new-born child. It is also worth noting that this too was a story which Selma Lagerlöf came across in a newspaper article.

The hero and central figure in Selma Lagerlöf's *Jerusalem* is Ingmar, who represents the family, tradition, the old religion and the family estate. In contrast to him there are the two most important of the minor characters - both based on real people. In the first half of the novel there is the subversive Hellgum, who with some assurance can be said to be based on the revivalist preacher Olof Henrik Larsson. In the second half it is Mrs Gordon, a rendition of the head of the American Colony, Anna Spafford. There are also a number of less important figures in the novel who with some certainty can be linked to people in the Nås community of the time. Hellgum's wife Anna Lisa, for example (Mathilda Helgsten in reality); the founder of the mission, the school teacher Storm (the founder of the Nås Mission Society, Olof Falk); the ineffective parish priest, Karin Ingmarsdotter (Stark Karin Halvorsdotter, married to Tipers Lars in real life) and several others. All of these characters do, however, in Selma Lagerlöf's fiction, end up in the novel following quite a different path from that which life presented to their equivalents in the real world.

The first point of divergence between the novel and the real story is to be found in the depiction of the Hellgum/Olof Henrik Larsson character. The description of Mrs Gordon's life also differs on a number of key points from reality. The disastrous loss at sea of the SS *Ville du Havre* in 1873 turns up in the novel in the chapter entitled "The Loss of L'Univers". Events are brought forward to the year 1880. It is also well worth noting that Selma Lagerlöf's Mrs Gordon does not have four little girls but two boys, both of whom were drowned. The writer would have undoubtedly known that Anna Spafford had lost four daughters, but the truth might have simply been too much in this case.

The novel follows the fortunes of Ingmar Ingmarsson, a young man who experiences difficulty in living up to the high expectations of his family's rather grand traditions. For generations the family had played a leading role in the community, on the school board, in a commission for the poor, and on the parish council. Ingmar's actions up until this point had not advanced his prospects very much. Brita turns down his proposal of marriage but is later forced by her parents to consent. Ingmar delayed the wedding because of a bad harvest and financial difficulties. Brita became pregnant and fled from the farm just as she was due to give birth, only to be found soon after with the new-born child lying dead by her side; she having strangled it to avenge herself on the fickle Ingmar. She was sentenced to three years in prison. Ingmar was in doubt as to what he should do about his relationship with Brita but finally, after some spiritual counselling from his late father, he decided to take her back when she was released. This time the two of them found love, and Ingmar's strength and authority in the parish grew.

A long period of time passed by; Ingmar died, and his oldest daughter Karin reached an age suitable for marriage. It was planned that she should marry Halvor Halvorsson, but the family was worried since Halvor's father was an alcoholic, and there was a risk that the son might have inherited this trait. Instead she married Elias Olof Ersson and together they moved onto the Ingmar estate. Elias, however, turned out to be a heavy drinker who lived rather a wild life. Some time went by and Elias fell down the stairs, breaking his back. From then on he was confined to bed, from where he would call out for a drink and bitterly curse his surroundings. Halvor Halvorsson came to Karin's aid in her time of trouble, and by the time Elias died, some months later, she had formed a strong attachment to Halvor and so married him.

Peace descended upon the Ingmar estate. In the parish, however, trouble was brewing, brought about by the schoolteacher, Storm, who had built a mission house in defiance of the priest's wishes. But the parish priest had lost control and could not therefore even call on the congregation to support him; he was forced to accept the new order, being unable to summon either the words necessary, nor the support of his congregation and was thus forced to reconcile himself. Storm preached every Sunday and drew a lot of support, until one day the congregation expressed a wish to hear other preachers. Storm realised that in building his mission house to provide an alternative to the parish priest, and to keep outside preachers from encroaching, he had unwittingly managed to let the revivalist movement in. He stepped down from the pulpit and left.

One Saturday night a terrible storm hit the area. Old Ingmar's youngest son, also named Ingmar, was at a party, dancing gaily with Gertrud, his fiancée. The storm forced them to take shelter immediately. They interpreted the storm as God's way of expressing his disapproval of them dancing and they decided, therefore, that it would never happen again. That same night Karin was in bed alone at the Ingmar farm. The storm smashed a window and Karin was instantly paralysed with fear, literally speaking, for the following morning the people on the farm found her there, lying beside the bed, unable to get to her feet. Karin too, saw this as God's punishment.

That very afternoon she was taken down to the mission house which was packed full of people. They were all terrified out of their wits over the storm the previous night, and the priest decided to take advantage of this and speak about hell and the Prince of Darkness. Suddenly a voice was heard shouting loudly outside the mission house: "Woe, woe, woe upon those who would pass stone off as bread!"

This was the first encounter between the people of the parish and Hellgum, the latter having just arrived in Sweden from Chicago where his congregation was based. Now he set about convincing the people of Nås, one after the other, to join him. His efforts soon begin to bear fruit: One day he calls on the paralysed Karin and tells her to think of him "At the very moment when she receives help from God". A little later, when Karin was alone in the drawing room with her little daughter, the child ran across to the fireplace and climbed up. As she did so a burning log fell and set her dress alight. Karin rushed over to her daughter and saved her. Karin's paralysis vanished in that instant.

This miraculous recovery gave Hellgum and his revivalist movement a good deal of credibility and as a result he gained some sway in the community. He demanded that those who joined his flock not mingle with the sinners who refused to do so. He caused divisions in every single household in the area that winter. This was also the case on the Ingmar farm. Ingmar was away all winter, working on a large project, the building of a sawmill. Karin and Halvor however, joined Hellgum's group, as did Gertrud, Ingmar's beloved. When Ingmar returned it soon became clear that if he did not join Hellgum he would lose Gertrud, the sawmill, and the farm too. His conflict with those closest to him made him wish Hellgum were dead - a wish that very nearly came true when a group of men attacked Hellgum one day and almost killed him. Ingmar intervened at the last moment, saving Hellgum's life. For his good deed he won back the hearts of both Gertrud and his sister Karin.

Hellgum returned to Chicago and one day a letter arrived from him. In this he told the

congregation all about a certain Edward Gordon and his wife, both of whom are very pious and godfearing. Once, Mrs Gordon had crossed the Atlantic and been shipwrecked, only to be saved by God. The couple had set themselves to following God and had travelled to Jerusalem where they had built up a Colony of like-minded people who carried out a tremendous amount of charity work. After fourteen years in Jerusalem the Gordons were forced to go to Chicago for a court case, and there they had met Hellgum's congregation. They had decided to travel together to Jerusalem. Hellgum then asked if the affiliated Swedish congregation were willing to join the Americans in Jerusalem.

After Hellgum's letter had been read out, the congregation remained quietly seated. Slowly, however, the calling came to them. Many decided to go to the Holy Land, fully realising that this would mean giving up either the family estate, or the farm which they had bought or built themselves when they were younger.

The Ingmar farm also had to be let go. Karin and Halvor were prepared to sell, while Ingmar - who was not a follower of Hellgum's, and was therefore not interested in going to Jerusalem - was quite upset at seeing the family farm put up for auction. He did not have the means to buy the farm himself, and the region's largest well established company, the joint stock company, was eager to acquire the farm and its land and was prepared to make a bid. The price - 40,000 crowns - being fixed, the unexpected suddenly occurred when the foreman of the parish council, Persson, put down the money. He was planning to marry off his daughter Barbro that summer and the farm was to be handed over to her and whoever was to become her husband. He had his sights firmly set on Ingmar.

For a brief moment Ingmar was encouraged, for he loved the farm dearly. He realised, however, that in order to gain the farm he would have to give up his beloved Gertrud and instead marry Persson's daughter Barbro. Reluctantly, and with great sadness, he accepted Persson's offer.

On his wedding day a quite ironic fate befell him: Gertrud came to him and declared that her heart now belonged to God and that she intended to travel to Jerusalem along with Hellgum's group. At the same time she handed Ingmar a large sum of money which she had found in an old woman's house, she knew that Ingmar was going through with the wedding so as to win back his inheritance. The money would have made it possible for Ingmar to buy the farm, but Gertrud had waited until it was too late for him to act.

The first half of the novel ends with the emigrants' gripping journey outward to Jerusalem. Selma Lagerlöf describes a long floating bridge which the travellers and their horse drawn wagons have to cross; it is the bridge which once led over the Västerdals river in Nås. She also recounts the violent storm which broke out as soon as the wagons drew out of the town, and of their arrival at the newly built railway station where the small children try to run away; they don't want to go to Jerusalem, they want to go home.

The second half of the novel takes place in Palestine, except for the last two chapters. Hellgum's role is played out by this point and it is Mrs Gordon who is in charge of the Colony. The Colony had a bad reputation in town. The American Consul and others had been spreading malicious rumours about the "wild life in the Colony". Members were unable to appear in public without being met with contempt. The nasty rumours even reached the Swedish papers and the burden of shame sent at least

one mother to her grave. More deaths occurred - also for other reasons. Tims Halvor died of sorrow when her daughter's coffin was smashed and desecrated (the true story of Consul Merrill's assault on the Colony's graveyard had been related to Selma Lagerlöf).

None of the men in the group of emigrants asserted themselves. But Ingmar arrived unannounced in the Colony in Jerusalem. He partly manages to uncover the conspiracy, and partly to get a great deal of work accomplished. He is the real hero, managing to disrupt the daily life of the Colony, and in doing so criticise their way of life.

Love, however, remained the prime motive in the novel: the real reason why Ingmar went to Jerusalem was because he wished to get divorced from Barbro and take Gertrud home with him. He had never been able to forgive himself for being the cause of her leaving Nås and thereby causing her parents so much unhappiness. He discovered that someone else, Bo Ingmar Månsson, had fallen in love with Gertrud - and at the same time he realised that he had, despite his reluctance, fallen in love with Barbro, the woman he had married against his will. He could not live without her.

One further complication arose in the form of a curse which had settled on Barbro's family. All the women in the family had given birth to severely handicapped children. Barbro knew about this and never wanted to get married, and certainly not to Ingmar. But when Ingmar returned home from Jerusalem he and Barbro were reunited in love - just as his father had been with Brita following her release from prison. When Barbro later had a child it turned out to be quite normal. The curse had been broken. In Jerusalem Gertrud realised her love for Bo and they too travel back to Sweden. Before his departure from the Colony Ingmar speaks the words of conciliation: "I believe that any man would be happy to meet you all, wherever it might be, in heaven or on earth. I do not believe that there is anything more beautiful than to see people practising justice with great devotion."

Selma Lagerlöf's choice of the Ingmar family is a brilliant starting point for a discussion that dealt with the big themes of the day; loyalty to the family versus loyalty to God. There is also an evaluation of the various forms of religion; the old image of God and the church founded in practical philosophy of life, rooted in the tradition of the family, - versus the wandering revivalist movement whose preachers claimed that their faith was unquestionable, that they received direct guidance from the voice of God, and that the fire and brimstone of hell would strike all of those who do not join them.

There are other themes in the novel, such as the consideration of the family and the family estate versus the joy of love, or the binding ties to home territory as opposed to emigration. The belief in oneself versus a belief in the norms and regulations of others.

Selma Lagerlöf's sympathies are difficult to pin down since her interest lay in the conflicts that were illuminated by the central themes. She had a great understanding of those who stayed loyally at home on the land of their forefathers, and at the same time she also felt a strong empathy with those who had dared to break with tradition and change the course of their lives. She was preoccupied by the contrast between the pragmatic farmers who remained and the reckless romanticism embodied by the emigrants.

Selma Lagerlöf would appear to have distanced herself from the revivalist movements. They represented the kind of obduracy and fanaticism that she was always prepared to castigate.

Characteristically, none of the Ingmar sons were taken in by the sectarian movements, the Ingmars were deep rooted people! The struggle between the old stock and the new religious movements was won decisively by the families when Ingmar unexpectedly saved Hellgum from a murderous assault. This put Ingmar at a definite advantage and he used this to force Karin - a sworn follower of Hellgum's - to choose between the preacher and himself. In the first instance she chose Ingmar. Later he repeated this success when he saved the Colony in Jerusalem from the plots that were being laid against it.

Selma Lagerlöf was clearly familiar with Hellgum's (Olof Henrik Larsson's) life and career, and it is unlikely that she was impressed by what she heard about him in Nås. During her stay in Jerusalem it would appear that she did not meet him, and possibly had no wish to have her own impressions of him confronted by the real article. The Colony in Jerusalem was run by a single strong woman, something that was quite popular at the time in many churches and social organisations in the United States, for example. So, while it is very likely that the emancipated Selma Lagerlöf applauded the set-up in the Colony, it is also quite probable that it struck her as being quite fair and right that there was no room given to the former preacher.

Selma Lagerlöf wrote Jerusalem in 1901 and 1902, but in 1909 a new version of the second half appeared. Selma Lagerlöf had never been truly content with the last part of the novel which seemed to confirm her own suspicions that her talent was limited to writing about Sweden. Added to this was the fact that the reviews of the second half were hardly as good as for the first half. It was therefore that she decided to write a new version of the second part which differed from the original on a number of significant points. The whole motive for the peasants' journey to Jerusalem was changed; this time the Swedes set off because they felt that they had a calling to save the new Palestine. The whole feel of the book was now more positive and optimistic. The second version is, however, generally regarded today as being inferior to the original.

In both versions Ingmar Ingmarsson arrived in Jerusalem as a hero. He criticised the Colony, and in the 1909 version he also criticises the celibacy rule; this was quite a harmless adjustment since the celibacy rule had been lifted in 1903. One might question how a noble, but still rural, farmer from Dalarna would be capable of formulating critical arguments, attending and understanding conversations in foreign languages and even, in a rescue operation, coming to the assistance of the Colony in spirit rather than corporally, his body being unable to get there in time. But then again, this was the Orient.

The story of Bo Ingmar Månsson, who stayed on in the Colony because of his love for Gertrud was, in part, based on fact. One of the Nås emigrants, a 26 year old single man, Hollisbetes Jon Jonsson made the journey to Jerusalem for the sole reason that he was in love with the wealthy farmer Tipers Lars Larsson's eldest daughter Karin. The difference in their social standing in Nås outruled any prospect of marriage. Jon Jonsson, however, had hopes that in Jerusalem, where all were to be equal, he might have a chance. Unfortunately for him marriage was forbidden in the Colony. The two loved one another in secret, but in the end Jon could no longer conceal his affections and was expelled by Anna Spafford. He was the first of the Nås Swedes to leave the Colony. In 1902 the young man, who had been the Colony's hard working and efficient baker, set off for the United States. Less than two years later Anna Spafford dropped the celibacy rule. Jon Jonsson returned to Nås in 1906 but did not marry until he was 62 years old. Karin Larsson never married.

When Selma Lagerlöf wrote the original version of Jerusalem she had no idea of the many problems that were lurking just beneath the surface in the Colony. When she came to writing the second version in 1908/9, however, she must have had some knowledge of these things. In 1903, for example, Olof Henrik Larsson, in Sweden for a three month visit, was interviewed by the daily newspaper, Stockholms Dagblad, in which it is clear that there was a lack of harmony in the Colony. The first version of Jerusalem was, it should be noted, banned in the Colony by Anna Spafford. For many years the book was completely unknown to most of the Swedish members of the Colony.

11. THE EARLY YEARS IN JERUSALEM

From that very first morning when they awoke in Jerusalem, the people of Nås, those of them who were parents, and with the exception of those who had infants, were no longer able to look upon their offspring as their own sons and daughters. The family was broken down and everyone was joined in a new community; man and wife had become "sister" and "brother", with Mrs Spafford as "mother".

In Sweden almost all of them had owned their own farms, some of them with rather good homes on them, and they had been free to live as they best saw fit. Each and every one of them had their day to day work and chores to do according to the season, in a way of life that had been passed down by generation to generation.

Suddenly they were thousands of miles from home.

The farmers' wives from Dalarna no longer had their kitchens where they could cook and serve meals for their families and send their children to school. Instead the new sisters and brothers would assemble in the communal dining room when the gong sounded. The food was set out on the tables - fresh brown bread every morning. There was no milk, butter or eggs. Only the following spring, when the earth began to provide for them once again, would they have goatsmilk, boiled and watered down. And perhaps a little white goatsmilk butter with thick black hairs in it, along with other, suspiciously dark objects.

It might perhaps have dawned on a Swedish housewife, awaking that first morning after the long journey to Zion, exactly how much she had left behind; her home and family. And her language - the new arrivals from Sweden had problems in making themselves understood, and were also, for that reason, quite isolated.

And the Swedish peasant...who no longer had a farm, no barnyard animals, no forest, no fields, and no stream. On that first morning when he awoke to look out of the barred window it must have seemed as though he were in prison. He saw barren stony hills with the odd sturdy tree which had managed to survive the dry weather. A few vines hung over the walls, but the leaves were white with dust because it was spring, the driest season in the Holy Land. Although the land in Nås had perhaps not been the most fertile, each farmer still had his own piece where he could grow his barley and his potatoes, and they each had their own patch of forest where there was enough grazing for their horses and cattle, and there they could clear away the stones and stumps to make the land suited for arable cultivation. Now, as he peered through the ominous looking iron bars, while the dream of his old farm died away, he realised that he had chosen to be a prisoner for life, in a land that had lost its top soil, its trees, its running water and everything else necessary for a good life. The only comfort he drew was from the thought that the Millennium was not so far off. Although no one dared to predict with any precision the exact time, and although it might well not come in his lifetime, his children would surely live long enough to witness it.

This is how Lars Lind was to recall his arrival along with the Nås group in Jerusalem in the summer of 1896, in his book *Jerusalemsfararna* (The Jerusalem Wayfarers). He was one of the children who, according to Selma Lagerlöf, had run away just as the Swedes were setting out on their journey, as they reached the railway station at Vansbro, crying that they had no wish to go to Jerusalem. Lind makes no mention of the extravagant villa in which they lived, nor does he describe the shade provided by the garden which was a little oasis in the burning August sun, nor does he recall the thick stone walls which retained some of the coolness of winter in the summertime. The elegance of the house was of course somewhat marred by the division of halls and corridors into barrack-like constructions with bunk beds in them to make room for all the new arrivals.

Many of the Swedes lacked the physical stamina needed to cope with the climate in the new land. A number of them succumbed early on to illness. They also proved to be particularly susceptible to the local mosquito which they discovered was rather different from the Swedish breed. Malaria was to become a regular cause of death. To fall ill in the Colony was extremely hazardous, bearing in mind Anna Spafford's stringent ban on medical assistance. Karin Halvorsdotter fell sick shortly after her arrival and died two months later. Her daughter noted the event somewhat laconically in her diary; "Mother fell ill on August 21st - was sick for two months, died on October 17th at one in the morning, which was a Saturday, 1896." In a letter home to her family she wrote: "Should mention that Mother has ended her days here and is now at rest. I would say that it was rather a strange death really, considering that there was a feeling of life and resurrection at her death...should now mention that she was buried in the arbor where the Holy Sepulchre is. It is down below, carved into the cliffside. She was carried along exactly the same route as Jesus was taken to the grave which was a wonder and delight for us to bear in mind." The husband of the deceased woman, Tipers Lars Larsson, did not even mention her passing the first time he wrote to his brother after his wife had died. Instead there were his views on one's duty towards God, and thankfulness at having left Nås, and for the good company of the brothers and sisters of the Colony. It was only five months later that he was to make any mention of his wife's death, and then only in passing.

Faith or repression? Perhaps a mixture of the two. To the Swedish members of the Colony, religion was often the most effective means of repressing the reality of what had often been, even prior to their emigration, a rather harsh life. Tipers Lars and Karin Halvorsdotter had buried five of their own children and one stillborn baby before leaving Nås. Gästgifvar Matsson buried four of his.

The Möckeland family was the hardest hit of all.

They had set out as a family of ten: Father, mother, seven children and grandmother. Just one month after their arrival, Anna the baby died. Two years later seven year old Karin died, as did her mother, Karin Ersdotter, who was thirty eight and her mother too, who was 56. Three years after that 13 year old Anders died and the father, Möckelind Erik Ersson, who was fifty, passed away two years later. The four remaining boys grew up without a family, and one of them was Lars Lind (The Möckelind family had changed their name to Lind shortly after they arrived). In his memoirs, Lind wrote: "I have no home, no parents, no language, no fatherland. The only thing they could not take

from me was my birthright to be Swedish. I spoke Swedish with the elder members of the Colony even though Mrs Spafford constantly made derogatory remarks about "narrow minded Swedish nationalism".

In her book, *Our Jerusalem*, Anna Spafford's daughter Bertha Spafford Vester did, however, give some credit to the Swedes and their ability to be self sufficient:

The courage of these people was remarkable. They came to a strange land of strange customs. There was nothing to remind them of home. They must often have been lonely and homesick, but they never made us conscious of it. They now lived in stone houses with stone floors. I do not believe they had ever seen such structures before.

Few of them could speak a word of English. Our morning Bible readings were translated into Swedish. Jacob - with his Oriental aptitude for learning languages soon picked up enough Swedish to speak freely with them.

They were accustomed to bake bread once a year, the hard thin cakes of rye bread with a hole in the middle through which ropes were strung and then suspended from the ceiling. They would then have got through the year with this supply alone. In the Colony we baked wheat bread every day. We thought our bread delicious, but it was disgusting to them. They hated the smell of it. But did they complain? Not once. What they must have gone through, I was only to learn later, when they had learned to like our bread just as much as we did and could talk and laugh about their early experiences. The old people in this Swedish group studied English conscientiously, the young attended the Colony's school and soon we were all able to fumble about with broken English and broken Swedish. We learnt to sing many of their lovely Swedish psalms and we became a bilingual community.

Karin Möckelin was fifteen when she wrote home to Nås about her life in the Colony just after their arrival:

I have learnt quite a lot of English and I understand almost everything, although I cannot speak that much. Early in the morning the bell rings and we all get up, and then we get ourselves ready and then it rings to tell us it is time for breakfast, later it rings for lessons. First we have English lessons and then Swedish, so it lasts almost until midday at twelve. And then there are English lessons from two o'clock until three thirty or four and then we have coffee, and then we do our work. Evening falls at six o'clock. After that we mostly spend the time in the salon because there are visitors every night. The people here are so strange and serious. Everyone is very kind to us. When we arrived they sent us flowers and pears to bid us welcome. Since then we have had a foal, which was fourteen months, an ass, a sheep and a cow for slaughtering, we got that for nothing. They say that it is because of us that the country is blessed, because they know that somebody has fulfilled the Covenant for them, and that somebody is us.

Responsibility for the Colony's well-being lay with Anna Spafford. She alone decided the general rules and strategies to be followed - such as which language was to be spoken. And although half of the Colony's nearly 150 members were Swedish, she would not countenance any suggestion that the Colony be called anything but *The American Colony*.

The Colony was founded on faith. Religion played a crucial role, both for the original members and for the new arrivals. Morning prayers were held with services and bible readings. Anna Spafford's religious convictions remained, however, unclear. She was guided entirely by the divine messages which came to her with great regularity, and which in turn had a direct influence on life in the Colony. The authority of the messenger was never questioned.

With the assistance of these messages Anna Spafford was to rule the Colony with a firm hand. She possessed strong leadership qualities. She had the ability to listen to confessions, bizarre ideas and wishes from a great number of people without losing her composure. She was very decisive and could take charge of any given crisis. She had a vision of a Christian unity, of all believers being "Wedded to Christ" in a world-wide unified Christian church. First and foremost, however, she possessed an unusual, almost hypnotic radiance which fascinated all those who came in contact with her. Even her opponents had to recognise her charm and her great charisma.

Chapter 14 of the gospel of St Luke was a popular choice for the readings at the morning meetings, verse 26 in particular:

If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

At these meetings Anna Spafford could suddenly, without warning, pick out a person who had invoked her wrath and call God's vengeance down on the sinner in indignant righteousness, referring to one of her heavenly messages. She maintained the unwritten law about celibacy and would not allow recourse to medicine in the case of illness, insofar as she felt that it was God's will if the patient were to die, which would be an indication of God's wish to receive the sick person in Heaven. Anna Spafford allowed no criticism, and would encourage members to inform one another if anyone expressed a contradictory opinion. She also censored all mail, both to and from home (her mother tongue was Norwegian and Brother Jacob, her right hand, had taught himself Swedish). This would explain why none of the letters in existence ever contain any hint of criticism, and generally reveal very little about life and the general atmosphere in the Colony. The letters were read aloud at the meetings before they were sent off.

Despite the fact that the letters were being censored, and considering that it would be quite natural for anyone writing home to be concerned that the people back home in Nås were convinced that they had made the right choice in making the journey, it is nevertheless reasonable to assume that during the initial years most of the Swedes were actually happy with their new life - even if they did miss their families, farms, forest and river.

Karin Lind (Möckelind), here writing to a relative in Nås:

We are truly one large family here, 100 sisters and 39 brothers, and we live a wonderful life together, and it will become even more wonderful. It is strange to walk here and see the places where Jesus himself once walked. I have been up on the Mount of Olives twice, it was high up, and the path was so steep that in places we almost had to crawl on all fours.

She went on to explain that she had never seen so many things as she had in Jerusalem, and that the saying in Nås, about nothing being available in Jerusalem, was untrue. The big house, too, was wonderful with all the flowers and the vineyard. And little brother Nils "is so dearly loved by all, large and small alike, that you would not believe it. He is no longer afraid when people talk to him or pick him up. Brother Jacob is so endeared to him that he is constantly giving him this or that. There are many other children here too, so he has many friends."

Erik Aurelius, Professor of Theology at Lund University, visited the Colony in around 1910. This was 13-14 years after the Swedes had first arrived in Jerusalem, and Aurelius noted that their contribution had been of very great significance to the Colony, that the camaraderie was good and that there was "nobody above and nobody below", the idea of social equality actually worked:

Among the tasks already begun early on there is the running of a few vineyards for friends of the Colony, some agriculture, with stables and a barn, a steam wheel, various bakeries and pastrymaking and a tinned goods factory. A couple of the women members have a small dental clinic.

A botanical department is run by three Americans and a Swede and here they have set up a little research station where they are experimenting with, among other things, a new type of clover. This type of clover needs very little water and they have now sown a large area with it. The Arabs are very interested. Furthermore they have developed a species of cactus without thorns which is eminently suited to be used as food. Other experiments have also achieved success, Swedish pine trees have been successfully planted – whereas fir will not grow.

The arrival of the Swedes in the Colony provided a much needed injection of capital. Even more important was the fact that the farmers from Nås provided a large and experienced addition to the Colony's work force which enabled them to become self-sufficient. The Swedes were quite used to hard work, and actually preferred work to sitting idle.

In the old photographs of the Colony, the women can be seen carding and spinning, weaving and sewing, dressed in their fine clothes. Primarily they made clothes for the Colony members whose apparel became rather uniform. In a large group picture (shown on the cover of this book) of over a hundred members gathered in front of the Colony, many of the young girls can be seen to be wearing the same chequered material, while most of the older ones are dressed in black with white collars.

The growth in tourism inspired them to begin producing objects they could sell, such as picture frames and book covers, carved out of olive tree wood, as well as some copper work, souvenirs of cloth, and pressed flowers mounted on postcards - not least of all, those flowers mentioned in the holy scriptures. The Colony also began to sell herbariums of biblical wood to American tourists. And they were certainly not above making crowns from the thorns of the Zizyphus Spina Christi bush which were bought by, somewhat naive, tourists.

The men leased land where they grew corn and vines and kept a number of farm animals: cows, goats, horses, pigs, hens, turkeys, and dromedaries. They also grew olives, figs and citrus fruits. Josef Lars Larsson was the man who oversaw the running of the agricultural work, was quite a large enterprise. He sent word to Sweden for ploughs and scythes. After they put up a steam mill they could

produce their own flour. They preserved food and baked cakes to sell to the tourists, as well as producing homewoven cloth. They also fitted shoes to the horses of the Turkish mounted police. The various social activities continued in the spirit of the Americans: the Colony fed the poor, cared for the sick, and trained the Arabs in housework, child care, and in English. A school was set up both for the Colony children and for others, and Bertha Spafford at one stage became the head of a respectable Muslim girls' school in Jerusalem.

In the early days of the Colony teaching and education were something of a grey area. They were awaiting the arrival of Jesus whereby all would be educated in an instant. Nevertheless Horatio Spafford taught the children something, most probably primarily biblical studies. With the arrival of the many Swedish and local children it became obvious that it was necessary to make more of an effort at teaching. A school was established in the Colony's old house by the city wall. In 1898 the Colony received two new members, John and Mary Dinsmore from the United States. The Dinsmores had been to Greece on their honeymoon a few years earlier and had paid a visit to the Colony in Jerusalem at the time. They were both trained teachers from Maine in the North-eastern United States where John had been a dean at Lincoln Academy specialised in botany. He was to become an outstanding force on the teaching front in the Colony in the early years.

At 7:30 John Dinsmore would sound the departure for school and the children would set off - before the morning service - two by two down to the The Old House.

Maria Matsson, writing home to her cousin Kristina telling her about the school, wrote:

I go to school during the day. There are around 40 of us children in this house, and we all walk to another house which is in the old city to have lessons, all except for three who are much too small. Around eight Arab children also come to our school. We are divided into five classes, the smallest only has little children in it. The youngest children are only three years old. They only have a little exercise in the mornings. When we walk to school we see a lot of things which are different from Sweden, like asses, camels, big flocks of goats and flocks of sheep. The people dress in a very different way too. On Fridays we don't have any school and sometimes we go to different places, like Mispah, the Mount of Olives and many other places.

In around 1903 a proper school was established which was capable of taking in a lot of outside children; often they would outnumber the Colony's own children. The number of children in the Colony was limited by the enforcement of the celibacy rule, although there were new members with children arriving steadily.

The Colony had by this time definitely changed its attitude towards education. Possibly this change in attitude had something to do with the Messiah's failure to appear, but in any case, it was now no longer just the Colony children who were receiving an education. The standard must have been high since the Arab director of Jerusalem's teaching authority sent his own children to the Colony. Snobbery and elitism were not typical characteristics of the Swedish-Americans, they devoted themselves to the schooling of the poor and orphaned children. The Swedish children did not mind going to school, they actually quite liked it, even though the walk was, at certain times of the year, both hot and dusty. They knew that going to school exempted them from all the work that had to be done in The Big House.

Later on, when the teaching was moved back there, their education was constantly disrupted by them having to fetch water, move furniture, carry sacks, beat carpets, and a variety of other trivial chores. The school provided a kind of free work resource.

The teaching they received did not, however, attach any weight to maintaining their command of the Swedish language. Neither children nor parents were encouraged to retain their mother tongue, and a Swedish tourist, Mrs Cassel, visiting the Colony in 1906 was so incensed by the incomprehensible mixture of Swedish and English spoken by her compatriots that she set up a course in Swedish. Some of the young people attended her lessons and made use of their old school books from Nås, but only a very few dared to take part.

In contrast to this account, Aurelius noted that the religious services held in the Colony had bits of Swedish woven into them, such as prayers and songs. Josef Larsson and his wife, who at the time of Aurelius' visit were both over 60 years old, still spoke a vigorous and distinct Swedish and emphasised the language at the Colony meetings. "I even speak Swedish with my cows," said Josef Larsson.

The truth about the fate of the Swedish language in the English-speaking Colony was probably that with the departure of the first generation of Swedish speaking members - and this happened extremely quickly in the majority of cases - the language was only used sporadically, and within one half to a whole generation it was to be consigned to the past.

12. CHANGING TIMES

The German Emperor Wilhelm II visited Jerusalem in 1898. He was 38 years old at the time. It is said that he was greeted on his arrival in Jerusalem as though he were the long-awaited Messiah. The ambitious and rather vain emperor undoubtedly enjoyed the great festivity: every procession, every stage set, every pompous ceremony in the Holy City. He loved to pose. He saw himself as the greatest warrior prince in the world and suffered from an unfortunate desire to play superior. He dreamed of gathering all people to his throne and all nations under his leadership - from which a millennium empire would emerge and all would give the emperor the recognition he deserved.

Palestine was still under Turkish rule. Turkey, the Ottoman Empire was, however, in a state of decay. Even during the Crimean War in the mid-1850s the Russian Tsar named Turkey "the sick man of Europe", and the Great Powers of Europe had frequently considered dividing Turkey between them. Nothing had as yet happened, and the Ottoman Empire was still of considerable size; from Greece in the west to the Persian Gulf in the east, to the south through Palestine to parts of the Arabian Peninsula, including the Holy City of Mecca. But Turkey no longer had the administrative capacity to rule over such a vast area and local regimes were brutal, reactionary, and as a rule lacking any feel for the need for development in the regions. The Arabs were oppressed by their Turkish Muslim brothers.

The official reason for the emperor's visit in 1898 was to inaugurate a new German church in Jerusalem, the Erlöserkirche, close to the Holy Sepulchre. For the occasion Wilhelm II had had a number of medallions made from a new material, aluminium, with himself and the empress on one side and the church on the other. The visit was, however, considered by most to be a political event, and for the people of Jerusalem it was a sign that they had not been forgotten and that there were perhaps changes afoot. For this reason the young emperor's visit was greatly anticipated and the city made very thorough preparations. Lars Lind, seven years old at the time, wrote in his memoirs:

In the year 1898 "The Sleeping East" woke up and stretched. Even those of us who had only had two years to get to know the East knew that a great earth shattering event was in the offing, and one way or another we were all involved.

The first real road to Jericho was built at this time. The Damascus Road, later to be the Nablus Road, which passed just in front of the Colony, was dug up and widened. An impressive work gang broke stone with iron hammers, while the peasant women carried asphalt in baskets on their heads and poured it out on the road which was covered in fine white clay. When the wind blew the whole Colony was enveloped in clouds of white dust. Antique pillars were used as rollers in laying down the road; they were cut up into suitable lengths and then holes were drilled into either end into which iron rods were fixed with lead. Two horses were then tethered to such a stone cylinder and then it was rolled back and forth over the road until it was even. Barefoot peasant women with watering cans sprang in front of the rollers and watered down the dust, while men spread clay out over the stones. This excellent road was quite suitable for the light traffic of the day.

The workforce was recruited the way you enrol troops in times of war. Every man able to work had to complete a particular quota of materials and work. Those who could afford it were allowed to hire a replacement. This was equal to the method used for recruitment into the Turkish army.

The city was beautified. Old yards and alleys which had not seen a broom in centuries were scrubbed clean, all the way down to the cobblestones. Trees were planted alongside the roads despite the chances of them surviving being pretty slim. Each of the large residential areas was ordered to build a suitably vaulted arch over their squares. In the Jewish quarter in the new section of town by the Jaffa road they built an arch out of wood with the inscriptions "Blessed is he who cometh in the Lord's name".

One day we received word that we were to put on our finest shirts with round white collars and to seat ourselves on the stone walls of the Colony along the Damascus road. Up from the turning by the Mount of Olives a long procession came towards us. At the front rode two men with flapping white capes that almost covered their horses. Behind them rode Turkish lancers with banners flying, and German generals and lifeguards with uniforms bedecked with medals brought up the rear. Swords and boots shone in the sun.

We had prepared for this moment for a couple of weeks, and so when the signal was given we all shouted, three times:

"Hip hip hurrah for the German emperor!"

Indirectly, the emperor's visit was to be of great significance to the American Colony as it was to mark the beginning of the Colony's famous photographic endeavours. An old camera had been purchased as well as a studio for the development of negatives. The pioneering spirit in this venture was the Indian born Elijah Meyers who had joined the Colony early on. Meyers had acquired an education of a kind in photography during his time in India, and he travelled around Palestine with Emperor Wilhelm II to record the visit. Another member, a young man who some years later was to become an important figure in the Colony, the German citizen Frederick Vester, accompanied Meyers and took care of all communications with the emperor's German staff. The pictures aroused attention and reached Berlin and London that same year.

Meyers engaged a succession of young men in the Colony to participate in what was to become a very lucrative photographic business. The first was Lars (Lewis) Larsson, who had arrived from Nås at the age of fifteen. He was later joined by the slightly younger Erik Matsson and Lars Lind along with the American John Whiting, one of the heirs in the courtcase in Chicago in 1895.

In time, the photographic enterprise became one of the two most important sources of income for the Colony. In around 1903 Anna Spafford received a divine message informing her that the Colony members could now receive money for their services. From that point on the Colony began to sell panoramic photographs, stereoscopic pictures, and hand-coloured postcards - which was quite a sophisticated technique at the time. Erik Aurelius mentions that during his visit in around 1910, "the photographic business is being run with great skill by ten people, half of them Swedes, the other half

Americans. One of the cleverest is Lewis Larsson who often travels around the country gathering photographic material for the big collection".

Up until 1930 the Colony supplied photographs to numerous publications. The travel book *Til Jerusalem* (To Jerusalem ed.), by the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, includes photographs by Lewis Larsson, and innumerable German, French and English publications of the Holy Land have photos of the period taken by members of the Colony's photography section. Orders for pictures came from Constantinople, Cairo and Athens.

Eric Matsson worked in the section from around 1915 and he took it over in 1938 under the name "The Matson Photo Service". By then the collection was generally known as "the finest collection of pictures ever produced in Palestine". Eric G. Matson - as he later called himself - moved to the United States in 1946. Much of the material had vanished at that point. It was only after the Six Day War in 1967 that the pictures were to turn up again. They had been kept in a cellar in East Jerusalem and had suffered a lot of damage from damp. Eric G. Matson managed to get the priceless picture collection out of Jerusalem. He donated it to the Library of Congress in Washington where it is to be found today, known as "The Matson Collection". The collection comprises over 15,000 pictures.

Back to 1898, where an episode that had a hint of the supernatural about it was to cast a shadow on the emperor's visit. Some weeks before the big event, students in the Muslim girls school in Jerusalem of which Bertha Spafford was in charge, were informed that they were to present a token of their handiwork to the empress as a gift. They chose a tapestry with the Turkish coat of arms on it, which was made at the school. It was framed and packed in a beautiful olivewood box. One of the school's pupils was to present it to the empress. Who was to be the one? This turned out to be very difficult. None of the parents was willing to allow their child to hand the gift to the empress for fear that this would invoke the "eye of envy", the evil eye which can bring misfortune.

Finally Ismail Bey, who did not believe in the evil eye, agreed to allow his daughter, Rowda, a charming little girl of 8, to have to the honour.

By way of thanks for the gift the empress gave Rowda a diamond pin in the shape of the German eagle - and a box of sweets.

During the emperor's visit the houses in Jerusalem were illuminated at night, and since there was no electricity in Palestine at the time, this was done by means of small lanterns with lighted candles inside which had to be lit each night. And each night Ismail Bey's servant would go up onto the roof to hang out the lamps and light them. Rowda went with him to watch one night wearing the same thin muslin dress that she had worn to meet the empress. Then the accident happened, Rowda got too close to one of the lamps and her dress caught fire.

Bertha Spafford was sitting talking to Rowda's mother when they heard the screams from the roof. They rushed up to find Rowda covered in flames. Hurriedly they threw her down and rolled her in a small - but, as Bertha later noted, valuable - carpet. They managed to put the fire out, but it was too late, Rowda had severe burns all over her body. The emperor despatched his personal physician but there was nothing he could do. By the following morning the little girl was dead.

The German emperor's visit came to an end and normal day to day life resumed in the Colony with the daily routines and rituals, not least of which were Anna Spafford's divine revelations, which guided the Colony's behaviour.

Possibly the rule that had drawn the most attention had come about as a result of just such a revelation. The insistence on celibacy was introduced during the early years of the Colony, when Horatio Spafford was the leader. The directive had given rise to many arguments, confessions at the breakfast table and, in the case of repeated breaches of the prohibition, expulsion from the Colony.

One Pastor Steen, writing in the newspaper Stockholms Dagblad in 1903, about the rule and its consequences, noted that:

Natural love is to be fought and suppressed. Marriage is forbidden. A married couple joining the Colony is often separated so that husband and wife are given separate rooms...but even when the couple are allowed to live in the same room they must regard one another as brother and sister, not as man and wife. Marital relations are considered to be a sin and can lead to expulsion from the Colony. Children are not to be born there. Those children whom the married couple might have with them are usually taken from them to be brought up by strangers.

In 1903, however, Anna Spafford received a divine directive informing her that marriage was to take place in the Colony and that her daughter Bertha was to be the first bride. The groom was Frederick Vester, son of a German-Swiss missionary in Jerusalem and a successful businessman. "On our arrival in Jerusalem we gave up all sensual life so as to put our faith in God to the test," Anna Spafford explained, "but the time has now come in which marriage can happen in a suitable way." She went on to say that previously they were not able to receive payment for their tireless services, but now that they had grown in spirit they could win back some of that which they had contributed and thereby improve their finances. They were allowed to earn money.

The double revelation was quite timely. Permission to earn money coincided with an inheritance which the Colony had just had transferred from one of its new English members. This was used to buy a business, Vester & Co., which lay just outside the Jaffa Gate. The business developed along with the photographic department into being the most important source of income for the Colony. The growing number of tourists made it easy to earn money, and in 1902 the Colony opened to visiting tourists. It was the owner of the Park Hotel Jaffa, Baron Plato von Ustinov (actor Peter Ustinov's grandfather), who arranged with the Colony that his guests could stay there when they visited Jerusalem. This was to be the seedling that developed into "The American Colony Hostel", and which much later on was to become the hotel of the same name.

The second half of Anna Spafford's divine message - the waiving of the celibacy rule - also arrived at an opportune moment; the two young people, Bertha and Frederick had grown attached to one another for quite some time and now wished to marry. Preparations got under way. Some of the sisters were put to work sewing the wedding gown, which was made of soft wool decorated with pretty lace. Fine tulle lined the high collar and the cuffs of the long sleeves. The veil fell like a cascade down over the shoulders and ended in a long trail.

Some of the other sisters were busy baking the big wedding cake and countless cookies and fruitcakes. Two days before the wedding the children went out into the field to pluck wild flowers. Honeysuckle and clematis were in full flower, along with wild tulips and anemones. Some of these found a place in the wedding bouquet, others were used in the flower decorations. When all was ready on the 1st of March 1904, the house looked like the Garden of Eden. A great bell, shaped out of clematises hung in the middle of the large dining room, from which festoons of white flowers emerged, stretching to the four corners of the room.

The couple was first wedded at the German consulate, Frederick being a German citizen. The religious ceremony took place in the room that today is the famous Pasha Room in The American Colony Hotel. It was the most beautiful room in the Big House, and perhaps even in all Jerusalem. Around 15 by 12 metres, with large arched windows on four sides, and almost 5 metres high with an uncommonly impressive wooden ceiling decorated with gold stars on a dark blue background. (It is, coincidentally, somewhat reminiscent of the sky above the pulpit in Nås church, dimensions aside) The floor is Sicilian marble laid in a very intricate pattern. (The name, the Pasha Room, is not actually authentic, it is a name that The American Colony Hotel's present Swiss director invented; formerly it was known as "Husseini's reception room" after the building's former owner, or simply the "upstairs lounge".)

All of the Colony's members attended the ceremony. Its orchestra played Mendelssohn's Wedding march, and afterwards there was a reception in the garden for the hundreds of guests. The cake was cut and tea was served. Champagne was served at the German consulate.

When Bertha Spafford married Frederick Vester she was 26 years old. They had known one another for ten years. In the beginning Anna Spafford was against the relationship which was incompatible with the demand of celibacy. This was why she had taken Bertha with her to the trial in the United States in 1895, in the hope that she would forget Frederick. But Bertha was one of the few people whose will power was a match for Anna's, and she stuck to her plans. There is no doubt that it was the beautiful Bertha who convinced Frederick to join the Swedes and Americans; with his background the spirit of the Colony must have felt very alien to him. As the family grew they rented a house below the Colony on the road to Ramallah. They came to the Big House for morning services and often for the evening meal too. But they lived alone and conducted quite an active social life. Bertha Spafford Vester never moved back into The Big House.

The way was now clear and after the first wedding others were to follow. The young men would always ask Anna Spafford's permission before asking a young girl to "be one with them" - as they called an engagement in the Colony. Anna Spafford lifted the celibacy rule but did not simply let nature take its course. Of the fourteen marriages which occurred in the first years after 1904, only two of them took place between people who were engaged in advance. The other marriages came to pass because Anna Spafford deemed the alliance suitable: "Do you think you should be married simply because you are in love?" she asked, and with this crucial influence on marriage in the Colony her autocratic power remained on the whole completely unchallenged. Those young people who were not willing to bow to her were expelled from the Colony. Four couples had to leave.

In 1909 Bertha's sister Grace - after having already been involved with a couple of the Colony's suitable men - married John Whiting, and the couple moved into a small house opposite the entrance to The Big House. In 1912 Olof Henrik Larsson's daughter Edith married Lewis Larsson from Nås and they were given Palm House to share, a beautiful house on a large plot of land just opposite The Big House.

The Swedish writer and politician K.P. Arnoldson, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1908 visited Jerusalem in 1910. By that time the active running of the Colony was being managed by a group of Swedes who had arrived in the Colony as children. Among them were Lars Lind and Eric Matsson, along with Lars (Lewis) Larsson who acted as Arnoldson's guide during his stay in Jerusalem and at The American Colony. Lewis Larsson told him about the ideology of the Colony, including the ban on marriage:

The reason why we came together to establish this collective was that we saw the rot in all the Christian teachings that we had met. They simply concentrated on preaching to others how to live and behave without anyone providing the evidence of using their own lives to demonstrate that one should do unto others as one would have others do unto you. We also saw the extent to which man had taken and used everything for the pleasure of his own flesh without asking whether it was right or wrong. People wished only to satisfy the cravings of their desires and wishes. Opening our eyes to this fact we felt disgust for this pretext of Christianity and decided that we would lead a life which was one in words and actions.

Since we felt like small children at the beginning not knowing anything, we did not dare to try anything one way or the other out of fear that we would do the wrong thing. In marriages we had, as a rule, only witnessed strife and dispute, rarely unity and peace. This is why we were suspicious of it, also because it seemed to tempt us to an external and egoistic belief in money which could draw us away from the self-sacrifice of love, the only thing to stand the test and make people truly happy.

When we had lived together in this fashion for many years and knew that we were seriously striving to live up to our faith as well as having resisted all the temptations which such a life gave rise to we began to accept some reward for our work; and so, now, step by step, each according to what we have learned, we have sought to make amends where we went wrong in the past, out of inexperience, so as to apply what we have learnt in all our efforts. So we have horses, wagons, cows, various industries and businesses, and we know that God wants that everything which is misused be used in the right way in a sensible fashion. Now that we have come so far that we have understood marriage and its true purpose we can therefore marry. This is the reason why we now enter into marriage as well as undertaking things that we previously had not done. This has nothing to do with brother Olof Henrik Larsson's return from Stockholm, such as the papers would have it.

Arnoldson was incensed over the negative accounts which had been written about the Colony. He notes:

This is the purest human fraternity on earth since the days of Jesus. There are over one hundred men and women here who, day in and day out, have not said a bad word to one another. Despite the fact that one is not perhaps immediately struck by the wealth of knowledge and brilliant intelligence,

one does encounter, first and foremost, willpower - and who has anything better to offer than a firm will? One would have to look far and wide, perhaps in vain, to find something more true and more human than the American Colony in Jerusalem.

If it was something of a surprise for the Colony members that marriage was now to be allowed, the news of Bertha and Frederick's marriage having borne fruit was certainly no less of a shock. There was a furore in the Colony when Bertha Spafford Vester gave birth to a daughter in 1905. It was the first child to be born in the Colony for twenty-five years. As a further sign that times had changed a doctor was summoned to attend the birth. Anna Spafford explained this as being "because we have proved our faith, we can now summon a doctor whenever needed." At this point, she abandoned her previous conviction of the divine healing powers of prayer.

The Colony strengthened its position in Jerusalem during these years. The American Colony was now independent and self sufficient, and it was not a part of any church or missionary society. With the assistance of the business "F. Vester, American Colony Store" the Colony came to dominate the local tourist industry with their sale of souvenirs, oriental carpets, copper goods and so forth - in open competition with the Arabs and to their great resentment. The first telephone system in Jerusalem was installed in the Colony, and it could also offer first class accommodation to tourists. The photographic department was highly respected throughout the Middle East. John Dinsmore was busy compiling a complete compendium of the flora of Palestine. The fashions among the women of Jerusalem were influenced by the sewing room of the Colony and the school offered tuition to anyone, regardless of their religion.

All of this impressive development came about under the religious autocracy of the Colony. Anna Spafford and her adult daughters never loosened their grip on the little community. Anna Spafford's divine revelations continued to act as the Colony's immediate source of guidance. If anyone should demand change the outcome was immediate exclusion from the Colony, they were expelled. This happened in several cases and it would occur with Anna Spafford taking a decision, without warning, against which, it goes without saying, there was no right of appeal.

It was the hard work of the Colony members which was the foundation for the welfare which began to characterise the American Colony in time. There was living space, food and clothing for all. The organisation functioned increasingly well. However, far from all the occupants were able to find happiness there.

13. SHEPHERD WITHOUT A FLOCK

Olof Henrik Larsson arrived in Jerusalem from Chicago in April 1896. His daughter Edith was four years old at the time. In her memoirs, *Dalafolk i heligt land* (The Dala People in The Holy Land) she writes:

Mother has told me a great deal about our first days and about how difficult it was to adjust to life in Jerusalem.

I was moved away from my parents to a room with several unmarried women and was treated quite harshly. I was too small to understand what was going on, but I missed my mother terribly, and on many nights I cried myself to sleep because I felt so lonely. I had never been separated from my family before and I loved my parents dearly, but I did not dare protest.

I remember creeping down the stairs and standing on my toes to reach the keyhole so that I might catch a glimpse of my father and mother. Once, mother heard me and opened the door, and I rushed into her arms; she held me so tightly I thought she would never let go. But I was not allowed to stay long. I was afraid of being punished. I think they were afraid that I would become too attached to my own family. After some weeks apart I was allowed to return to my parents, and I was glad to be able to throw my arms around my mother's neck, kiss her goodnight, and know that she would put me to bed and make things cosy for me. "I missed you so much, mother," I said. "I am never going to leave again." I was only four years old at the time.

Things were, however, even more difficult for Edith's father. Olof Henrik Larsson, the former head of the congregation in Chicago was ignored by everyone in the Colony. He felt defenceless and powerless. He prayed to God and tried to understand how he had come to lose his flock. He also lost his self-confidence, became doubting and began to blame himself, while Anna Spafford played on her authority. It was not uncommon for her to select texts about John the Baptist and Jesus for the morning prayers. This was a continuation of the line she had taken during the first encounters between herself and Larsson in Chicago and was intended to undermine Larsson. The parallels with John the Baptist who had to yield to Jesus were by now deeply engrained in all the Colony members. Many years later Josef Larsson of Nås explained his emigration to Jerusalem using the same New Testament story:

I joined Larsson, and just as John had led some of his disciples to Jesus he led us to the American Colony where he encountered people who had forsaken their own lives to devote themselves to God, and that was where the judgement came down on our own justice which we could not see before the light was turned on.

Some saw it as being God's punishment that Larsson, who had been so hard on others, should himself now be the recipient of condemnation. His wife Mathilda from Lindesnäs felt some compassion for him, but she was forced to obey Anna Spafford who set the agenda, and who warned

her against taking Larsson's side.

Mathilda's relationship with her husband was paradoxical. It was as though she would not give him her support just when he was really in need of it. When, in Chicago, in the autumn of 1895, Olof Henrik Larsson was failed by his congregation and he received no support from Mathilda. On the contrary, his wife was quite taken by Anna Spafford. Writing about the Americans and Anna Spafford in a letter to a cousin in Sweden in 1901, Mathilda said; "God revealed himself to them at the exact moment when they were at the height of their wealth and honour. He revealed to them his will and plan... We knew nothing about them, but as soon as we heard them it was as though a new life had begun." Mathilda Helgsten had apparently found a new purpose to her life. In her letter, she identified herself with her new brothers and sisters, not with her husband.

When Larsson was in Nås with Jacob Eliahu in May-June 1896 to try, among other things, to limit the size of any potential group of emigrants to Jerusalem, he immediately lost all respect among the emigrants, something he was never to regain. But Mathilda, who came from Nås and knew the people of the parish better than her husband, could have guided him so that his performance helped to improve his position rather than weaken it. She did not. In an interview with Stockholm's *Dagblad* in 1903 Olof Henrik Larsson said, among other things, that his "wife and children sided with the others".

In an interview in 1970 about her parents, Edith Larsson said that Mathilda had been submissive to her husband all her life. On the surface this would appear to be true. He was almost twenty one years her senior. There was perhaps more respect than rapport and love in the marriage; she never, for example, stopped addressing him as Larsson. Possibly the respect was replaced by resentment - or hatred - on that day in the autumn of 1890 when their child died. Perhaps Mathilda blamed Larsson for the rest of her life for the child's death. It was he who refused to summon the medical help, which probably might have saved the child's life.

Larsson regretted that he had moved to Jerusalem. One day his little daughter climbed up onto her father's knee to hear a story. "The one about the sea and the big ships," she said. But instead of the usual story he told her monotonously about his life, almost as though he were talking to himself: "How little I knew about what life had in store for me. Did I do the right thing when I left everything behind me and brought my family out to this existence? I lacked her supercilious self confidence and now it is too late to go back ...If only I had been a little firmer in my conviction, then I might never have doubted my calling. If I had had stronger beliefs and had I had the courage to remain faithful to that conviction then I should never have given way to Mrs Spafford's superiority. But doubt came and clouded my vision."

Swedes visiting the Colony tended to feel pity for Olof Henrik Larsson. One of them, Pastor Steen, was so moved that he wrote to the Spaffords' adopted son Jacob and protested at the treatment Larsson was receiving. Steen never received a reply. Then, on the 26th January 1903, he wrote an article in Stockholm's *Dagblad*:

Not long after his arrival in Jerusalem the poor old man realised the mistake he had made. He has endured some crushing blows and is more deserving of our pity than our criticism. He has long since lived as a hermit among his brothers and sisters, banished from "the faithful", abandoned by his

wife and his children and completely ignored by the others.

"The others" refers to the Spafford family in particular, and in Bertha Spafford's book on the Colony, *Our Jerusalem*, there is no mention of Larsson at all.

The pressure on Larsson became so great that he went back to Sweden in 1903. Here he was interviewed by *Stockholms Dagblad*:

We asked him why he had left Jerusalem and his brothers and sisters in the curious Swedish-American Colony, the holy society which has sprung up in the shade of the Holy City. "I was not in agreement with them in spirit," Larsson replies in a monotonous voice lacking any nuance. "I left them, not for the sake of the external, the boldily, but because I could not agree with them about the teachings." He explained that at the time when he first met Mrs Spafford and her followers in Chicago, he felt that they "had attained more in terms of holiness", and that he would have followed her at any cost. Yes, he would have spent a million kroner if he had had that much. "Why was it that the Nås farmers followed on?" the journalist enquired. "I wrote to them of our journey to Jerusalem, and so they all wanted to go along." - "You did not have to talk them into it?" - "No, no, they wanted to do it. No one persuaded them. But if I had seen then what I see now..." Larsson never completed the sentence and was not inclined to go any further on the matter.

As regards the strict celibacy rule which was imposed on the members of the Colony, Larsson remarked that this was all very well, "but Paul, who was himself a bachelor, did not condemn marriage."

Olof Henrik Larsson remained in Sweden for three months. In the end he realised that he felt no more at home there than in Jerusalem. He returned to the Colony where he resumed his insular life and found solace in reading the Bible and in prayer.

Right from the start Larsson was held down. Some time after his arrival in Jerusalem a letter arrived from a lawyer in the United States informing him that the remainder of the money from the sale of the Larsson house in Chicago had been released and could be collected. But Larsson played no further role in the case which was handed over to Mr Rudy, the Colony's bursar.

The only large project which Larsson was allowed to take part in was doomed to failure even before it got started: As a former mariner and fisherman he became leader of a project to provide the Colony with fish. Under his supervision two small fishing boats were built for the purpose of fishing in the Jordan river. Larsson made nets and fishing gear and with great difficulty he managed, along with a couple of helpers, to transport the boats over rocks and mountains to the low-lying river. It turned out to be severely depleted of fish. The only thing the river valley was rich in was mosquitoes. The fishermen went down with malaria and had to hurry back to the Colony where several of them later died. The Colony did not apply medicine in the case of illness and it transpired that not all of them could be saved by divine intervention. Larsson himself lay ill with malaria for several months.

The whole project was badly planned and not at all carefully prepared. The Colony had neither

ice nor an ice-house - assuming that it had been at all possible to catch any fish in the first place and manage to transport them back. The affair did not increase respect for Larsson, nor did it improve his self-confidence.

He became increasingly lonely; an old shepherd without his flock, his daughter called him. His wife did not show him much sympathy either.

And while everyone else in the Colony called one another brother and sister - with the exception of Anna Spafford, who was called mother - Olof Henrik Larsson always remained Mr Larsson.

After some years he became the Colony's plumber and locksmith. He built himself a shed for a workshop behind The Big House with a small forge where he patched up all the Colony's old pots and pans together. He also made tin cans for keeping milk, olive oil and orange marmalade, or any of the Colony's other products in. Anna Spafford informed him that it was no longer necessary for him to attend the morning meetings, but he carried on taking his morning and evening meals in the common dining room. Lunch and afternoon tea were brought over to him in his shed by Mathilda.

With the arrival of the tourist season, Larsson and his wife along with a number of others were asked to vacate their rooms in The Big House. Then they moved over to the workshop shed. Here they lived under pleasant, but quite Spartan conditions. And when the day's work was done Larsson would sit down with his bible and his hymn book and Mathilda with her handiwork. Here they could be together in peace.

In any case, this is how their daughter Edith Larsson chose to recall her parents in her book (*Dalafolk i heligt land*); in harmony and loyal to one another. But as mentioned earlier in this chapter it was a question of whether Mathilda had taken sides in the conflict between Anna Spafford and her husband and put her eggs in the Spafford's basket. In an interview around 1930 with the Swedish journalist Laura Petri, Mathilda explained:

It was a happy time. We were a people blessed by God. We worked hard, but with joy. For fifteen years I baked all the bread for the Colony. At first I just made caps. On the voyage over from America one of the men had his cap blown off and my husband sat down and sewed a new one for him, Larsson was an old seaman and could manage everything. He taught me to sew caps, and after that it was me who sewed caps for the men and children. But then the brother who baked the bread (Jon Jonsson) went back to Sweden again and mother Spafford asked: "Who is going to bake now?" I felt that I had a duty to volunteer and so I baked for fifteen years. Later on I also began to make all the umbrellas, since the sister who made them previously had become so old that she could not see. Yes, we were happy even though mother Spafford was strict with us and passed on her messages to us in public during the meetings. But if we simply made an admission then she would forgive us and it was forgotten. Mother Spafford was a wonderful woman, and she was a mother to us all, she loved us with a holy love. But she kept us trembling with fear and it was worse for Mr Larsson, for she spoke the harshest to him. She felt that since he had not shown mercy towards others, she would not show him mercy now. Once, he even went back to Sweden, but he soon came back again. Poor Mr Larsson.

From 1908 Larsson withdrew completely to live in isolation in his shed, living the life of a

hermit, occupied with his little projects and with prayer. The only attempt Larssona made at making any kind of protest was when he complained that the young members would sometimes - following the suspension of celibacy - use the large meeting hall for dancing. He was put firmly in his place and clearly informed that he was not the one making the decisions. Those who shared his opinions were forced to leave the Colony and those who remained had to conform to Anna Spafford.

In April 1919 it all came to an end:

One morning, when mother went over to father with his breakfast she found him on his knees in prayer, with his head bowed over the table. He did not move when she entered and so she approached, speaking to him, but got no reply. She put down the food and ran back for help. He had suffered a stroke. When help arrived he was still lying there unconscious in the same position. He was carried to our living quarters and laid on the bed in mother's room. A doctor was summoned but there was nothing he could do. Father died without regaining consciousness.

The bible on the table beside which he had knelt to pray lay open on a chapter in Corinthians I, chapter 13 where he had underlined the words "Love is long suffering, love is gentle". Mother was overcome with grief. She had loved him and dearly taken care of him, even though she had been afraid to show it. Now she wept in silence, at the thought of what had gone before and wished that she could have shared more in his life. She felt tired and dismayed. Her life, which once had seemed so full of promise and happiness had ended in so much sorrow. But she was told not to mourn, and Mrs Spafford said: "When my husband died I danced to show my joy at God's will."

Anna Spafford's superiority to Larsson lay in her natural authority and her great radiance which was supported by the night-time messages from God. Larsson was powerless in the face of this.

She also used the advantage she gained in having arrived in Jerusalem first, and of the language used in the Colony being her mother tongue - having spoken English from when she was little. There was also a class difference between the Spafford and the Larsson group from Chicago; Bertha Spafford wrote that her parents had met some of the Larssonites who worked as domestic servants in the home of some of her parents' friends. The climax of this condescending attitude can be seen in Anna Spafford's silencing, or at least suppression of the fact that it was the Larsson group who had paid for the Spaffords' return from Chicago, and that in very real terms it was also they who, along with the Nås farmers, had saved the Colony from financial ruin.

It was the charismatic woman of the world from Chicago who won over the repressed fisherman's son from Bohuslän. But perhaps also, despite everything, a more loving message did win through in the end. The Spafford family did after all leave Chicago in 1881, and the church they were part of, because they had had enough of all the talk of God's wrath and sin and death. Larsson on the other hand preached the judgmental aspects of Christianity; The unrepentant would burn in hell, he yelled in his sermons, in the days when he still had the power to do so.

14. THE COLONY DURING WORLD WAR I

The First World War broke out in August 1914, triggered off by the assassination in Sarajevo in June. The two opposing sides were The Allies (England, France and Russia) and the Central Powers (Germany and Austro-Hungary). Turkey joined the Central Powers in November 1914 and this brought Palestine into conflict with the Allies.

The First World War was a very static war. On the Western Front things soon ground to a halt. The situation was not very different in the Middle East where the Turkish army, often with support from German or Austrian troops, fought countless battles against the British.

At the beginning of the war the British often came off worse when they clashed with the Turks, without this having a significant influence on the war as a whole. Most of the year of 1915 was spent fighting over the Dardanelles, the entrance to the Black Sea, which was ruled by the Turks. In the end the British were forced to withdraw. In April 1916 British army forces were forced to capitulate to the Turks on the Euphrates. In addition, the British army was doing its best to defend the Suez Canal against serious attack by the Turks. The Suez Canal was of crucial strategic significance to the British. If it were to be closed all supplies from India, Australia, New Zealand and the Far East would be hindered and British troop transport would also be made impossible. It was not until 1917 that the British first managed to gain the upper hand over the Turks in and around Palestine. They managed to persuade a number of Arab tribes to rise up against the Turks on the promise that the region would be given its autonomy after the war. General Allenby, one of the best British Field-m Marshals in this war, turned this situation to his advantage by advancing from Egypt, across Gaza and into Palestine.

One summer morning in 1914 Anna Spafford appeared at the morning meeting looking tired and worried. She had not slept all night, but had lain awake asking God for a message now that the threat of war was hanging over them. After much thought and prayer a message did come to her. It went as follows; "God's great anger moves across from nation to nation". And while she was speculating over the meaning of this she received another message: "No harm shall befall you if you love one another". Anna Spafford informed the members that, "Terrible times lie ahead of us - but think what blessed comfort God has given us." Then they sang: "It is my will that you love one another as I have loved you".

On the night of August 3rd 1914 a group of German students who were staying as guests in the Colony departed in a hurry, and in the morning it became known that Germany had attacked France. It was Frederick Vester's 45th birthday that day and by a hair's breadth he narrowly escaped being enlisted into the German army where the age limit was 45. The Swedes too could easily have been called up had the Swedish Honorary Consul in Jerusalem, Gustav Dalman, not issued them with passports long before the war broke out. They had after all travelled out to Jerusalem with only a church permit from Nås. The passports proved to be indispensable when the Turks began mobilising all their nationals and everyone not possessing identity papers.

Although Frederik was German by birth he supported the Allies, and this brought him into conflict, not only with his mother who, being Swiss, supported the Germans wholeheartedly, but also the entire German community in Palestine.

In an interview with the BBC in 1953, Bertha Spafford Vester gave an account of the First World War:

"The most important thing that happened when the First World War came was that the American Consul came to mother and told her that she must go into safety, she must go away, as a retreating Turkish army would be an unpleasant thing to meet. Mother, who thought that this meant being ordered away, asked him: "Are you ordering me away?" - "No, I am not ordering you out," and then mother said: "I left my country to be of service, and this is my supreme moment." And so we all stayed, and we were never sorry.

What we suffered during this period was unspeakable."

Later, in her book *Our Jerusalem*, she wrote;

Thousands must have died from slow starvation and disease, notably from spotted and enteric fevers. The cholera was added. There was nothing we could do about it. Many a person came to our door and dropped from exhaustion. We cared for as many as we could. We would carry them under the olive trees, making them as comfortable as possible, while we sought for a conveyance to carry them to the hospital. Some died before we were able to procure this...Many women brought their babies to us and offered to sell them for a pittance, just to be sure of a few more meals.

The military victims of the war were mostly Turkish and German soldiers. But wounded British prisoners of war were also regularly brought to the Colony only to be transported on to prison camps as soon as possible.

Shortly after the war broke out the coastal towns of Jaffa, Gaza, Haifa and a large number of other smaller towns and villages were evacuated (including Tel Aviv which at that time was little more than a village with a main street and around 20 houses), and the people living in all of these places flowed into Jerusalem, all of them in great need of help.

The following summer the Colony began to make handicraft objects using the help of, among others, the many Arab women whose husbands, cousins and brothers had been called up to the army. The idea was to create an income by exporting the many beautiful works abroad, primarily to America. Over 300 women were employed until hunger and exhaustion forced them to stop. There was a catastrophic shortage of food due to the Turkish army having requisitioned all foodstuffs. The fields lay untended as all the cattle had been slaughtered; the shepherds had been taken into the army.

As if the man-made plagues were not enough, Palestine was invaded by locusts in 1915 in what was the worst visitation in generations. One day in March the sky over Jerusalem grew dark. From the desert of Judaea locusts descended on the sacred walls. Behind them came thousands of storks feasting

greedily on the pregnant females; millions of which, however, managed to lay their eggs before they were either eaten or flew on.

In the middle of April the Turkish army issued a proclamation ordering every man between the ages of 16 and 60 to gather five kilos of grasshopper eggs. This might sound like a lot, but there were around 75,000 eggs per square metre. Special stations were set up to collect these eggs. In Jerusalem they were taken to a quarry where they were buried under crags and stones. Unfortunately the job was not done properly and not long afterwards millions of small black grubs (larvae) began to emerge from the quarry. At a speed of 200 metres a day they began to spread out in every direction, in small jumps, all across the city and the surrounding fields. Roads that were usually gleaming white turned black. The larvae were crushed by passing horse carts or trampled by passing feet, leaving a stinking black pulp in the dust. By the end of May the larvae had reached the pupal stage and they arrived in the Garden of Gethsemane which was stripped in less than a day. The thousand year old olive trees were left bare. The grasshopper larvae climbed over walls and crawled into courtyards and houses. In the American Colony you could not move without a grasshopper landing on your neck, or in your clothes. One girl who had been out for a couple of hours found one hundred and ten grasshoppers on her when she came home.

An army of thousands marched across roads and fields, eating every blade of grass in its path. Not a leaf was left on the trees or vines where the locusts had been. It went on for three months. In the beginning of June the pupae shed their skin and unfolded their still wet wings and then, as though on a given signal, the baby grasshoppers took to the air as one and flew on to new pastures. In their wake Palestine looked as though it has been ravaged by a terrible fire. Everywhere there were barren trees and singed brown earth.

Bertha Spafford Vester got the idea of writing to some of her friends in the United States to ask them to set up a collection for a soup kitchen in the Colony. Her efforts were fruitful and she wrote back later to inform the charitable Americans of the good that the money was doing:

If you could just stand at our gate, and see the pleasure on the gaunt faces, as they go away with their pails and saucepans the nutritious soup, enough to satisfy their family, it would repay you for your trouble. When I last wrote we were giving soup to four hundred people daily. Since then we have every day been obliged to increase the number, until Saturday (day before yesterday) there were eleven hundred and eighty six souls who were fed. All the last week there were from nine hundred to one thousand daily. Working among the poor as we have, in and around Jerusalem for so many years, we get to know them all personally. However, we are cautious about accepting new applicants, and several of the sisters make it their duty to visit the homes and see exactly what they need. The deplorable condition of these homes is shocking. Americans cannot conceive, even by trying to imagine, what the reality is.

Two years ago, when distributing money from the Christian herald, and last year, when conducting the Industrial Relief Work, we thought conditions could not get much worse. We have learned differently. It would be impossible to carry on an industrial relief work now. The people are not in a condition to work. It is now simply keeping soul and body together. In some cases our assistance helps; in other cases it is too late. I wish I could send you some of the numerous letters of application

we get daily. In the midst of the misery we have to smile when they say, for instance, that they "have the pleasure to inform us that my husband, he dead, and my children, they starving."

My husband and Mr Whiting were fortunate in being able to buy a few tons of beans and lentils, but they will last only until Wednesday. We have spent more than the one thousand dollars, the first instalment for the soup kitchen. We were very glad to see by your letter, which came last night, that we could expect about five hundred dollars more. Some think it would be wiser to limit the number of recipients and thus make the money last longer. This one could only advise from a distance where you do not see the applicants. It is utterly impossible to refuse.

Throughout all the suffering the Colony continued in their routine of hymns, morning prayer and confession; and on Sundays there were services. The Swedish explorer Sven Hedin described Sundays in the Colony during his visit in 1916:

My Sundays passed peacefully among the Dala-people. At 3.15 they gathered for services in the big salon one floor up. It was transformed into a church hall. All of the chairs were set up in rows. In Sunday clothes, quiet and serious, men and women arrived with their songbooks and gospels in their hands and took their places. The flaxen yellow hair, the blue eyes and the rosy cheeks gave the Dala-people away. The Americans were of another type, the Swedish-Americans were halfway between the two. The Arabs and their women with jet black hair and brown skin took their more humble places. A female choir sang an exquisitely beautiful and wistful hymn, and later the men joined in too. Brother Jacob got up and slowly read Matthew's 24th chapter (in which Jesus foresees the ruin of Jerusalem and his resurrection and urges vigilance) and followed this with a study of the words of this text and their actual meaning. He ended with a prayer and the Lord's Prayer. To close we sang yet another hymn.

Then it was the children's turn. All the chairs in the middle were moved and the young shoots which had blossomed on the sacred field of Jerusalem made their entry. One could see small pretty blonde creatures from the North, and just as adorable raven black Arab children in the care of Christianity. Some had white, others pink or light blue clothes on, and all held flowers in their hands.

Sven Hedin describes Anna Spafford as follows:

Mrs Spafford bears no trace of the storms which have buffeted her life. Certainly she has white hair, but this is due to her 74 years. She is heavily built and stands erect, quite large in size, humble and friendly to everyone, and always holds herself in the background even though she is the head of the Colony and has complete faith in the prescience which has hitherto held a protective hand over her large family. All of her person is infused with peace and dignity, and through the spectacles there comes a look that means only good.

Music played a significant role in the Colony's religious, cultural and social life. Many of the young people played in the Colony's orchestra, a brass band, or else sang in the mixed choir. They played and sang spirituals as well as American and Swedish folksongs. The members were also known for singing while working, and in the years leading up to the First World War the Colony's musical and theatre performances and evening dances were something of a tourist attraction.

By 1916, in addition to its houses, the Colony owned several pieces of land where they produced corn and had room to graze their sixteen cows, several calves, four horses and a donkey. On the other side of the Nablus road they had an olive grove and also planted fruit trees and built an arbor with vegetables and root plants. They had acquired three dromedaries to transport their agricultural produce, which they often purchased outside the town where it was a little cheaper. They kept pigs, hens and turkeys, and along with the noise from the blacksmith and the carpenter they created a thriving, hard working atmosphere which, according to Sven Hedin, "could convince a guest that he was back in Dalarna, particularly when mother Brita, who took care of the cows, came along carrying her milk pails."

The commander of the Turkish forces in Palestine and Syria was Djamal Pasha. He had once belonged to the so called "Young Turks", who, at the beginning of the century, had fought for a parliamentary system in Turkey. He was a gruesome and quite unpredictable man: one day sitting to drink tea with somebody while the next sending him to his death. Djamal Pasha pushed his way with his troops through from Gaza and Sinai to the Suez Canal which the British fought so desperately to keep. The battles were very bloody.

The Colony had won a degree of Djamal Pasha's trust. Anna Spafford held regular talks with him, and there are photographs from the beginning of the war of the gruesome Turk with one of Bertha Spafford's daughters, little Louise, on his knee.

Because of the Colony's good links with the Turks they were allowed to keep their three dromedaries; the army had requisitioned all other animals. Djamal Pasha gave orders that all the Colony's wishes were to be met, and therefore they were allowed to buy cheap corn on the other side of the Jordan River, which was otherwise not permitted.

One day during the war, when things were at their worst, a young man who was digging in the Colony garden struck something hard with his spade; it gave off a metallic ring. He dug further to find a tin can bound with string. He untied the string and opened up the tin to discover that it was full of gold coins. He rushed to Anna Spafford who immediately called a meeting where she announced that although the gold had been found just when they had most need of it, they would have to put it to one side until the matter was investigated more closely.

The following day Anna Spafford was standing talking to a group of young people when Mr Rudy, the Colony's bursar came over to ask to speak to her in private. They adjourned to the hall and sat down. There Mr Rudy then confessed that it was he who had hidden the gold coins. It was the remains of a sum of money which he had brought back from America as the last instalment from the sale of Olof Henrik Larsson's property in Chicago. Mr Rudy admitted that he had put part of the money into the Colony and had buried the rest for an eventual rainy day.

Hardly had he finished making his confession than Mr Rudy collapsed, lifeless, into Mrs Spafford's arms. A couple of the Colony's young men came rushing over and carried him into the room next door. Word was sent for a doctor who ascertained that Mr Rudy had died of a heart attack.

Anna Spafford called an assembly and informed everyone what had happened. She made it

understood that Mr Rudy had put the money aside for himself - without any hint that he might possibly have intended the hidden cache as a reserve for the future use of the Colony. Then she took up the Bible and read from the Deeds of the Apostles, 5:1:

But a man by the name of Ananias and his wife Safira sold a property and with his wife's knowledge he put some of the money aside and came forwards to place only a portion of the money at the feet of the Apostles. Then Peter said: "Ananias! Why has Satan filled your heart, so that you have lied against the Holy Spirit and hidden some of the money for the world to one side. It is not man you have lied to but God." When Ananias heard these words he fell down and exhaled and a terrible fear came over all those who heard it.

And now a new Ananias had arisen in the Colony and judgement had fallen on him. "Confess your sins," Anna Spafford shouted, "and let this be a lesson to all who conceal parts of their lives and do not give themselves completely to God!" Everyone was terrified, and they poured out their innermost thoughts. At the meeting it emerged that there were those who felt that when it came to material goods, there was too big a gap between the Spafford family and the rest of the Colony. The Spafford daughters and their children instantly got everything they wished for, while the others had to humbly beg for even the smallest thing. But Anna explained that humility was necessary for their spiritual growth, and that they should not think, but believe and have faith.

There was, however, genuine joy at the discovery of the gold coins. They really filled a hole in the Colony's finances which were overstretched with the running of the soup kitchen: they were actually serving soup to up to 6000 people daily. But in April 1917 the United States declared war on Germany and the German military in Jerusalem immediately forbade the American Colony from running the soup kitchen which they regarded as a form of American propaganda. The closure gave rise to very serious hunger shortages for thousands of people. But there was nothing they could do and so the Colony turned its considerable energies towards another form of assistance, the running of the hospitals.

Immediately following the outbreak of war the Turks had ransacked the foreign hospitals in Jerusalem and moved all the medical equipment and instruments out to field hospitals in the desert. In April 1917 the Turks were expecting an imminent attack from the British. They were also aware that they could not expect voluntary help from the Arabs in taking care of the wounded Turkish soldiers. In a critical position Djamal Pasha sent word to Anna Spafford asking whether she was willing to open the foreign missionary hospices and assume responsibility for all nursing in the town. She accepted and Djamal Pasha went on to ask whether the Colony would continue to assist them, even though Turkey was at war with America. Mrs Spafford accepted this - probably she had little choice in the matter.

In a way it was ironic that the Colony should be responsible for Jerusalem's nursing, because none of the members had any training as nurses; and they had previously been opposed to any form of medical assistance over and above that of God. But in the last months of the war - from April 1917 until Allenby's arrival in December of the same year - the Colony ran eight military hospices in former hotels, convents, and hospitals. Turkish, British and Arab soldiers were cared for by the Colony's members. The Turkish authorities lent them support but did not interfere in any way. The Turks gave the Colony whatever they could spare, and when there was no more lamp oil, or medicine, or cotton, or bandages left, they tore down the curtains and ripped them into strips; soft paper was used instead of

cotton, and wax candles and pine cones were burned to heat water.

When America entered the war in 1917 the Turkish authorities began to keep an eye on the Colony; officially they were enemies. One day a message arrived, stating that all young men with American citizenship were to be regarded as prisoners of war and were to be deported to a place inside Turkey. There were six men to whom this applied. Worriedly, their relatives helped to pack clothes and bags of supplies for them, and prepared themselves to say goodbye. At the last minute help arrived in the form of a Turkish general who was inspecting the hospices in Jerusalem. When he was informed that he was about to lose six of his best helpers he exclaimed: "I cannot do without them, these men are in the service of mankind and their transport to Turkey must be halted."

The most serious problem was that their supplies were running out. Things were only made worse when the Turkish governor informed them that the Germans wanted the Colony's pigs. The Germans took 21 fat pigs from the Colony; in return the Colony was allowed to be left in peace. According to Sven Hedin the Colony obtained a good deal on the pigs, and they still had a number of them left.

In the emergency hospitals the Americans and the Swedes worked alongside the occasional Arab doctor in haste and in awful conditions. There was an unbroken stream of wounded arrivals, the majority of them German, soldiers from the Sinai front to the south. The soldiers were transported from the war-zones by primitive means; first by camel, and then by very slow train. Many of them attempted to dress their own wounds which were often full of larvae. Some were unconscious, and all of them had lice, which spread typhus.

In early December 1917 it became clear that the war was drawing to a close. By this time nursing conditions had deteriorated to a terrible state. Only one hospital was still open, and here there were hundreds of wounded, lying there screaming for help. All the doctors had disappeared and many of the Colony's members had returned to their own big house to be with their families. The final battle over Jerusalem was expected to be a hard one. Only six unmarried members of the Colony were left at the hospital, among them was Lars Lind. The wounded continued to arrive from the battlefield in the south and all were calling for morphine, but the only thing they had to offer them was water. The medicine had run out long ago.

Around midnight on December 8th there was a loud knocking at the hospital gates. Outside there stood a stately Turkish officer who asked Lars Lind in French to hand over three of his wounded subordinates to take with him. He explained that he and his company were the last Turks remaining in the town, and that the British would be surprised when they marched into Jerusalem without encountering any resistance. "We will go through the Zion Gate and down to Jericho. I thank you," said the officer, climbing onto his horse. He thereby handed over the last Turkish bastion and the military hospital to three Swedes and three Americans, and thus brought to an end 400 years of Turkish occupation of Jerusalem.

On the morning of December 9th Bertha Spafford handed the last crumbs of food to the wounded and announced that she was going out into town to find an Englishman. She went through the Jaffa Gate and began walking up the Jaffa road when she saw a car. The car had to be British; there

were no other cars in Jerusalem at the time. She waved an arm in the air and the car stopped. Inside was Sir John O'Shea, the man General Allenby had appointed to accept Jerusalem's surrender. Bertha stepped onto the runningboard and told them who she was. She told them about the many wounded and that hostilities had ceased. Sir John O'Shea pointed at a group of people who had gathered and asked who they were. Bertha turned and caught sight of Jerusalem's mayor, whom she knew personally. The mayor was holding the capitulation papers in his hand, and Bertha stepped down and introduced him to General O'Shea; at least, this is Bertha Spafford's version of the surrender of Jerusalem.

Lars Lind experienced the capitulation from another angle. The morning after the Turkish officer withdrew from the hospital, Lind hurried back to the Colony to pass on the good news that Jerusalem would be saved a battle in the streets. On the way he passed the house on the Damascus road where Anna Spafford then lived, and where the Americans were gathered. He told everyone there that the Turks had left town and they all broke out in a jubilant cry. Shortly afterwards there came a knock on the door. It was the mayor, along with a dozen or so young men, relatives and neighbours. "Tell mother," the mayor said, "that I am off to Sheikh Badr to hand over the town." Lars Lind and the photographer Lewis Larsson fetched their photographic equipment from the Colony and hurried after the mayor. When they arrived they found two white flags made out of sheets from the hospital. No British general had turned up yet, and two sergeants who were present did not have the authority to accept the capitulation papers. A captain and a lieutenant-colonel turned up after a while, but they did not have the necessary authority either. It was only when Brigadier-general Watson arrived astride an old horse that things began to happen. Along with the mayor, Watson went along to the nearby hospital, and in the hospital yard the mayor read out the formal letter of surrender and then handed the letter and the town to the brigadier general who was seated on a chair surrounded by his staff listening to the mayor's words of surrender.

Lind and Larsson photographed everything and hurried back to the darkroom to develop their pictures of the ceremony. While they were busy working they received news that the capitulation was about to take place once again. General John O'Shea had finally arrived in town and was ready to accept the city's surrender on behalf of General Allenby. When O'Shea was informed that one of his subordinates had already attended to the formal matters he became furious and insisted that the mayor repeat the whole ritual. It was too late though. In his fury O'Shea insisted that all pictures of the ceremony be destroyed. And for 60 years this was actually believed to be the case, but in 1977 one of the two sergeants wrote an article entitled "I Was There" which appeared in The Observer Magazine, in which he claimed to still have two copies of a picture that was taken just after General Watson had accepted Jerusalem's capitulation. The familiar picture of the event - which was not the formal surrender - shows the mayor with the two sergeants and the white flag which can be seen today at the Imperial War Museum in London.

Two days later General Allenby formally took command of Jerusalem. He came riding to the Jaffa Gate, where he descended from his mount and walked in the manner of a pilgrim into the Holy City.

Anna Spafford was jubilant: The prophecies had been fulfilled, and the time had come for the Jewish people to return to Palestine. Under the Turkish regime there were signs from time to time, but hopes were always put to shame. But now the road was open. The British marched in through the

southern gate, and that, it was said, signified love.

15. THE BREAK-UP OF THE COLONY

The British were warmly welcomed by the Colony in Jerusalem. Bertha Spafford wrote: "For the first time since the crusaders drove Saladin out, Palestine will have a so called Christian government. We have witnessed the last crusade. A Christian nation has conquered Palestine!" The church bells rang out and the British officers were met with flowers. Turkish rule was a thing of the past.

It was almost Christmas. The Colony invited four British generals and twenty other officers to Christmas dinner. The menu comprised stuffed turkey, plum pudding flambéed in cognac, and Jaffa oranges. After dinner the Colony's orchestra played and the choir sang "Hallelujah" from Händel's Messiah.

Many in the Colony, including Anna Spafford, believed that the First World War would be Armageddon - the end of the world before the millennium. Many of Horatio Spafford's hymns, which the members had sung over and over, were about exactly this. And then the world war turned out to be just a war like any other war.

This was not the first time that the prophesies about the coming of the Messiah and the millennium had not come true. When the Messiah did not descend to the Mount of Olives in the year the immigrants arrived, in 1881, it was a great disappointment, and this was followed by another in 1897 when again he did not appear. When the predictions proved to be wrong, the prophets explained this by saying - and this was very likely the case with Anna Spafford too - that either their estimate of the time was wrong, or the people had not behaved themselves correctly and therefore they did not deserve the arrival of the Messiah. Sometimes it was said that the Messiah had actually arrived, but had not as yet revealed himself to ordinary people. In any case, the proven fact about the war must have been a hard blow for the now 75 year old Anna Spafford. It must also have struck her that her prophesies were becoming increasingly less valid. She could no longer regard "The return of the Jews", which should have been a sign of the coming millennium, as anything more than an outcome of the realisation of the Balfour Declaration. Shortly before the end of the war, the British Foreign Secretary Arthur J. Balfour had publicly declared the British government's support for "the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine". The purpose of the declaration had been to gain the support of Jewish finance for the Allies.

British soldiers now thronged the streets of Jerusalem with their pockets full of money and trade took a turn for the better. In the Colony's shop the shelves were dusted off and the British Tommies welcomed; they bought up any souvenir that had Jerusalem on it. Olive trees were felled for the wood to make more souvenirs and orders were sent to the mother-of-pearl carvers in Bethlehem. The Colony also began to deal in antiquities and carpets. Later the Colony became the agents for Dodge, the American automobile firm. This proved to be a goldmine - as such franchises have always been in the Middle East. All of the Colony's young men gained regular employment in the business and in the car

section. But all the money coming in went back into the Colony's common bank account which was run single-handedly by Frederick Vester without any form of auditing.

The Arabs were pleased about having thrown off the Turkish yoke and hoped that the British would bring justice to the country. Arab landowners earned themselves a fortune by selling land to the Jews, who were particularly concentrated around Tel Aviv. The promise of autonomy in the region, as promised in 1915 by the British and the French, was forgotten; Balfour's promise to the Zionists in November 1917 of a Jewish national home was, on the other hand, not forgotten.

In 1925 Lord Balfour was in Jerusalem for the inauguration of The Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. Bertha Spafford, who also attended the ceremony, described how Balfour was moved at being in the place where Moses had once walked and looked out upon the Promised Land. Tears streamed down his face as he held his opening speech at the Hebrew University; the symbol of a new era - that of the state of Israel. Bertha Spafford went on as follows:

But later, when Balfour drove through Jerusalem and up to the Mount of Olives, where the High Commissioner was to hold a reception, he did not notice the Arab houses and businesses which were clad in black, or the black flags which were flying everywhere. Even though he might have heard the high pitched wailing of the Arab women, he would not have understood what they meant, because he was surrounded by Zionists who were not prepared to give him that information. But we heard the wailing and we worried about what the future held for Palestine.

Palestine had been Arab for 1300 years, and at the end of World War I 90% of the population was Arab. It seemed unlikely that the presence of the few Jews in the region could threaten them, but the immigration of Jews then increased dramatically. It transpired that the Jews were not interested in coexistence. Lars Lind explains that the Jews, for example, opposed the establishment of schools where Arab and Jewish children were taught together. Less than a year after General Allenby took Jerusalem the Arabs rose up against the Zionist influx and attacked the Jewish population in Jerusalem's Old City.

In 1919 the British Mandate took effect in Palestine. Lars Lind called it a political system characterised by more falsehood, treachery and discord than the Holy Land had ever witnessed...what the mandate actually was no one knew, and no one was interested in it, least of all the British. Nor did anyone know where their authority began and ended. The only tangible power was the Jewish Agency which had offices in London, Geneva and Washington. The Arabs too had offices, but the establishment of these was a political trick on the side of the mandate authority so as to make it appear that both parties had an influence, that there was proportional representation in the government authority. It was false. And the fact that there was never a parliamentary election in Palestine was due to the simple fact that the overwhelming majority of the Arabs would have smothered at birth the Zionism which Great Britain had declared itself in favour of.

To make things absolutely clear to the Arabs the British installed a Jewish High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, as leader of the civil administration in Palestine. In an absurd, but quite revealing handover ceremony, he signed a piece of paper, made out by the former leader, Sir Louis Bols, upon which there stood "Received by major general Sir Louis Bols: One whole Palestine". Later Herbert Samuel added the letters "E & O.E" which stood for "Errors and Omissions Excepted". But Sir Herbert

Samuel put all reservations to shame. He proved to be a fair and skilled high commissioner who by right achieved great respect and popularity.

The environment of Palestine also changed in the following years. Wide roads were put down and tall houses and building blocks shot up to accommodate the many Jewish immigrants. A railroad to Egypt was constructed and many places were supplied with water and electricity.

It was still relatively calm and so the tourists continued to stream in, among them were many Swedes, and Sweden decided to set up its own consulate in Jerusalem. Up until that point the Swedes made do with an honorary consul, Gustav Dalman, who was half German into the bargain.

Lewis Larsson was offered the post as Swedish consul. He accepted the challenge, but only after consulting Anna Spafford. She gave her consent, declaring that, "it is better that you occupy the post rather than someone else who might not act in our interests." Lewis Larsson arranged round trips to Palestine for Swedish tourists, and many of them were lodged at The American Colony. Lewis Larsson marked the Swedish presence every year by celebrating King Gustav Adolf's birthday in his home. But Anna Spafford warned the Swedes against displaying too much love for their own country. "That is what creates wars," she said.

Bertha Spafford Vester did not like the sight of Larsson's Swedish flagpole. She set her sights on getting her own husband installed in the available post of the Danish consul's representative in Jerusalem and worked doggedly at bringing this about. So certain was she that the lobbying would be successful that she put up a flagpole in the garden. To her great dismay, however, her plans went awry and the Colony had to settle for just one consul among its ranks.

The Colony now had a significant number of houses in Jerusalem at their disposal. Other than The Old House by the Damascus Gate and The Big House on the Nablus road, they owned a large villa with a private garden, into which Anna Spafford had moved some years previously. There was also the Palm House, and two other houses opposite The Big House, and Larsson's locksmith's workshop as well as another house which was the sleeping quarters for the men. The women lived in The Big House. From all these buildings, but mostly from the house in the Old City, the Colony carried on their charity work. The traces of the war, hunger or poverty, were still there.

In April 1922 Bertha Spafford and her husband Frederick Vester travelled to the United States with three of their six children. In New York they opened a branch of The American Colony Store. They were called back to Jerusalem suddenly - Anna Spafford had suffered a stroke and was asking after Bertha and the family.

Anna Spafford's illness put the members into a state of shock, they had never thought that she might die. She herself had said so many times that death was the wage of sin and God's judgement on the sinner. She had never been in doubt as to her special status as regarded God. "Do you think that I am talking to myself? Do you not believe that God is guiding me?" she once retorted to some members who were dissatisfied with the unequal treatment of members in the Colony. On that occasion she reminded Lewis Larsson, who had begun to be critical of the Colony leadership, of Thomas the Doubter, the disciple who only believed in Christ's rebirth when he saw the marks on his hands and feet

and felt the wound in his side.

After the first stroke, Anna Spafford regained her balance and regularly attended the morning meetings. Then she had another stroke, which was followed by diabetes, difficulty in breathing and other problems. She now had to be carried to the morning meetings. Often she fell asleep in the middle of a sentence, but she announced; "I have no intention of dying. The resurrection is near. We shall pray for the resurrection, that will bring the dead back to us." She spoke often of her husband Horatio and his return. Her condition gradually deteriorated and towards the end the family noted to their surprise that she began to speak only her mother tongue, Norwegian. Her family had emigrated from Stavanger to the United States when she was three years old, now she was 81.

One evening, while Anna Spafford's two daughters and Jacob Eliahu were sitting with her, a meeting was held. The Colony members were uneasy about the future, even though they knew that nothing was impossible for God. Together they prayed together for a miracle. They remained together all night until finally Bertha came in and said, "Mother is with Jesus." It was April 17th 1923.

The Colony's mother was gone. The Colony grieved, but only in private. Bertha Spafford decreed that there would be no grieving for a woman who had been a blessing for so many people in her life. But when they filed past Anna Spafford's open coffin, the members were clearly deeply moved, suddenly they had been made orphans and were no longer capable of understanding, or of going on with the life that Anna Spafford had always arranged. All of Jerusalem was devastated by the news, from the High Commissioner down to the lowliest of Arabs. Letters and telegrams began arriving from all over the world and hundreds of people attended the funeral.

On Anna Spafford's headstone there was her name and date of birth and passing, while on the other side the word "Mother" was engraved.

Selma Lagerlöf never forgot Anna Spafford; two years after her death she held a speech at The Universal Christian Conference in Stockholm in 1925, where she praised Anna Spafford highly:

The founder of the commune died at the age of 81, after having given her life to that community, in serving and leading it. It never became as powerful and world-encompassing as she might have hoped in the beginning - today there are only around 50 members. However, on her deathbed she could say to herself that the Divine voice had led her aright. Unity and harmony had surrounded her life like a protective wall. Grief had not been a stranger to her, but shared by so many loyal and sympathetic hearts it had lost its bitterness. And the ability to help - to lighten the burden of others - grew in a wondrous way. She could say to herself that for a Jerusalem which had once been hard hit by poverty, her Colony had been a blessing. She could recall bands of Jewish refugees whom the Colony had saved, of suffering pilgrims in danger of dying, whom she had helped, of the hundreds of starving people whom they had fed daily. She felt that the people who had been apprenticed in the Colony were upright, pure of heart, cheerful, mild, and happy in serving others. She could rejoice in the fact that the assistance of America during the war was largely due to her persistent and determined efforts.

But it would certainly not have been like her to boast of her earthly achievements in her final

hours; nevertheless she felt that God had Himself chosen even in this way to prove that unity and harmony are the greatest blessing of human life. The Colony now owns a huge palace not far from the Damascus Gate along with six smaller buildings and land, olive and fig trees, businesses and workshops. Photographs of Palestine from its studio are sold all over the world, and they equip caravans which carry travellers far and wide throughout Palestine and Syria.

Her once so despised Colony has become a resting place, a haven of peace in the Holy City. In the evenings people gather on the terraces for prayer, and song and music. Thoughts of peace emanated from this place during the dark and discomfiting days of the World War. Unity is possible. Unity can be attained between the peoples of different nations, unity can also rule between a government and its people.

Let us hear! Let us listen! He whose voice spoke to us of unity throughout the thunder of the World War, speaks to us now through the modest efforts of his humble servant. "Unity!" the voice calls to us. Unity between the Calvinists and the Lutherans, unity between Protestant and Greek Orthodox, between Greek Orthodox and Catholics, unity between Christians and non-Christians, unity, unity, unity between all the people of the earth!

The business of running the Colony was now divided in two. The religious leadership was given to Jacob Eliahu, assisted by John Dinsmore, while Bertha took care of practical matters. Bertha did not resort to consultation, let alone election, in assuming the mantle of Anna Spafford as the new leader of the Colony. As an outward sign of her new esteem she moved into her mother's magnificent villa with its private garden and its numerous servants. None of the members appear to have made any effort to oppose her, but Brother Jacob, who had been very closely attached to Anna Spafford, his adoptive mother, began increasingly to deprecate Bertha's material lifestyle. For her part, Bertha felt that his endless criticism was something of a bane. Another of her mother's loyal supporters, Elijah Meyers, was also something of an irritation to her. One day he laid out several accusations against her in connection with her mother's book of recorded revelations. Bertha marched over to him, tore the book from his hands and ripped it to pieces. This was such a shock to Elijah that he never recovered. Shortly afterwards he abandoned the Colony, never to return.

Bertha's dramatic method of dealing with Elijah Meyers - destroying her mother's book - meant that the recorded "messages" were lost forever. However, when the Swedish journalist Laura Petri visited the Colony in the 1920s she had the opportunity to study Anna Spafford's bible, the margins of which were filled with notes and comments. These included the repeated assertion that the Colony was "Christ's chosen bride", Christ was the bridegroom for whom everyone was waiting. An other addendum was, according to Laura Petri, a direct quote from Anna Spafford's collection of nocturnal revelations: "One who does not love the knowledge of truth will be struck by blindness. God's judgement is the blindness which strikes His unwitting victim." Other messages are more obscure. Among the few which Laura Petri uncovered was one from November 5th 1895. This was some weeks before Anna Spafford and her group moved into the Swedish Evangelical Church in Chicago. It read: "Lead them home to God. Now, this evening, Take the loaves because they could see God's things. The loaves come. It is time to guard the nations with an iron bar. The dragon is tortured." On the 31st January 1896, by which time Anna Spafford had become the unchallenged leader of both groups in Chicago, there is an entry that reads: "Come in time, when the crow screeches. I came quickly. They

shall see the man in His kingdom." The crow was apparently Olof Henrik Larsson who had done something which she considered to be an attempt at rebellion. But Anna Spafford alone could interpret these divine messages.

When Bertha tore the message book into pieces, she marked the end of a period in the Colony's history. Perhaps she was also acting out of a wish to protect her mother from curious and critical eyes. In any case, Bertha's book *Our Jerusalem* suggests that she, a more traditional Christian, was somewhat ashamed of the sectarian aspect of her parents' faith - in particular of their expectation of the Messiah and the rule of celibacy. These aspects of her parents are considerably played down in the book. Whether she believed in her mother's divine messages remains an open question. But perhaps more interesting is the question of whether Anna Spafford herself believed in them. They had apparently comprised her credo, her religiousness, and complete conviction. Nothing else had been as paramount to her - nor indeed, by extension, to the Colony. The messages covered quite a range of different forms: from mystical unconnected rambles to the religious directive about truth which Laura Petri recorded, or to messages oriented towards quite concrete and practical matters. It is also undeniably striking that the practical messages were always in line with Anna Spafford's own wishes, and that they appeared just in time to resolve matters when problems became acute. It is not too far fetched to suggest that they were self-motivated: Anna Spafford was at heart convinced of Christ's return, she wanted to play a significant role when the day came, and she possessed the considerable will required to hear those voices she had need of. Although it would be too much to conclude that this was a case of out-and-out fraudulence.

Following her mother's death, Bertha stayed away from The Big House as much as possible. She took part in some of the prayer meetings and, as a rule, was present to take afternoon coffee on Sundays. But she also had plenty of things to occupy herself with; charity work, a lot of social activities and socialising with Jerusalem's aristocracy, and with the British. She held a lot of receptions in her home, cocktail parties and dance parties upon which her beautiful daughters cast a radiant shine, and she herself was a brilliant hostess. Horatio Spafford once used to say that, "at one time or another the world and his wife will come to Jerusalem," and that certainly seemed to be becoming the case: The number of notables whom Bertha Spafford brushed shoulders with over the coming years was countless. Businessmen, princes and tycoons such as John D. Rockefeller, who casually enquired, "can you tell me, Mrs Vester, was it one or two million dollars I donated to the Jerusalem Museum?"

Bertha's children spent much of their time in the United States, and she travelled there regularly to visit them and to raise money for the charity work, first and foremost for the Spafford Baby Home which had just been established.

The children's home was the outcome of a sudden emergency. On Christmas Eve 1925 Bertha met a couple who had a new-born baby. The mother and child had need of medical help, but all the hospitals were closed. Bertha, however, managed to get them admitted to a hospital, but the young mother died the following day. The father then went to Bertha Vester and asked her to take care of the little boy. He himself lived in a cave and had no way of looking after the baby. Bertha took the child, gave him the name Noël and employed a trained nurse to take care of him: within a week two more children had arrived, and thus The Baby Home, later to be given the name The Anna Spafford Baby Home came into being.

Bertha's sister Grace moved to New York with her family. Bertha had decided that Grace's husband John Whiting was to take charge of the American branch of the American Colony Store. He himself would rather have remained in Palestine, the country where he was born and raised, and whose language he spoke fluently, but Bertha insisted. Some of the children were educated in the United States, sponsored by the Colony, and the business gave her and her family an excuse to travel back and forth.

In 1927 Lars Lind was asked to travel to New York to evaluate the viability of the branch. He reported back that the enterprise was experiencing deep financial difficulties and suggested that the branch be closed down immediately. It would be better to concentrate on the business in Jerusalem which was a steady source of income, and where there was in fact a shortage of personnel. Frederick Vester accepted the proposal, but Bertha opposed it. She was perhaps worried that this course might lead to the emergence of rather embarrassing details: The New York branch had received goods worth a value of 200,000 dollars from the business in Jerusalem, while not a single dollar had passed the other way.

Other money was disappearing too. At one point a generous tourist donated 25,000 dollars towards a church so that religious services could take place there rather than in the Colony's living room. A church fund was set up and Bertha Spafford Vester promised that one of her sons would take a course in Theology so as to pass on the religious heritage. Nothing more was to come of this however. The church was never built, and the 25,000 dollars disappeared.

None of the Vester family showed any interest in the religious life of the Colony, and the obvious person to be the new religious leader was brother Jacob, who had acted as spokesman for Anna Spafford, read the gospels in the morning and preached and led prayer services. He was well educated, spoke several languages fluently and was well respected by both members and visitors to the Colony. He was appalled, though, by the way the young people in the Colony lived. In the hope that Lars Lind could help Jacob to adjust to the changing times, Bertha asked him to share a room with Jacob. "Try and persuade him to stop reprimanding the children at the meetings," she said. But Lars Lind did not want to get involved. It would in any case probably have proved futile, Jacob's opposition to the Colony's new style was so deeply engrained. His loyalty, however, compelled him to remain. In 1932 he was killed in a traffic accident in Palestine. It then emerged that, albeit at such a late stage in life, he had converted to Catholicism. Anna Spafford's hold would appear to have been broken. Despite her having spoken out against the established church in general, and Catholicism in particular, her adopted son had converted.

Olof Henrik Larsson's daughter Edith also had difficulties accepting the changes during these years:

The Colony was wealthy now and owned several valuable properties and prosperous businesses. All the members worked very hard and ardently to build up the Colony's well being, all had contributed to the success of the enterprise and had put their own material property and their salaries as well as their hands to work for the Colony. One could compare us to equal shareholders in a concern. Nobody called anything their own property, all the money that came in was put into a common pool which was controlled by Frederick Vester, and receipts were never kept to show how the money was

spent.

The younger generation found it hard, having to ask every time they needed money for clothes and other necessities for themselves and their families. It was hard for us to understand why such a distinction should be made between the Spafford Vester family and the rest of us in the Colony.

Only the Vester family's children received a formal education. Despite the fact that the Colony's Arab neighbours had begun to send their children to university in Beirut and other places to be educated as doctors, pharmacists, lawyers etc., no one in the Colony received an education. The young people were fed into the various branches of the Colony's enterprises as free labour.

Immediately after the war ended the British authorities asked for an account of the Colony's finances and ownership of the different businesses. Frederick Vester, who was responsible for the Colony's finances, sent the following letter in reply:

Jerusalem, the 8th September 1919.

We have given ordinance No.118 our careful consideration, but feel unable to decide which category our Colony comes under, and we would ask for your help in this.

The shop came into our possession because a number of items which had been produced in the Colony were for sale there. It belongs to the Colony and is run by those members of the Colony best suited to the task. In much the same way as human limbs are placed on the human body. Those who run the shop are neither partners nor shareholders.

No one holds shares and no one receives a salary, all earnings go towards food, clothing, and rent etc. for all the members as a whole, and anything which is left over is put into the Colony's charity work.

There is no actual capital, but a large part of the stock is produced in the Colony and is exchanged therefore according to the circumstances.

Those responsible for the business naturally take care of expenses according to the income.

For many years the business was called "F. Vester", but when the latter's son became a member of the Colony, and the Colony took over the business, "American Colony Store" was added to the well known company name. The business continued to sell F. Vester's products.

We eagerly await your decision so that we might implement your requirements and we remain yours respectfully

F. Vester.

For some years the Colony heard nothing more from the authorities and continued to pay no income tax.

Four years later, however, which is to say three months after Anna Spafford's death, Frederick Vester suddenly gained a clear understanding of the ownership of the business, and he subsequently wrote to the registration office in Jerusalem:

Jerusalem, the 19th July 1923.

I hereby request that our firm be registered.

1. The names of the partners: Frederick Vester, John D. Whiting, both resident at The American Colony.
2. The firm was formerly known as:
F. Vester & Co. The American Colony Store.

From now on the name will be: Vester & Company, The American Colony Stores.

3. The names of the partners who have the right to sign for the firm: Frederick Vester and John D. Whiting. The partners may sign jointly or separately.
4. Capital: 8000 Egyptian pounds.
5. Start and closure dates: The present partnership began in 1903, its termination is undecided.
6. Purpose: The sale of oriental goods to tourists, export of local products, import of automobiles with spare parts and accessories, electrical light materials, typewriters, etc.

We remain on behalf of Vester & Co yours respectfully,

John D. Whiting F. Vester.

This letter caused a great deal of consternation among the other members. The contents were in complete contradiction to the ideology which had ruled under Anna Spafford. At the same time Frederick Vester was putting the Colony's good reputation at risk by becoming involved in the illegal trade of antiquities. This matter concerned some very valuable rarities which proved to have been smuggled out of Lebanon. Vester bought them from some men who happened to come into the shop one day by chance. He later passed them onto an American professor of archaeology. The affair ended with Vester being threatened with prison unless he managed to return the objects in question within a

set period of time. Luckily the professor decided to send the things back to Vester who thereby paid only in the damage to his name and reputation. But this episode only served to encourage the dissatisfaction, especially among the younger members of the Colony, with the methods of the new leadership. The most ardent critic was Lewis Larsson who, for example, refused to accept that the Colony's young people could not have an education. He sent his son Theo to school in England.

In 1929 Frederick and Bertha Vester, along with the Whiting family, travelled to the United States to visit the children. Bertha consulted an American attorney about restructuring the Colony and together they drew up a number of statutes created for the regulation of members' claims in the event of their leaving the Colony. A telegram then arrived from Jacob Eliahu to say that there was unrest among the younger members and urged the Vesters to return to the Colony immediately. Once she was back in Jerusalem Bertha Spafford set out before the members the new set of rules which, paradoxically, she called the Colony's "unwritten" laws. She asked everyone to sign them.

The "unwritten" laws went as follows:

Membership of the American Colony is terminated:

- a. when the member dies,
- b. when the member volunteers to leave the Colony,
- c. when, after having been given a warning by a majority of the general committee, the member is expelled from the membership.

The warnings may be given in the manner in which the general committee at any time sees fit.

With the termination of membership the person in question immediately loses all right to income, property, and privilege in the above named Colony, and lose every right and claim to compensation for any contribution which he or she might have passed on to the Colony. Children of parents who have lost their membership have no rights or claims, except in the event of the parents' death.

Personal property belonging to members living in Palestine who are given shelter and maintenance from the Colony can not be handed on by this member to any relative, either by blood, kinship or marriage, nor to any person or organisation not holding membership.

In the event of the Colony's dissolution all its property will fall to its members.

Lewis Larsson refused to sign. He called the contents of the document unchristian sentiments which contradicted the Colony's credo to love one's neighbour as oneself. Gradually, however, he reluctantly gave in to Bertha's argument that this was "simply the way things had always worked. Matters simply had to be straightened out, so that the children can inherit."

But relations between the Larssons and the Vester family deteriorated steadily. The Larssons were gradually excluded from the Colony. They lived in a rented house across from The Big House and

no longer took part in either the morning services or communal meals. Larsson's mother-in-law Mathilda collected their daily ration of food from the kitchen and carried it over to them - in the same way that she had brought food to her husband Olof Henrik Larsson for years. But in contrast to the old shepherd without a flock, Lewis Larsson did not give up the fight against Bertha's unabashed attempt at appropriating the Colony's property.

Lars Lind described the situation as follows:

It was at this point that Larsson abandoned his exile and took on a great number of conflicts in the belief that he could lead the Colony back to "the old truths". The manoeuvring to gain influence promulgated corridor politics worthy of a political congress. Larsson tried to take over the morning devotion but the older members were tired of the whole thing and left the meeting, while the younger ones soon let him know that as far as they were concerned the communal life was past history. The only thing that interested them was a fair division of the Colony's resources before they set out on their own.

Lars Lind, who enjoyed the confidence of the Vester family, and who was the only one outside the family with any grasp of economics, tried to convince Frederick Vester to make an estimate of the value and form a shareholding. While Frederick might have been amenable to the idea, Bertha resisted, declaring that she would rather die than abandon her mother's ideals. "But are they worth dying for?" her husband asked.

Eventually the leadership decided that Lewis Larsson's internal political manoeuvring could no longer be tolerated and the Colony's new "unwritten laws" were put into practice; Lewis Larsson and his family were to be expelled. Bertha called a meeting with the intention of voting the Larssons out and paying 1200 dollars in compensation to the family, plus their passage home to Sweden. So as not to arouse the suspicion (i.e. criticism) of the British authorities the Vesters invited the General Secretary of the YMCA to the meeting. He would adjudicate and ensure that everything was in accordance with British law.

Lars Lind also prepared himself for the meeting by asking Daniel Auster, a lawyer friend and the first Jewish mayor of Jerusalem, to wait in another room in the house. Lars Lind's plan to save the Colony was to have a total of the property drawn up and a new firm established. Everyone would have an equal share of what they had created together in fellowship.

The members gathered in their best Sunday clothes in the large hall. The Larssons did not turn up. The meeting began with Jacob Eliahu reading out the accusations made against Lewis Larsson, after which the idea being that they should all vote for expulsion, but Lars Lind got to his feet uninvited and spoke:

Firstly, give the Larssons their fair share. Certainly, married couples can get divorced, but only when each partner has been given their full share of the common property. If you have any moral accusation against the parents or the children - then let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

Lars Lind then outlined his own plan and called the lawyer Daniel Auster in. Auster was also

the lawyer for the firm Vester & Co.. Before anything more happened Lars Lind went across to fetch the Larssons. It took some time to convince them to come over to The Big House, where, as expected, they were met with icy looks from the Vester family. Auster described the plan and this triggered off half an hour of accusation, blame and insult from Bertha. Auster asked to be driven home, as he could see no possible way of bringing the two parties together in agreement.

It soon became clear that a break-up of the Colony was inevitable. The separate sides both hired lawyers at enormous cost. Bertha sent a telegram to her sister and brother-in-law in New York, asking them to come home and to bring with them the best lawyer they could find. They replied that they had hired a Mr Townsend and that he demanded 10,000 dollars in advance. The money was paid without any of the other members being consulted. Mr Townsend later turned out to be unacceptable to the British authorities who would not recognise him as a lawyer in Palestine.

One central question was whether the Colony was a charitable institution or a business enterprise. There was a document in existence, issued by the Public Prosecutor, describing the Colony as an institution with charitable aims. It also declared that all of the Colony's income went into an account to be audited by a bookkeeper appointed by the courts. Bertha had up until this point never paid very much attention to this document. When, however, it was brought into the trial she received the shock of her life. To consider the Colony as a charitable institution would mean that her control of the Colony's property, built up over 30 odd years, would be relinquished.

Although this interpretation would mean that none of the Colony members, not even Lewis Larsson, would benefit from the value of the Colony's businesses, he was nevertheless in favour of it. The only thing that really mattered to him at this point was hurting Bertha Vester. The other members were much less enamoured of the idea of waving goodbye to the fortune they had amassed over the years.

The case came to court and the document was immediately rejected. The court stated that the Colony could not be regarded as a charitable institution. This was a victory for the Vesters but not for the solidarity of the Colony, whose future looked increasingly uncertain.

Lars Lind was, apart from the Vesters and the Whiting family, the only one who had a small part of the Colony's property registered in his own name. One evening he was invited to the Vesters' home. While he was alone with Bertha she pointed at a large portrait of her mother and asked; "Can you look into her eyes and tell her that we have failed?" Lind answered in the affirmative. Bertha looked at him; "You must trust me," she said. "And you must set these people free," Lind replied. They exchanged views without reaching any agreement and Lind went home around midnight.

The following morning Frederick Vester went to see Lind and he suggested that the two of them, along with John Whiting, work out an official sworn affidavit that all the property registered in Vester's, Whiting's and Lind's names was in fact common property and belonged to all the members of the Colony. Vester went along with the idea with no objections, so Lars Lind went to the registry office and signed his declaration. Some days later he asked Vester whether he had done the same. "Not yet, but I will do," came the reply. A week later Lind again visited Frederick Vester in the shop. This time the tone had changed; "No, and I shall never sign," shouted Frederick Vester, "I am no fool. And I do

not wish to see you again."

By this time several fractions had formed among the Colony's members. The sharpest point of confrontation was the disagreement between the Vesters and Lewis Larsson's family. The Vesters had most of the Americans and some of the older Swedes and Swedish-American members on their side. Brother Jacob, too, had chosen to side with the Vesters. On Lewis Larsson's side, which was more of a breakaway group, there were the younger members in particular. There were also a good number of members who had no wish to choose sides and who in many ways belonged to both camps.

After Frederick Vester went back on his word to Lars Lind, the Colony's dissolution became inevitable. Lind informed the breakaway group that they would be forced to resort to the law to get their share of the communal properties. The Colony then went through an open internal conflict. Members changed rooms, no one wishing to share a room with someone from the opposite camp. In the communal dining hall the two groups kept to themselves, and in the Colony's workshops the work was planned according to the wishes of the different fractions. Any form of communal fellowship and unity was gone.

The two groups were united in their wish to resolve the case by letting it go to arbitration. The man responsible for the task was a leading Public Prosecutor from Egypt, C.H. Perrot; the costs of the arbitration alone added up to 100,000 dollars, which today would be equivalent to more than 250,000 dollars. Perrot commented that, "never in all my life have I had to deal with a more distasteful arbitration, and I have never had to deal with such impossible people."

Some of the members who had previously been expelled by Anna Spafford and sent away with just enough for their travel expenses took advantage of the situation to make claims against the Colony demanding a share of the fortune. Often those expelled could prove in court that their expulsion - which was of course decided by Anna Spafford single-handedly - was random and unfair. An American woman, who had joined the Colony as a child in 1896, and who was later expelled along with her family for no given reason brought a case for unwarranted expulsion. Older members of the Colony seated on the witness stand confirmed that the woman had in her time been expelled for moral reasons.

"What moral circumstances were the cause of her expulsion?" judge Perrot wished to know.

"The woman went out into the street unsuitably dressed," replied the witness.

"How was she dressed?"

"She went into the street with an apron on," came the reply.

There was laughter in the courtroom - and this brought ridicule and shame on the Colony and its methods.

The arbitration awarded the major group - the elder members of the Colony - the large buildings. This gave them the opportunity to continue their lives, even though it also led to The Big House becoming something of an old people's home. The smaller group was awarded money and/or

real estate. But much of the money had been used up on the Spafford family's journeys and stays in the United States - and not least of all on the expensive legal costs. After four years of calculations a figure was arrived at in 1934 of 5,386 dollars and 19 cents for each member - not a particularly big reward for 34 years' work. All houses, workshops and businesses belonging to the Colony were evaluated and thereafter divided into as many parts as there were members. To the minority group it seemed that the buildings in particular were undervalued which resulted in the majority group receiving too much. One exception to this was, according to Lars Lind, Lewis Larsson, who got the Vesters' house with its beautiful private garden which was filled with pine trees. Put together, the value of the house and grounds added up to more than the five shares which the Larssons were entitled to. When Lind pointed out the inconsistency of this to the arbitrator, Perrot replied that these shares had been his greatest problem, but that he had been forced to award Larsson the properties, thereby leaving it to his own conscience to reimburse the other members. But this never happened. According to Edith Larsson her husband was in complete disagreement with this. As Lewis Larsson saw it he had not even received as much as he deserved.

The ethical and non-judicial principle that those who were awarded their share in real estate were under a moral obligation to compensate the other members with any outstanding value accrued in the property received never really worked. So not only did many dreams of unity and love result in a division between the majority and minority groups, but also in an internal falling out between the members of the minority group themselves.

Around fifty people remained as members of the Colony's main group after the split. Many in the group were elder members who were allowed to remain living where they were. There were only a few children, of which the majority belonged to the Vester and Whiting families.

In the minority group there were 16 adults in total with a dozen children between them to take care of. Those who belonged to the group that lived in the Colony now moved away.

Relationships were also visibly affected. One young married woman, Rachel Dinsmore, chose to continue living in the Colony, despite the fact that she was married to Gästgivar Olof Matsson who belonged to the minority group. Although she lived outside The Big House, along with her husband and their four children, she received a monthly allowance from the Colony. Her father, John Dinsmore, remained in the Colony and continued to lead morning prayers for the rest of his life. In 1935 Bertha Vester decided to throw Rachel Dinsmore out of the Colony, fearing that her children might one day make claims on the Colony's holdings.

Rachel's brother in law, Eric G. Matson, left the Colony in 1935. His share of the Colony's fortune was the photographic business that he had helped to build and perfected over many years. He was the last person in the Colony, apart from the Vester and Whiting families with children. The Vesters and the Whitings had now ensured that only their heirs would be able to claim the Colony's holdings.

Bertha Spafford Vester does not devote much space to the break up of the Colony in her book *Our Jerusalem*:

A little later a cable arrived from Jacob asking us to return, as there was dissent between Colony members in Jerusalem.

Our summer holiday was over. Three weeks from that day Frederick and I were back in Jerusalem. We took the constitution draft with us, but try as hard as we could we were not able to reconcile the opposing parties. Eleven of the members left the Colony.

Josef and Brita Larsson from Nås remained loyal to the Vester family. When the arbitration case was over Josef Larsson wrote to some friends in Sweden:

You say that there has been a considerable amount written in all the papers about the Colony, and we have heard nothing of it, even though we received Mora Avis until August when it stopped coming, and before that there were several issues missing and in one issue a large article had been cut out. So it would appear that Lewis Larsson has managed to run things the way he wanted them. So that his honour can remain untarnished. But Mr Vester gets the blame for everything, and his name is blackened all over Sweden...Larsson and the others do all they can to harm Vester and the Colony. But we are so pleased that we have succeeded in as far as having them removed from the Colony. So we no longer have to listen to their tempestuous words and false accusations. They said that they would take a broom and sweep all impurity from the Colony and make it a house of prayer for all people. But they were driven out. But not thrown on the street as Larsson would have it, on the contrary they got their full due and more than that which they deserve. They got Vester's house, which lies on the road to the Damascus Gate, a large two storey house with all the conveniences, a wash room, and four smaller living rooms in the yard behind the house, and a beautiful garden with all kinds of flowers between the house and the street. So it is quite suitable as a hotel, which we presume is what they will put it to use as. Uppermost in Larsson's mind is getting all the Swedes down there to stop them coming to the Colony, and in addition to their share they also get a house in Haifa and the entire car business, with everything that entails, which is a good source of income. But they have to pay some back to the Colony, because it is more than their share...we are so pleased that there is now an end to this whole matter which looked so hopeless before as they would not hear of sharing, but wished to remain in the Colony so as to slowly edge Vester out of the way, so that they could take over the leadership and control...

To Lewis Larsson, of course, the story went somewhat differently. Here he writes to some of his family in Nås:

As far as I and the family are concerned, that is to say Edith, the four boys and my mother-in-law, Tilda, they are all fine. My three sisters I never see, despite them still living in the Colony which is only a few hundred metres from here. They have been fooled by the leaders into staying as far away from us as possible - it is dangerous for them to come anywhere near us, for then they might hear the real truth about the huge scandals in the Colony. Yes, that is how the great ideals have turned out. Who should have dreamed that it would turn out like this in the end? It was a terrible struggle with the leaders until I eventually forced myself onto the court with the help of lawyers, legal proceedings and conciliators. We are most dearly grateful that we managed to free ourselves from the whole thing when it turned out so unfairly. The leaders had naturally not counted on us sweeping the board instead of giving in to their superior power, nor that things would go so well for us since then, that our standing

has not been undermined in the least. On the contrary, we are on the best terms possible with people from every walk of life.

Lars Lind ended his account of The American Colony thus:

I never returned to the Colony. But it has not been easy to let go of the memories of the 34 years during which the Colony was my home. Or was it ever indeed a home? Was it simply an institution? How could it be a home when parents were separated from one another and from their children? When the children were common property which could be ordered to work by any one of the adults, and be punished by anyone who felt the urge to do so. One lived according to one's age and gender, not with ones siblings. "The Sisters" made sure that the boys' clothes were washed and folded, "The Brothers" were the guardians at night. There were of course good times. But who could call it a home?

16. EPILOGUE

While the Colony was occupied with its own internal divisions, the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine escalated. The Arabs had become increasingly desperate about the accelerating purchase of land by the Jews, and the rising immigration. In 1933 entry permits were issued to 30,000, in 1934 it was 42,000, and in 1935 61,000 Jews were allowed in. In addition to this there were many thousands of illegal immigrants. In 1936 the situation went completely out of control and there was an open Arab uprising all over Palestine. It began with a general strike which paralysed the country for six months and continued with fighting in the following three years, first and foremost between the British and the Palestinians. In 1939 the uprising was finally put down. In effect this was to seal the fate of the Palestinians, despite the British continuing to try and win the Arabs over by promising the region its independence.

The promises were laid down in the so called White Paper of May 1939. According to this document there were no plans to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, Jewish immigration was to be limited over the next five years to 75,000, where after it would be stopped completely. The purchase of land was to be regulated and the country was to develop autonomous bodies in preparation for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within ten years.

In the American Colony life went on after the split. An increasing number of tourists visited The Big House which was turning more and more towards being a hotel. The dining hall had been divided so that most of the members could eat there, separated from the guests. A bus was acquired to take the tourists to visit the holy sights, or the members on day trips to pick flowers, swim, or simply relax. The Colony also bought a summer house in Haifa where the elder members could have some recreation. The Colony's Swedish members took care of the Vesters' and the Whitings' grandchildren at times and, generally speaking, enjoyed a good relationship with the two American leaders. They were allowed to take over the two families' cast-off clothes.

The Second World War was a relatively quiet time in Palestine and in The American Colony. Just as he had 25 years earlier, Frederick Vester regarded Germany as the aggressor, and he eventually managed to trade his German citizenship in for a Palestinian one. He did not, however, have much time to enjoy this as he died on the 2nd January 1942 of a heart attack. Bertha described their marriage as "38 perfect years together".

During the war the British imposed stringent rationing which resulted in the rise of a large black market. The war did not, however, aggravate the internal situation in the country, Jewish and Arab women could be seen sitting talking while sewing bandages for the British Red Cross. The Arab-Jewish conflict was apparently gone. This was, however, only to last until the war was over. The hatred surfaced again into the broad light of day with murders, kidnappings and bombings, The Jewish terror organisations in particular were very active. Irgun and the Stern Gang, both led by men who would later become prime ministers of Israel (Menachim Begin and Yitzhak Shamir), created havoc

everywhere. The terror groups introduced some of the methods that were later to typify the terrorist action in the area, namely the use of car bombs and letter bombs. The most notable terror action was the blowing up of the King David Hotel in 1946. The hotel housed the British civil administration and more than 90 Britons, Arabs and Jews were killed. Life in Palestine became a hazardous affair. In 1947 all British women and children were evacuated, and in November 1947 the United Nations implemented a division of Palestine. This decision took no account of Palestinian or Arab wishes.

The majority of the Colony's remaining members now left the country, leaving behind the elder Swedish sisters who lived in The Big House. The spirit abroad during the First World War now returned to the Colony. Help was given and The Big House, which had been operating as a hotel for some time, was partly turned into a hospital in 1947.

With great sadness the old members looked on as the country was divided. When they had come to Palestine, the Arabs and the Jews had lived peacefully side by side. Lars Lind described the division as the crime of the century, and the 78 year old Nanny Holmström, one of the Swedes who had arrived in the Colony from Chicago in 1896, wrote to the American president Harry S. Truman, on the 19th February 1948:

Alas! Mr President, you have now made the mistake of your life, I am sorry to tell you that we live with bombs that have smashed our windows, and we are in danger of flying bullets at all hours. Come and have a look for yourself. You must come incognito to see what you have done, and you must spend the night here. The British army will do their best to protect you on condition that their Tommies survive in sufficient numbers. Do not come with an entourage like the leader of a democratic country with free elections, you will have to settle for one bodyguard with a good automatic rifle to prevent you being harassed before you have even stepped off the train. You have contributed to the creation of this mess, so I implore you to kindly help in solving it. This crisis, this cruel, barbaric wave of pure hatred can only be helped by a miracle. Do whatever you can, perhaps it is not too late. If you insist on a division, then it will have reach up as high as the sky, for no amount of cement or stone, borders or agreements will solve this problem. It can only be done with the help of mutual consent, Mr President, the whole thing has been tragically destroyed by you.

By the start of 1948 Palestine was in chaos. There was a civil war in progress and the British had lost their hold on the country. Everyone was shot at, even the Colony's children's home in the Old City was hit a number of times, and many of the nurses gave up their jobs. Bertha Spafford felt obliged to close the home. On April 9th the so-called Deir Yaseen massacre took place. The small village outside Jerusalem was attacked by Irgun and the Stern Gang. Over 250 Arab men, women and children were killed and even more were wounded. The Anna Spafford Baby Nursing Home took in 40 children who had lost one or both parents in the massacre. The House was situated in a very exposed position at one of the highest points in the city. The children were later evacuated to a safer place.

The Big House was placed in a strategically unfortunate position on the Nablus road. Two members and three servants were hit by gunfire, none of them seriously. At the beginning of 1948 one of the old members passed away. It would have been very dangerous to move the coffin to the Colony's graveyard on Mount Scopus. But Bertha resolutely contacted the opposing parties and convinced them to hold a short cease-fire so that the Colony could bury their member.

The Big House was hit several times, and during one violent attack one of the two large palm trees which the Ustinov family had donated to the Colony at the time of Bertha and Frederick's wedding was hit and destroyed. (In a huge ceremony many years later Peter Ustinov planted a new palm in the garden). The Colony managed, however, to avoid either of the conflicting parties taking over the house to use it to launch their attacks. Bertha's good contacts and the Colony's traditional neutrality protected The Big House throughout the war.

The 15th of May 1948 was the official date for the termination of the British Mandate and the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel. On that day the Arab nations launched an attack on Israel. The UN intervened and managed to create a temporary cease-fire between the parties. The Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte arrived as a UN envoy to the region to attempt mediation between the warring sides and he was lodged for a time in The American Colony. Theo Larsson, the son of the Swedish consul, Lewis Larsson, became Bernadotte's assistant. On the 17th September 1948 he put the consulate's Chrysler at Bernadotte's disposal for the sake of an official mission in Jerusalem. By coincidence Theo Larsson was not in the car when it was stopped by a group of Jewish terrorists who gunned down Bernadotte on the spot with machine guns. The Stern Gang was responsible for his murder.

When the war was over hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled as new national borders were drawn. The American Colony now lay in the Jordanian occupied section of Jerusalem. Most of the old Colony members had left the country. Many had travelled to the United States, some went back to Sweden. The remaining members now turned their eye to the east and established contacts in Jordan and Lebanon, the Vester family set up a travel bureau in Beirut. Since most of the holy places in Jerusalem remained within the Arab part of the city there was still a good deal of tourism. Arabs from all countries, not least of all Lebanon, flooded in along with tourists and pilgrims from all over the world.

Most of Bertha's six children had moved abroad, but her youngest son, John, remained in Jerusalem where he took charge of the hotel, "The American Colony Hotel" as it was now known. Bertha cared about him a great deal, he reminded her of her husband, but John was not a particularly gifted businessman, and the hotel began to lose money. In 1963 Bertha called her oldest son Horatio home from London where he worked as a lawyer. He was to save the hotel from the threat of ruin, and with energy and skill he and his wife Valentine managed not only to turn the business around but also to refurbish and expand the hotel so that it could completely live up to the expectations of the day.

Horatio loved the country and spoke fluent Arabic, but he had no interest in the religious aspects of the former colony. Among Anna Spafford's grandchildren only Bertha's daughter, Anna Grace Lind was religious, but to a degree that was in contrast almost too much for Bertha's tastes: Anna Grace had spent some time at a convent in England, and when she arrived in Jerusalem she was wearing sandals and a cross. This was not the way one had carried one's religion formerly. Anna Grace spent the rest of her days at the hotel; she died in 1994.

During the June War of 1967 The American Colony Hotel was hit numerous times as, once again, it found itself in the firing line, caught in the crossfire between the Israelis and the Arabs. All of

the hotels windows were smashed and the building suffered some degree of damage. One night soldiers from the Israeli army forced their way into the hotel and fired through the doors of every room. The hotel garden was also ruined.

The soldiers inflicted great damage, but put things right afterwards, as from one day to the next the hotel changed nationality. After 20 years in Jordan the hotel woke up after the Six Day War to find itself under Israeli rule. Valentine Vester had been in England during the war, to visit one of her sons, and when she returned to the hotel she was met by one of the Palestinian servants with the Jewish greeting "Shalom". At once the links to the Arab world were severed. It was no longer Amman and Beirut that one dealt with, but Tel Aviv. The hotel guests changed, with Israelis replacing Arabs, while the international guests, businessmen and journalists, continued to arrive.

On the 24th March 1968 Bertha Spafford celebrated her 90th birthday with a grand reception attended by both Jews and Arabs. Shortly afterwards she died in her sleep. To the very end she was a stately woman. "She was like a queen," the hotel's long time doorman George said in unabashed tribute to the woman who had inherited her mother's charisma and talent for organisation, but who lacked her mystical religious spirit and magical power. Other than George it was difficult to find anyone who had anything good to say about Bertha Spafford Vester - but her authority still seems to reach out from beyond the grave, nobody would openly dare to express their dislike of her. In informal conditions, however, a picture would emerge of a despotic woman who, while being able to enchant and beguile public gatherings and the notables of the world, could not manage to form close ties to anyone, not even her own children.

Following Bertha's death The American Colony Hotel carried on, learning to adapt to the regular changes. During the Palestinian uprising in the 1980s, the Intifada, Israelis stopped coming to East Jerusalem and thus to the hotel. Nearly all the guests during that period of time were international journalists who made good use of the facsimile and telex facilities and the international on-line news services. In addition there was the outstanding accomodation and excellent restaurant and service. At the beginning of the 1990s the secret negotiations for the peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians took place in Room 16 of the hotel. And since then the hotel has housed hundreds of representatives from the aid organisations from all over the world who were keen to help the peace process on its way.

Apart from The American Colony Hotel in The Big House, which is owned by descendants of the Vesters and the Whitings but is administered by a Swiss hotel chain, one can still visit The Spafford Children's Center inside the city walls which has helped and continues to help thousands of Palestinian children.

As a guest one can still feel some of the old spirit from the Samaritan days of the house hidden in the walls, woodwork and floors of the hotel in this beautiful and amiable place. The American Colony Hotel has of course over the years been the location of numerous conferences, political talks, and negotiations. History has, literally, been written here. As has the story of belief and ideals, of brutal reality, of man's timeless enterprise and of a tough struggle for power and survival. More often than not in the name of God.

Without the Swedish contribution of capital and hard labour the international hotel is unlikely to

have been in existence today. And several thousand kilometres to the north there is a stone in Nås Parish in Dalarna upon which are engraved the names of the thirty-seven emigrants who left their homeland on the 23rd of July 1896. At the beginning of July every year since 1959 the play *Ingmarspelen*, a dramatisation by Rune Lindström of the first part of Selma Lagerlöf's novel *Jerusalem*, is performed in Nås. In the summer of 1996 a caravan of twelve horse drawn wagons was staged in memory of those who had set out a hundred years earlier. The exodus is still seen as a tragedy in Nås, and is marked by a minute's silence. Today there are still people in Nås who believe that their compatriots were cheated in their venturing to foreign parts. But without Selma Lagerlöf's account of Sweden's smallest revivalist movement this story would probably have been forgotten a long time ago.