

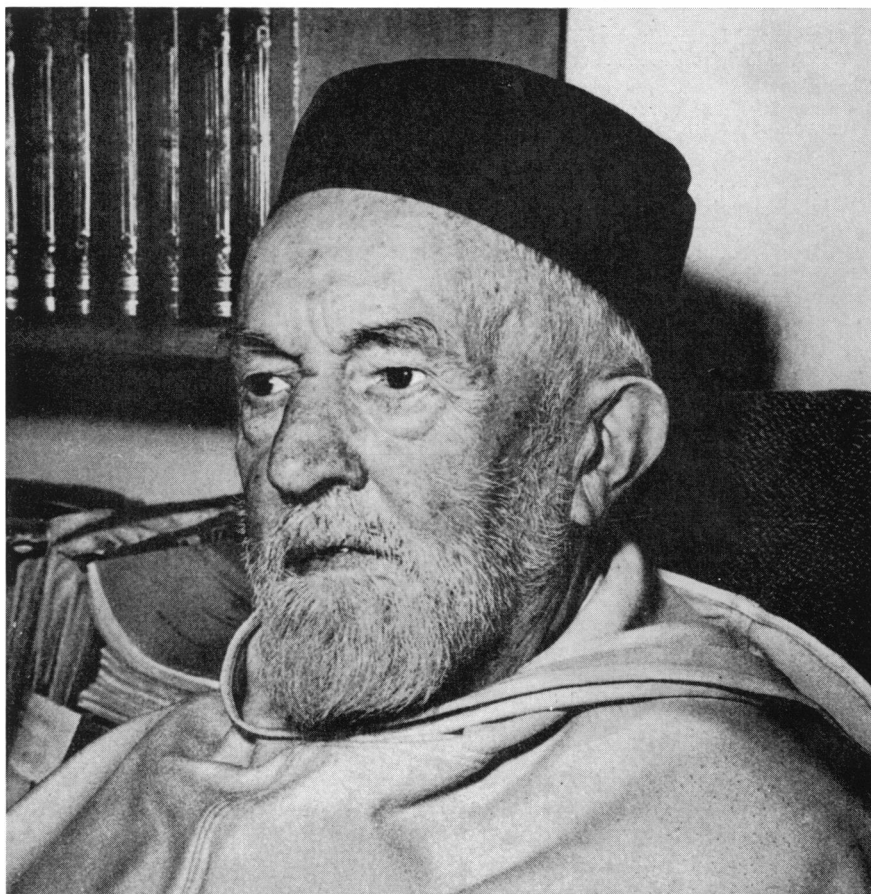
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PÈRE L. H. VINCENT, O. P.  
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## IN MEMORY OF LOUIS HUGUES VINCENT

To every generation and to every field there is given a man who is justly revered by his contemporaries and disciples. Père L. H. Vincent, O. P., was such a man. In him were uniquely combined genius and industry, charm and humility, enthusiasm and balance. But for his tremendous contributions as scholar and as teacher, Palestinian archaeology could never have attained its present status among fields of antiquarian research.

Louis Vincent was born the 31st August, 1872, at a small town in the Isère, southeast of Lyons. Soon after entering the Dominican novitiate, he was sent to Jerusalem to join the Ecole Biblique which had been founded by Père Lagrange the year before (1890); he was thus associated with this famous institution for only a few months less than seventy years. Except for prolonged sojourns in France during the first and second World Wars he was in physical residence at the Ecole Biblique during all or part of every year from 1891 to 1960. And it was finally

in his beloved surroundings at the School that he passed quietly away at dawn, the 30th December, 1960.

Of medium height, but always thin and often frail, Père Vincent accomplished an unbelievable quantity of work, in spite of what he called his "petite santé." Because of his physical weakness, he was excused from some of the more rigorous obligations of the Dominican rule. Though criticized by some of his sturdier brethren as unnecessary coddling, it is highly probable that this consideration was absolutely necessary to keep him going. For he never spared himself. Whether he worked on his drawings, supervised a *chantier*, lectured to a large audience, or talked to a visitor, he always threw his whole personality into the task.

In retrospect it seems incredible that Père Vincent stood the strain of unremitting work and unlimited assistance to an increasing host of scholars and aspirants. Though he never suffered fools gladly and could be extremely severe in his published criticisms of what he regarded as sloppy workmanship or wrong ideas, his patience and kindness to younger people seemed boundless. In his personal relations warm friendships quickly arose, standing the test of decades of association. The writer of these lines and his wife were among these favored many. I became acquainted with Père Vincent in early 1920, and by 1921 I was consulting him on all matters connected with pottery chronology and the interpretation of finds. In the summer of 1921 Père Lagrange and he attended our wedding reception; some years later he was present at the christening of our second son, Hugh (named for him). . . . I saw him last at Saint Etienne (the Ecole Biblique) in September, 1953; my wife and our son Hugh saw him three years later at the same place, to which he was confined increasingly during the last decade of his life, when he was in his eighties. It is probable that I do not even yet begin to realize the debt I owe personally to Père Vincent, not only for his early archaeological guidance but for the impression made by his union of Gallic vivacity with a profound simplicity which is found in all too few people.

His scholarly career was devoted to archaeological recording and interpretation, utilizing all available resources, no matter whether they were architectural, ceramic, cultic, epigraphic, or philological. Under the sound instruction and remarkably versatile guidance of Père Lagrange, who remained throughout his life Père Vincent's closest friend and mentor, he developed steadily until he became the undisputed leader of Palestinian archaeology. His judgment was decisive for most scholars and laymen, until the rapidly swelling flood of discoveries and of improved stratigraphic methods introduced a new age of scientific technique during the middle and late thirties. In archaeology as in other expanding fields of scientific research, the older investigator must be willing to recognize the value of new methods and to surrender cherished points of view as younger students advance beyond him. It would have been very difficult for Père Vincent to accommodate himself to the new age if it had not been for his saintly character, in which humble recognition of the merits of others was always close to the surface.

Vincent's first of many big books was his *Canaan d'après l'exploration récente*, which appeared in the year he became thirty-five (1907). This was the first thoroughly informed and rigorously scientific treatment of a subject which had until then remained an enigma to scholars who had not actually taken part in the excavations themselves. For the first time this volume brought clarification on such subjects as towns and town-planning, cult places and objects, mortuary practices and ceramic art in ancient Palestine. To be sure, pottery chronology was still in a somewhat confused state, but this was not the fault of Père Vincent, but of the excavators who had made a good beginning with the pioneer work of Petrie and Bliss, but had then started off on individual tangents. In fact, Vincent's ceramic chronology was far better than much that was to come between 1906 and 1916.

In collaboration with Père F. M. Abel, Vincent published a great work in several volumes, *Jérusalem Nouvelle* (1914-1922), which began with Jerusalem of the New Testament. This was completed, after Abel's death, by Vincent alone in three volumes under the title *Jérusalem de l'Ancien Testament* (1954-1956). In addition to the impressive volumes on Jerusalem were several equally imposing volumes (mostly in collaboration with Abel): *Bethléem, le sanctuaire de la Nativité* (1914), *Hébron, le Haram el-Khalil* (1923), *Emmaüs, sa basilique et son histoire* (1932). He also wrote a great many monographs, papers and reviews, most of which appeared in the *Revue Biblique*, which he edited from 1931 to 1938. In 1941-1944 (1945), while he was in France under the yoke of Nazi domination, he was not allowed to continue publication of the *Revue Biblique*, but he did receive permission to publish an annual under the expressive title *Vivre et penser: Recherches d'exégèse et d'histoire*, which appeared in the same format and under the auspices of the same publisher. Apparently no one in authority noticed the profound (and intentional) irony of the title!

Among the many honors received by Père Vincent during his immensely fruitful scholarly career were corresponding memberships in the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres and the British Academy, the Order of the British Empire, the Belgian Cross of Leopold, and the French order of the Légion d'Honneur (with the distinguished rank of "commandeur," given him a few weeks before his decease). But far greater than all such honors was the memory of his *humanitas* cherished by a host of friends and the *monumentum aere perennius* which he had unintentionally raised for himself during a lifetime of labor.

W. F. ALBRIGHT

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