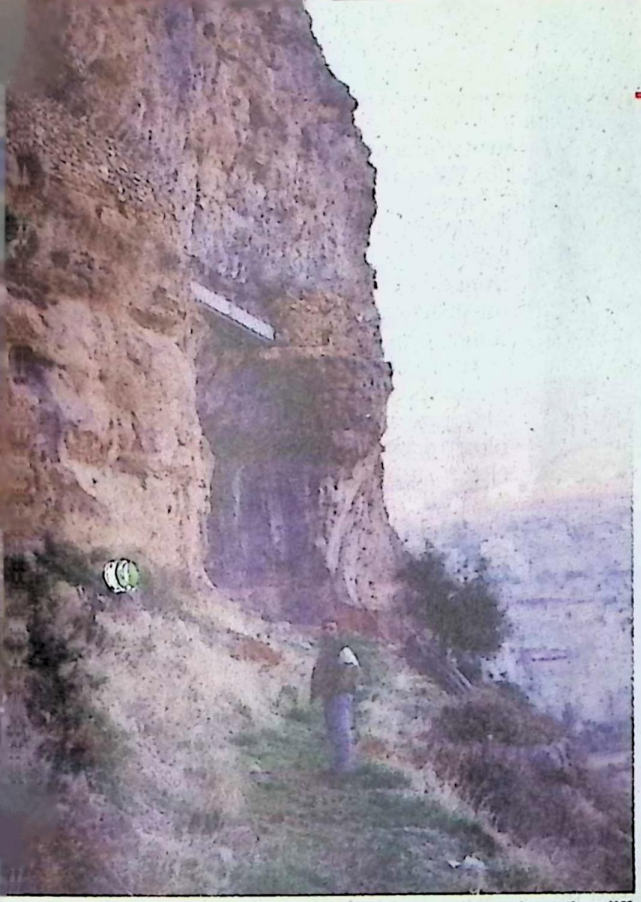
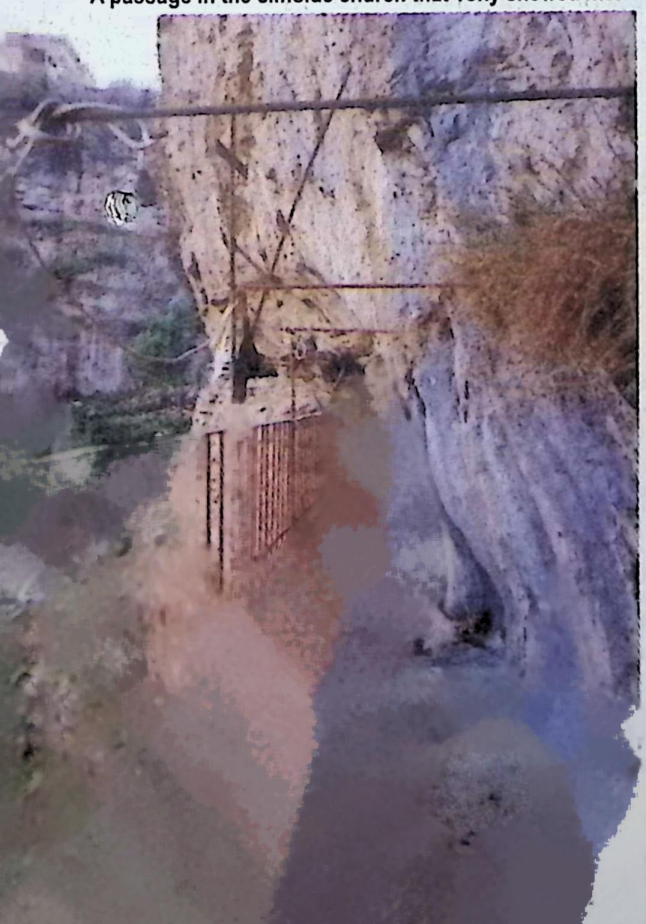


Tony, below the secret church with its brickwork on the cliff.

Below
A passage in the cliffside church that Tony showed me.

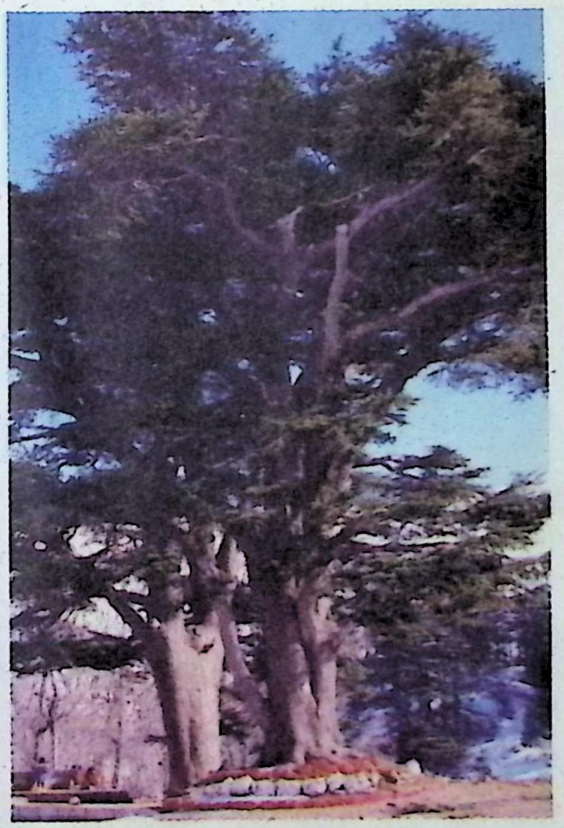


American writer Khalil Gibran who was born in Bcharre, and the nineteenth century Maronite Christian saint, St. Charbel Makhluf.

I discovered this because there was no bus down the mountain again. It's the sort of thing I am good at neglecting to plan, return transport. And I hoped to reach Beirut by late evening. There's a freeway that runs along the coast and it is possible, theoretically, to see the cedars and reach the capital in the same day.

I stood on the road waiting for a passing car. And it was Lebanon so the first one stopped.

Tony was driving. But the small thrill of not having waited more than thirty seconds was



The cedars are Lebanon and the heritage of half the world.

undone when he said they lived in the next village and would only go that far. It was a small start.

It can't have been more than ten minutes to his village, but we conversed. He strung English words together in a similar fashion to the largish house he'd constructed: room by room as he could, by his own hand. Coffee was offered. Yes, Beirut was far, but perhaps a thick, black coffee wouldn't hurt.

It helped being Australian. In the 1980s Australia had more compassion to it and many Lebanese refugees resettled there. In Lebanon everybody had a relative or neighbour living in Sydney.