

The Israelis now (5Jan87) do, & Card. O'Connor has just apologized for refusing to go through with arrangements to meet Israeli officials in Jerusalem after the Vatican, which says the UN should rule Jerusalem, objected....Three millenniums ago the Canaanite king of Jerusalem thought he should rule the city, but David slyly relieved him of his duties: Israel, in the person of King David, was to rule Jerusalem, but not without persistent prophetic claiming that only God should be King of Jerusalem (a theocracy). And of course a series of empires--Egyptian, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab (Arab Muslims, AD/CE 637-), Christian (AD/CE 1099-), Syrian Muslim (AD/CE 1187-), Turkish Muslim, British (AD/CE 1917-47)--ruled Jerusalem before it was split into Jordanian East & Israeli West (AD/CE 1947-67), a split I recorded in color as guns pointing at each other across the barbed wire....This Think-sheet popped into mind while I was restoring to my ancient-lamp collection the lamp made in Jerusalem during the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem (AD/CE 1099-).

1. I'd used that lamp yesterday, lighted where all could see it, in preaching in Bridgewater (MA) UCC church on the green. Tomorrow is Epiphany, the 12th Day of Christmas, closing the Christian festival of lights (which encloses, in the calendar, the eight-day Jewish festival of lights). In front of the burning lamp, so that the illumination of it caught the eye of the congregation, was a stained-glass creche in three dimensions. As the windup worship of this winter's Christmastide--my sermon being "The Christmas Carols Are True"--I was (1) making use of the Holy Family in the aspect of the common-everywhere-and-at-all-times-and-religions image of religious experience as extraordinary light shining through the ordinary, the holy through the common, the supernatural through the natural; (2) leading the congregation in celebrating the Incarnation as Immanu-el, Emmanuel, God come among us as one of us; and (3) intensifying the experience for the people by using a lamp made during the lifetime of Francis of Assisi, father of the Christmas creche, who brought down among the people in three dimensions what they had seen before only in two dimensions in the churches, the Holy Family in fresco, mosaic, and stained-glass.

2. What struck me, as a few minutes ago in my study I was putting that lamp away, is that in the worship yesterday I'd said nothing about the power politics that had produced the lamp; Francis' power was political only by way of secondary effects, though directly he tried to persuade Muslim rulers (at great risk of his life) to negotiate with Christian rulers. Then I began to remember the complexity of spiritual/temporal powers during the period of the Crusades (11th-13th cs.). When the Fr. knight Godfrey of Bouillon seized Jerusalem (AD/CE 1099), he refused (as did Geo. Washington long after him, and not for entirely different reasons) to be recognized as king: "I will not wear a crown of gold where my Savior wore one of thorns." (So he accepted only the title of mayor of the town, governor, advocate-protector-defender of the Holy Tomb --the title depending on how you translate the Latin. But in a few months he died, and his brother did not scruple to let himself be crowned king of Jerusalem.)

3. Let's not be too hard on the Pope under whom the First Crusade got revved up. He hoped (1) to restore Christian pilgrim's access to the holy sites, access the Arab Muslim had allowed but the northern Muslims were now forbidding; (2) to heal the East/West breach in Christendom by working with the Patriarch of Constantinople on this joint project, which also would relieve Turkish pressure on Constantinople; and (3) to provide a common enemy for Fr. barons then engaged in internecine perpetual warfare, agonizing France.