Where Heaven and Earth Meet:

Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade

Christian Memories and Visions of Jerusalem in Jewish and Islamic Context

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A Sacred Place and Its Religious Overdetermination

From the perspective of the comparative historian of religion, the real peculiarity of the Temple Mount lies in its resilience and versatility. In striking contrast to the Delphic *omphalos*—the navel of the earth—this *axis mundi* has, throughout history, symbolized more a border between clashing civilizations than the epicenter of a culture. There are other places that are sacred to more than one religious tradition.[1] But no other place on earth, to my knowledge, has retained to such a degree, over centuries, its deeply attractive power as the venue for a series of cultures transforming themselves and replacing one another.[2]

If religious history, to a great extent, is the history of the devaluations and revalorizations of various manifestations of the sacred, then the Temple Mount can be said to model a significant portion of it. Over the last two thousand years, at least, the Temple Mount has constituted a unique pole of attraction for competing myths and rituals, both successive and juxtaposed. Moreover, the transmission of sacral power from one tradition to another has always been compounded by the interaction between those traditions and the dialectics of their own transformation.

As far as we know, the Temple Mount first owed its sacredness to Solomon's construction of his Temple there. In other words, its holiness was acquired rather than native. What is perhaps most striking is the retention of its sacred character for the Jews even after repeated destructions. Rather than losing its sacred character, it seems to have become, more than ever before, the locus of God's dwelling, His *Shekhinah*—a concept that developed only in rabbinic literature, after Titus' destruction of the Temple. As long as the Temple stood, there was no need to emphasize that it was the dwelling place of the divinity. In a sense, the emptiness of the Temple Mount during the Byzantine period reflected the aniconic nature

184 A partial view of the Dome of the Chain (*Qubbat al-Silsila*), ca. 1921
This early color photograph is preserved in the collection of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem

of God in the former Temple. Indeed, to the puzzlement of pagans, the Temple of the Jews contained no statue of their God, not even in the Holy of Holies. Pagans could thus easily consider the Temple to be empty. Incidentally, the Temple's emptiness is reflected, as it were, in the Cenotaph of the Anastasis and in the empty space of a mosque, in particular that of the *mihrab*, the niche indicating the *qibla*, Mecca's direction.

As from the destruction of the Second Temple, however, the Jews were no longer the only community concerned with the Temple Mount. Between the fourth and the seventh centuries, Christian leaders sought to erase the memory of the Temple (in contradistinction to the splendor of the Basilica of the Anastasis)—to accomplish, in a sense, what the Romans called the damnation of memory (*damnatio memoriae*) of the barren Mount. But for the Jews, despite its barrenness, the Mount became the place that most powerfully recorded the glory that was once Jerusalem.[3] It became what French historians call a "place of memory" (*lieu de mémoire*), or rather: a memory of the place (*mémoire du lieu*). Notwithstanding the report of Dio Cassius (69.12), the Hadrianic Capitolium or temple of Zeus, which stood until the fourth century, was not built on the Temple Mount. Though there may have been some imperial statues, the holy place, in the main, stood desolate and empty, pointing—for the Jews—to a future rebuilding. In the Christian mind, too, the Temple would play a part in the future, but only in the eschatological future, when the Antichrist would establish his throne there.[4] The eschatological dimension of Christian thought, however, paled with time, particularly after Constantine—or so it seemed. For the Jews, on the other hand, the reconstruction of the Temple not only was conceivable in theory—and of course prayed for three times daily—but was also considered achievable in practice, as showed by the events surrounding the Emperor Julian's authorization of its reconstruction in 361.

As highlighted by both Christian and Jewish attitudes to the future of the Temple Mount, there can be no sacred place without a sacred time. While the Temple was standing, sacred times were those of sacrifices, of holy days. After its destruction, the sacred time, the temporal axis around which history was developing, became the eschatological time of its reconstruction. The barren Temple Mount, then, points to a time as well as to the building that once stood there. Or, rather, it points to two opposite moments in time, past and future—when the Temple stood, and when it will stand again—and to Israel and humankind at the beginning and end of history, the *Urzeit* and the *Endzeit*. In a sense, one can say that the sacredness of time is a projection of the sacredness of space. Between Christians and Jews, then, the Temple Mount stood at the core of a dialectic: the one's loss was the other's gain. For the Jews, the reconstruction of the Temple would herald the advent of the Messiah, while for the Christians it would announce that of the Antichrist.[5] Hence, the Temple Mount played (and plays) a role in clashing visions of the end, at the core of the competition between the two clashing religions.

Various clashes between civilizations, focusing on the Jerusalem Temple, had occurred in the past: the Babylonians, from the East, and the Romans, from the West, had each in turn destroyed it for its reflection of a vanquished people's identity. Later, the invaders of the seventh century CE, for a brief but violent time the Persians, and then the Arabs, would bring back, with a vengeance, the eschatological expectations of earlier times, which the Christians had thought banished to the back of their consciousness.

Two highly different vignettes, both from Christian sources, symbolize the Christian reaction to the victorious entry of Caliph 'Umar into Jerusalem. The first portrays him, still dusty from the way, dismounting his horse to be invited by Patriarch Sophronius to pray in the Anastasis (today's Holy Sepulchre). 'Umar allegedly replied politely but firmly in the negative. Had he accepted, he added, Muslims would have transformed the church into a mosque. In the second vignette, Sophronius laments seeing 'Umar on the Temple Mount; for him, indeed, it is nothing less than the repudiation of the desolation announced by Christ.

By transforming the Dome of the Rock into a church, baptized the Templum Domini, the Crusaders, at least for a while, changed the parameters of the opposition between the Mount and the Anastasis. In 1099 they could exclaim: "Ad Dominicum sepulcrum, dehinc etiam ad Templum!" ("Up to the tomb of the Lord, hence, up to the Temple!"). The Crusaders, indeed, are a reminder of the Christians' ultimate inability to settle for a spiritual Temple or forget the old one of stone.[6] But this inability could only be due to the dominating presence of the Qubbat al-Sakhra—the Dome of the Rock.

Eschatological Beliefs

Moving between the *even shetiyyah*, the Holy of Holies, the Temple, Jerusalem, and the Holy Land, we have before us, as it were, a series of Russian dolls. All seem alike; all reflect the same sacred character. In order to understand more precisely the religious dimensions of the Temple Mount, we must also reflect upon the power encapsulated in the name of Jerusalem in religious and cultural history and memory. Originally, to be sure, it is from the Temple that Jerusalem received its sacred character. Later, however, the Holy City became emblematic of the sacred locus where the Temple had once stood, and where it would eventually be rebuilt. It would be a mistake, therefore, to limit our inquiry to the Temple Mount itself, without calling attention to Jerusalem's metaphorical dimension in cultural memory.

The concept of cultural memory (*kulturelles Gedächtnis*) was developed, in particular, by art historian Aby Warburg between the two world wars. In order to be really useful, this concept should be connected to that of collective memory (*mémoire collective*), a term invented in the 1930s by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Any cultural memory,

indeed, belongs ipso facto to collective memory.[7] The early Christian thinkers whom we call the Church Fathers launched the process through which the name of Jerusalem was transformed into a major icon of Western cultural memory. This process was directly related to what Christoph Markschies has recently called its *devaluation* in early Christianity.[8] Cultural memory does not necessarily stand in contradistinction to religious memory, but rather to the radical intensification of religious feelings involved in eschatology.

The earliest Christian attitudes toward Jerusalem seem to have been related directly to the millenarian or chiliastic view founded upon the announcement of Jesus' reign of a millennium (*chilia etè*) in Jerusalem. Although this view was not the only one available (the African bishop Cyprian never mentions Jerusalem), it seems to have been dominant.[9] As Ernst Käsemann put it, "Apocalyptics is the mother of Christian theology."[10] In the second century, Papias and Justin Martyr espoused millenarian views of this kind. Enthusiastic expectations of a return of Christ in glory (*parousia*) and a restitution of things past (*apokatastasis*) seem to have been inseparably bound up with the Christian faith down to the middle of the second century. This tendency was broken only by Marcion; and Marcion's opponents, such as Irenaeus, returned even afterwards to broaching the End of Time.

Can we detect the mechanism by which such eschatological views were contested, and so ceased to prevail in the mainstream tradition? Marcion, a contemporary of Justin in the mid-second century, rejected the Old Testament (as well as major parts of the New Testament), arguing that Christianity was a religion of a new kind and possessed no Jewish roots. He seems to have been the first opponent of chiliastic ideas in early Christianity. As Stefan Heid has shown, the argument around millenarianism in the second century was directly related to the controversy between Jews and Christians.[11] The Jewish wars, especially the revolt launched by Bar Kokhba in 132–35 CE, form the background to this controversy and to the debate over millenarianism and the role of Jerusalem. For most Church Fathers, the Holy Land remained the land of the Jews, and a reconstruction of the Temple meant a Jewish victory, at least from a spiritual perspective. Indeed, expectations of this kind were to be found among the various Jewish-Christian groups, such as the Ebionites, for whom the rebuilding (*restitutio, apokatastasis*) of the Temple was a central eschatological belief.

Marcion rejected all that, including beliefs in the *eschaton* and about the role of Jerusalem at the End of Time. For him, such beliefs were simply irrelevant to the Christian faith. No wonder Irenaeus—for whom Marcion, along with various dualist and Gnostic thinkers, was the arch-enemy—insists precisely on eschatology. Deservedly called "the theologian of chiliasm," Irenaeus is the greatest writer on eschatological Jerusalem. The last chapters of his magnum opus, *Against the Heresies*, are devoted to the battle between Christ and Antichrist that was to precede the reign of Christ in Jerusalem, waged up to the ruins of the Temple. Eschatology is the principal insurance against the metaphorization of Christian beliefs; it possesses an irrevocably concrete element.

It is no accident that Tertullian, the late-second and early-third-century North African Church Father, who first established the antinomy of "Athens versus Jerusalem," eventually joined the ecstatic and prophetic Montanist movement. For the followers of Montanus, in the second half of the second century, a new prophecy, delivered to women, announced the imminent descent to earth of the Heavenly Jerusalem.[12] Montanism, then, exhibits with particular clarity the direct connection between the role played by (heavenly or earthly) Jerusalem at the End of Time and the intensity of eschatological expectations.[13]

The Christian idea of *translatio Hierosolymae*, the holy city's travel in space, seems first to appear with Montanus, who, according to Eusebius, "gave the name of Jerusalem to Pepuza and Tymion, which are little towns in Phrygia."[14] As confirmed by Tertullian, who had inside knowledge of Montanist beliefs, this probably meant that the heavenly Jerusalem was seen as having descended upon Pepuza and Tymion. The heretical status of the Montanists in the third century, and the Christian invention of the Holy Land in the fourth century, probably forestalled the implantation of *translatio Hierosolymae* in Patristic literature. Nevertheless, this concept never quite disappeared. Throughout Christian history, it emerged as an expression of sectarian eschatology in such phenomena as the Hussite reconstitution of the Holy Land in fifteenth-century Bohemia, the Taborites' Tabor, and the expectations of the New Zion sectarians in nineteenth-century Russia for the descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem.[15]

If the new Jerusalem can descend from heaven onto Pepuza, a small town in Asia Minor, who needs the city of David anymore?[16] Indeed, new Zions exist in various cultural surroundings. A famous case is that of the churches carved in the rock in Lâlibalâ, in Ethiopia. This new Jerusalem became a major pilgrimage destination in periods when Axum was inaccessible.[17] Today we think mainly of Baptist churches in the southern United States or in black Africa, or of the Swedenborgian churches of "the New Jerusalem."[18]

The failure of early Christian apocalyptical movements, illustrated by the perception of the Montanists as heretics and the postponement to the End of Days of Christ's Second Coming, his *parousia*, had direct implications for the representations of Jerusalem. Rather than earthly alternative locations, or the idea of an eschatological *renovatio*, it is the metaphor of a *spiritual* Jerusalem that was to become prevalent in the early Christian mind. This Jerusalem was the Christian's true fatherland, and it was in heaven—from which, according to Rev. 21.2, the New Jerusalem was to descend. In this regard, the early Christian writers were following in the footsteps of Jewish apocalypticism. In IV Esdras, a Jewish text redacted at the end of the first century CE, the eschatological element is still prominent: Jerusalem would be established by God in the messianic era. The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch weakens this element by describing the Heavenly Jerusalem as having been prepared by God at the origin of the world, thus pointing to the direct relationship between the origins of the world and the End of Time.

The transformation of the ideal city is completed in the late second century with Clement of Alexandria, who recalls that the Stoics referred to the heavens as the true city.[19] For him, as a Christian, the obvious parallel to the heavenly city of the Stoics was the Heavenly Jerusalem, which he calls "my Jerusalem."[20] We touch here on the roots of Jerusalem's mystical meaning. Origen takes up and develops Clement's views on the holy city (*polis*): Jerusalem, whose Hebrew name (*Yerushalayim*) is interpreted as meaning "vision of peace" (*yir'eh shalom*), can mean the Church, but also, in the tropological sense, the soul.[21] A similar allegorical interpretation appears in the writings of the fourth-century Origenist Didymus the Blind. For him, too, the significance of Jerusalem is threefold: It is at once the virtuous soul, the Church, and the heavenly city of the living God. We shall return to the "vision of peace" (*visio pacis*) metaphor of Jerusalem, which runs as a thread through the centuries.[22] One further formative metaphor stems directly from Paul: The supernal Jerusalem, mother of the Christians, is also called *eleuthera*—free (Gal. 4.26).[23]

For Marcion and the Gnostics, the whole Jewish heritage was a stumbling block on the way to a fully emancipated Christianity. The Gnostics did not need Judaism's traditional eschatological expectations, since they claimed to live in the redeemed time of "realized eschatology." In their struggle against such objectors, Church Fathers such as Irenaeus were led to insist, precisely, upon the hopes of Christ's *parousia* and the last, decisive battle between the forces of good and evil. But such hopes were also those of the Jews and of the Jewish-Christians, with whom the same Church Fathers were also engaged in intensive competition about the proper understanding of the Scriptures.

Thus, concerning Jerusalem, two distinct phenomena can be observed in early Christianity. The first is the distinction, made more and more clearly with time, between the Earthly and the Heavenly Jerusalem. This distinction, which, again, is of Jewish origin, received a new impulse in early Christian writings, already with Paul. The two Jerusalems became completely disconnected, as they never had been in Jewish writings. The Earthly Jerusalem remained identified, essentially, as the city of the Jews, who had killed Christ and whose Temple had been destroyed in divine punishment. This Temple would not be rebuilt. "And I saw no Temple in it"—that is, in the New Jerusalem to come down from heaven—says the visionary in the Apocalypse of John, the most topical of all early Christian eschatological texts (Rev. 21.22). The Heavenly Jerusalem soon became a metaphor for the community of the saints, or the "city of God," in Augustine's parlance. It was invested with all the dreams and qualities attributed to Jerusalem in eschatological thought, but very little remained here of the original meaning of the name.

The Augustinian typology of the two cities has its roots in Tyconius, whose *Commentary on the Apocalypse* referred to two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem.[24] For Augustine, Babylon represents power and politics, while the Heavenly Jerusalem—of which he sings, "Quando de illa loquor, finire nolo"[25]—represents the Church, wife of Christ. Babylon refers to

life in the present, in this world, Jerusalem to the future life, in which the boundaries of time will be overcome and God will be praised forever, *in saecula saeculorum*. The major formative influence of this typology on medieval perceptions needs no further stressing.[26]

The second phenomenon is the weakening of eschatological beliefs, expressed in the progressive erosion, from the second to the fourth century, of the expectation of Christ's second coming. As it became more and more difficult to maintain intensive hope of an imminent advent, the acme of the Christian message became clearly entrenched in the past. With the fading of its future, Jerusalem itself, a small, marginal city in the Empire with the forever destroyed Temple and Golgotha at its heart, was bound to lose almost all significance. Paradoxically, the less important the city of Jerusalem became, the more the name "Jerusalem" seemed to gain in evocative power. Late antique Christianity, indeed, bequeathed the overwhelming resonance of Jerusalem to European culture, eastern and western. Jerusalem was now Rome: In the words of Jerome, "Romam factam Hierosolymam." It was also Byzantium; Constantinople is often called "the second Jerusalem," while Moscow, later, would become "the third Jerusalem." The whole world would eventually become Jerusalem. This is literally true in the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* written in the fourth century by Victorinus of Poetovio (Ptuj in present-day Slovenia): At the End of Time, Jerusalem will expand and cover the face of the earth.[27] Similar conceptions appear in rabbinic literature as well.

In both the fourth and the sixth centuries, major architectural achievements sought to offer new, Christianized versions of the old Jewish Temple. Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea Maritima, who was Constantine's spiritual herald, described the Basilica of the Anastasis as "the new Temple," while Justinian, upon entering the newly built Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, allegedly declared: "I have outdone you, O Solomon!"[28]

It is traditionally assumed that by the fourth century, the chiliastic trends so prominent in the early stages of Christianity had more or less burnt themselves out; yet they seem to reappear with renewed strength in the seventh century, with the same old scenario being played out in Jerusalem, in particular around the Temple Mount. Indeed, the seventh century, a period of dramatic religious and political transformations in the Near East, has long been recognized as a time when eschatological beliefs were particularly activated in the Byzantine Empire.

The Temple Mount Islamicized

In ancient Israel, as we learn from Max Weber, a major tension revolved around the Temple and its service. The prophets' charisma versus the priests' routine: two radically different kinds of religious action confronted one another, one pushing for change, the other for stability. In the seventh century CE, centuries after the destruction of the Temple, the very place where it had been built, its locus, seems to have been once more at the epicenter of a prophetic movement.

At least as from the conquest of Jerusalem by the Sasanians in 614 and the capture of the Holy Cross, the Christian world was rife with expectations of the *Endzeit*, with its traditional imagery of cosmic war between the forces of light and darkness. The Byzantines were slow in understanding the true faith of the new conquerors. For too long, they perceived the Arabs as barbarians from the desert and Muhammad as a false prophet, whose faith could be understood only in the categories of Christian theology—namely, as a heresy.[29] What would eventually settle into a centuries-long, deep-seated political and religious conflict, sometimes more overt and sometimes relatively dormant, started as a "big bang," epitomized more than anything else by the conquest of Jerusalem by the Arabs in 638 and the ensuing dramatic changes in the city's religious topography.

In a series of important publications, distinguished Byzantinists such as Gilbert Dagron, Averil Cameron, Cyril Mango, and Vincent Deroche have done much to provide us with a clearer understanding of the complex interface between Jews and Christians in seventh-century Byzantium, in particular from the perspective of the Greek texts.[30] These and other scholars have underlined the renewed importance of polemics between Jews and Christians in the Eastern Roman Empire. In particular, they have highlighted the centrality in these polemics of the Holy Land, the Holy City, and its core, the Temple Mount, as well as their direct impact on the earliest Islamic program in Jerusalem.[31]

The spiritual demotion of the old Israel by *Verus Israel* was spatially represented by the relocation of the sanctified locus from the Temple Mount, whose emptiness should have remained striking, visible to all, to the new Basilica of the Anastasis. Oleg Grabar has called this process of relocation an *eislithosis*,[32] while Annabel Wharton refers to the "erasure" of the Jewish dimension of Jerusalem.[33] The city's Islamic conquerors, seeking to accomplish what we could call, in the Hegelian sense, an *Aufhebung* of both Judaism and Christianity, moved its sacred core back to the Temple Mount. For the Byzantine historiographer Theophanes, it was 'Umar's devilish pretension that made him seek to emulate Solomon.[34] As Andreas Kaplony argues convincingly in this volume, there is reason to believe that the early Muslim rulers intended to rebuild the Temple and even to install a kind of Temple ritual. This perception of things was also aimed at convincing the Jews that the End of Time was drawing near, and that the Caliph was the expected Messiah. In the Umayyad period, at least, the Temple Mount, not yet called the Haram al-Sharif, was viewed both as the Temple rebuilt and as the Mosque of Jerusalem. If some of the Jews, however, might have been tempted to place the dramatic events in an eschatological perspective, they soon were disappointed. For them, the construction of a new kind of Temple in place of the old was perceived as no less an erasure of the Jewish dimension than the Christian dislocation of the sacred. Moreover, since the Anastasis remained standing, it would retain its sacredness (albeit lessened) under the Islamic regime.

The new clash of civilizations between the Christian and the Islamic imperial states was nurtured in the cocoon of the Jewish–Christian clash of interpretations, which only superficially appeared essentially to reiterate, again and again, old arguments over a long-decided issue. The argumentation of these polemics, which centered upon the interpretation of biblical prophecies, revolved mainly around the image of Christ as the Messiah announced by the prophets of Israel. For the Jews, the Messiah was yet to come; for the Christians, he was to return in full glory and establish his kingdom, at long last, over all the earth. For the Chiliasts of the first centuries—most clearly exemplified, perhaps, by Irenaeus—Jerusalem, and in particular the Temple Mount, was to be the epicenter of the cosmic events that would occur at the End of Time.[35] The debate focused on the inheritance of the Holy Land and the restoration to it of the Jews. Early Christian Chiliastic expectations had very strong Jewish roots. In particular, the Antichrist is strikingly similar to the figure of the false prophet in the pre-Christian Jewish sources and was probably constructed from the latter.[36]

For the Christians, the Messiah expected by the Jews would be the last impostor, the Antichrist. The Jews, on the other hand, believed that they were being ruled by believers in a false Messiah. Victory for one side would mean defeat for the other: in modern strategic terminology, this was a zero-sum game. The clearest expression of a Jewish vindication would be the re-establishment of the Temple. For the Christians, this was tantamount to the coming of the Antichrist, who had been envisioned, in Irenaeus' classical version of the myth as well as in the slightly later version of Hippolytus, as establishing his throne for three and a half years in the Temple itself, until his finally defeat by Jesus Christ. In the Christian psyche, this threat did not quite belong to the ancient past. The memories of the great anxiety generated by Julian's authorization of the Temple's reconstruction—and by the actual start of the work, before a providential earthquake brought these efforts to naught—seem to have been a long time in dissipating.[37] And now, with the violent conquest by the Persians and its deeply humiliating result, the exile of the Holy Cross, and then the new wave of successful invasion by the barbarian Arabs, the old questions were raised again, with a new urgency. These Arabs, streaming from their southern desert and claiming to follow the lead of their prophet—who could they really be, if not the powerful arm of the Jews, sent to reclaim their pretended possessions in the Holy Land and the Holy City? Paradoxically, the great fear of the Christians had more to do with the shadow of the Jews than with the Arab invaders.

'Umar's conquest of Jerusalem in 638 was bound to rekindle both the fears of the Christians and the hopes of the Jews and bring them to new levels of intensity. The Armenian historian Sebeos, bishop of Bagratunik in the seventh century and one of our best sources, seems to indicate quite clearly that the Jews began building a structure on the Temple Mount in the first years after the conquest:

> … the plot of the Jewish rebels, who, finding support from the Hagarenes for a short time, planned to [re]build the Temple of Solomon. Locating the place called Holy of Holies, they constructed [the Temple] without a pedestal, to serve as their place of prayer. But the Ishmaelites envied [the Jews], expelled them from the place, and named the same building their own place of prayer. [The Jews] built a temple for their worship elsewhere.[38]

Apparently, the first Aqsa Mosque was built only later.

For the Christians, Muhammad, who thought of himself as both prophet and apostle, was simply an impostor, a false prophet. For the Jews, the matter seems to have been more complex. In their perception, Muhammad could have been either a prophet or a Messiah. Both these titles, indeed, had been attached to non-Israelite figures, such as Balaam, who was a prophet, and Cyrus the Great, who was called "God's Messiah." The Jewish sources from Arabia are scarce and difficult to interpret, but it seems that some Jews, at least, did at first see in Muhammad a messianic (or pre-messianic) figure. For the Christians, on the other hand, the concept of "Messiah" was bound to remain quite puzzling, since *Christos* (a literal translation into Greek of Hebrew *mashiah*, "anointed") was, for them, the name of the Savior.

According to the *Doctrina Jacobi*, a crucial Greek document dating from the very beginning of the Islamic conquests, the Jews considered Muhammad a false prophet (*pseudo-prophètès*). This would seem rather surprising, since the Jews viewed the "gates of prophecy" as having been closed long before that date. It may well be that the Jews were speaking of a false Messiah rather than a false prophet, and the Christians, who could not possibly have understood what such a term meant, decided that it was identical to the much more comprehensible "false prophet."

In this context, it is interesting to note that the concept of a false Messiah (*mashiah sheqer*) is extremely rare in rabbinic literature, occurring, as far as I know, only in the late seventh-century *Apocalypse of Zerubbabel*. The Syriac *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, a fundamental witness to the eschatological perception of the Islamic conquest and a text that would become, in Latin translation, a major source of medieval eschatology, also mentions a false Messiah, *mashiha degala*.[39] This *Degala* seems to be the source of the *Dajjal*, the figure paralleling the Antichrist in Islamic eschatological texts.

For just one religious group, Jesus was at once Messiah and prophet: the Jewish-Christians, and particularly the Ebionites and the various groups that succeeded them. Notwithstanding the lack of scholarly consensus on this issue, I am convinced that the sources formally indicate that such groups were still in existence, at least in Palestine, in the seventh century (and beyond). In this respect, the "Jewish-Christian" formulations and Docetic conceptions in the Qur'an, according to which Jesus was not really crucified and only appeared (Greek *dokein*) to suffer, deserve fresh consideration.

Almost thirty years ago, Michael Cook and Patricia Crone, in their thought-provoking and very influential *Hagarism*, showed the extent to which earliest Islam must be understood as a product of Jewish messianic preaching in a gentile environment.[40] In recent years, the important epigraphic studies of Christian Robin have transformed our perception of the Jewish element in the background to Muhammad's preaching. Although Robin suggests that his findings weaken the need for appeal to Jewish ideas imported from Palestine, as proposed by Cook and Crone,[41] it seems that the cross-fertilization of Jewish and Christian beliefs, the centrality of the Holy Land and in particular of the Temple Mount, and the eschatological expectations of both Jews and Christians should be perceived as the true prelude to Islam.

Mystical Jerusalems

The Christian transformation of Jerusalem and of the Temple Mount, however, is not bound to happen only at the End of Time. The ubiquity of Jerusalem is also manifested in the representations of the Basilica of the Anastasis built in various European cities in the Latin Middle Ages. In certain cases, in particular in Bologna, it is the whole earthly city of Jerusalem that is reconstituted, a theme park of sorts, complete with Golgotha, the Mount of Olives, Kidron, and Gethsemane. One did not have to go on a crusade in order to reach Jerusalem; it could be reproduced anywhere, in any city or in any cloister.

The other regnant Christian transformation of Jerusalem is to be found in the mystical envisioning of the Heavenly Jerusalem, to which the religious virtuoso is called to ascend in heart and mind. Mysticism, with its insistence on immediacy and interiority, would seem to be the antipode of eschatology. But here, too, one should note that various mystical meanings of Jerusalem took on an eschatological dimension in Christian history.

An apocalyptic Christian spirituality was to survive through the centuries, permitting the actualization and vivification of perceptions often muted or neutralized in mainstream tradition. The great twelfth-century Calabrian visionary Joachim da Fiore is said to have experienced a conversion to the inner life during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land as a young man. He later made extensive use of the name of Jerusalem in his *Book of Figures*. The most puzzling antithesis in this book is perhaps that of Jerusalem/Ecclesia and Babylon/Rome. But for Joachim, the Roman Church is always Jerusalem, never Rome. If Babylon is the realm of the devil, the heavenly kingdom of God is symbolized by Jerusalem, whose sons "are pilgrims sojourning in the midst of Babylon."[42] At the end of history there will be a third apotheosis of Jerusalem, after the reign of David in the Earthly Jerusalem and the papacy of Sylvester in Rome. In a detailed description of the Heavenly Jerusalem in his *Eternal Gospel*, Joachim points to the precise symbolism of its various components, named in Rev. 21, such as the different precious stones of which it is built. He insists that in the

Heavenly Jerusalem there is no Temple built by men, since the Father and the Son are themselves the only Temple of the Spirit.

Via the intermediacy of Augustine and Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636), the traditional etymology of Jerusalem as referring to a vision of peace became prominent in medieval texts.[43] The last avatar of the perception of the earthly Jerusalem, in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, reflects a new dimension to this mystical visio pacis. From a purely spiritual vision, it also becomes the best metaphor for an eschatological dream of peace on earth between religions and civilizations.

In his *Peace of the Faith*, Nicolas Cusanus (1401–64) dreams of a religious concordat agreed in heaven, the only rational region, by wise Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Given full powers, they then meet in Jerusalem, their common religious center, to receive in the name of all the single faith, and they establish perpetual peace within the city, "in order that in this peace, the Creator of all things be glorified in all *saecula*. Amen."[44]

The development of ethnological curiosity, also towards "Turks" (Muslims) and Jews, together with the sorrows generated by religious strife throughout Europe, encouraged a renewal of utopian thought, and in this context Jerusalem provided a ready-made symbol, understood by all. Tommaso Campanella, another visionary (this time a Dominican) from Calabria, dreamed at the beginning of the seventeenth century of a regaining of the Holy Land (*recuperatio Terrae Sanctae*) that would be the utmost expression of a historical restoration, a *renovatio saeculi*: "The Church was born in Jerusalem, and it is to Jerusalem that it will return, after having conquered the whole world." He perceived the erstwhile presence of the Crusaders in Jerusalem as a step toward the instauration in that city of the messianic kingdom: Jerusalem, indeed, is the Holy City, where Jews, Christians, and Muslims can become united in communion.[45]

In the religious history of Jerusalem and of its representations, each new historical stage has perforce reflected all the previous layers. The earliest Christian attitudes toward Jerusalem reflect contemporaneous Jewish apocalypticism, while early Islamic perceptions of Jerusalem are deeply indebted to both Jewish and Christian approaches. The various religions have not only succeeded one another in presiding over the political destinies of the city. They have also developed dialectical relationships between them. Today, as Israelis and Palestinians search (or should search) for a modus vivendi in the city, with the various Churches anxious and active in the background, the idea of the three monotheistic faiths having equal shares in the spiritual identity of the city might offer a reference point.

At the very core of this city and of Jewish and Christian eschatology stands the Temple Mount, the Haram al-Sharif. The main intention of the preceding pages has been to reflect upon the complexity of its character, and to show how this small locus has also, throughout its history, been at the core of the interaction between three religious traditions. Their constant

transformations of both themselves and each another have been played out, at some crucial turns in their history, through their competing visions of this same locus.

The Temple Mount is indeed a pivotal point, at the intersection of cultures and religions. It may also appear, alas, as a tectonic fault line in history. It sometimes seems that evil may sprout not from the North, as Jeremiah has it, but from this place at the center. The Temple Mount appears to be a Rashomon of sorts: each side and its story. I have seen the photo-montages in which a reproduction of the Temple replaces the mosques on the Mount. And I have read about a Palestinian claim (supported by "the research of Israeli archaeologists") according to which the Jewish Temple was actually built elsewhere, not on the Haram al-Sharif.

The Mount is not only too small to allow for physical partition; one cannot even partition this small piece of holy land diachronically, allotting its past to the Jews, its future to the Christians, and its present to the Muslims: all three want to possess it throughout time. Let us only hope, then, that we are not living, as did Jews, Christians, and the first Muslims, at the End of Time. Regarding the Temple Mount, like so much else, the complexity of cultural memory offers safer horizons than the simplicity of eschatological beliefs.

185 Muslim women harvesting olives on the Haram al-Sharif

Notes

1 One of the most obvious instances of a place sacred to more than one religious tradition is that of the Babri Mosque, built at the birthplace of the god Rama in Ayodhya, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, and destroyed in 1992 during an eruption of violence launched by Hindu fundamentalists. For another instance of a disputed place, see Robert J. Franklin and Pamela A. Bunte, "When Sacred Land Is Sacred to Three Tribes: San Juan Paiute Sacred Sites and the Hopi-Navajo-Paiute Suit to Partition the Arizona Navajo Reservation," in *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, ed. David L. Carmichael et al. (London and New York, 1994), pp. 244–58.

2 There is remarkably little literature on the history of the Temple Mount from a comparative religious perspective. For an introductory study, see Rivka Gonen, *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim and Christian Perspectives on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 2003). For contemporary perspectives, see Roger Friedland and Richard D. Hecht, "The Politics of Sacred Place: Jerusalem's Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif," in *Sacred Places and Profane Places: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Howley (New York, Westport, CT, and London, 1991), pp. 21–61. See further J. P. Burgess, "The Sacred Site in Civil Space: Meaning and Status of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif," *Social Identities* 10 (2004), 311–23, and Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (Oxford, 2001). See also Simon Goldhill, *The Temple of Jerusalem* (London, 2004), p. 16: "The history of the Temple is a history of clashing cultures."

3 On the formation of the early Christian *imaginaire* of the Temple Mount, see Yaron Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place and Memory* (Baltimore, 2005). On the Christian translation of sacred space in Jerusalem, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago, 1987), chapter 4: "To Replace", pp. 74–95 and notes, pp. 154–70. On the creation of Christian holy space, see Robert A. Markus, "How on Earth Would Places Become Holy? Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Space," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), 257–71. See further Jules Lebreton, "Sacred Space," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 12:526–35.

4 See in particular Stefan Heid, *Chiliasmus und Antichrist-Mythos: Eine frühchristliche Kontroverse um das heilige Land*, Hereditas 6 (Bonn, 1993). For an excellent collection of texts, see *L'Anticristo*, I: *Il nemico dei tempi finali*, ed. Gian L. Potesta and E. Marco Rizzi (Milan, 2005).

5 See William Horbury, "Antichrist among Jews and Christians," in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford, 1998), pp. 113–33, and Oded Irshai, "Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Calculations in Late Antiquity," in *Apocalyptic Time*, ed. Albert I. Baumgarten (Leiden, Boston, and Köln, 2000), pp. 113–53.

6 See Hugh Nibley, "Christian Envy of the Temple," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50 (1959–1960), 97–123, 229–240.

7 On these concepts, see in particular Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992).

8 Christoph Markschies, "Die Bedeutung Jerusalems für die Christen," (unpublished; I thank Prof. Markschies for making this rich text available to me).

9 See for instance Manlio Simonetti, "Il millenarismo cristiano da 1 al 5 secolo," *Annali di Storia dell' Esegesi* 15 (1998), 7–20. See also Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity* (Oxford, 1992).

10 See Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (Oxford, 1982).

11 Heid, *Chiliasmus* (above, n. 4).

12 On the representations of heavenly Jerusalem throughout Christian literature, see E. Lamirande, "Jérusalem céleste," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 7 (1972), 944–58.

13 See A. M. Berruto, "Millenarismo e montanismo," *Annali di Storia dell' Esegesi* 15 (1998), 85–100.

14 Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.18.2; Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, 1926–32) II, pp. 486–87.

15 See Pierre Kovalesky, "Messianisme et millénarisme russes?" *Archives de sociologie des religions* 5 (1958), 47–70.

16 On Montanist conceptions of the heavenly Jerusalem, see Pierre de Labriolle, *La crise montaniste* (Paris, 1913), pp. 86–95, 330–32. See further Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 15–26.

17 See for instance Marilyn Heldman, "Legends of Lâlibalâ: the Development of an Ethiopian Pilgrimage Site," *Res* 27 (1995) 25–38.

18 For the meaning of "the Heavenly Jerusalem" in the thought of Emmanuel Swedenborg, see, for example, his *The True Christian Religion*, §782. The *Book of Mormon* offers another self-understanding of a modern religious movement issuing out of Protestant Christianity as "the New Jerusalem."

19 *Strom* 172.2ff. This text is quoted by Karl L. Schmidt, "Jerusalem as Urbild und Abbild," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 18 (1950), 239.

20 For a discussion of Clement's attitude, see Klaus Thraede, "Jerusalem II (Sinnbild)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 17 (Stuttgart, 1995), pp. 718–64, esp. 729–31.

21 *Hom in Ier* 9, on Jer 11.2; Com. in Ioh 10.18: "It is Jesus, God's logos, which enters into the soul, called Jerusalem." See also the triple allegorical interpretation of Jerusalem by the fourth-century Origenist Didymos the Blind, in his *Commentary on Zacharias*, quoted by Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Ecriture*, I.2 (Paris, 1959), p. 645. See also Dom O. Rousseau, "Quelques textes patristiques sur la Jérusalem céleste," *La vie spirituelle* 85 (1952), 378–88.

22 Medieval references in De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, p. 646.

23 "Caelestis Hierusalem, quae est mater libertatis, chorus libertatis": this is a leitmotif of mediaeval Latin Christian literature. See for instance Godefroy of Saint Victor, Glossa in Ex., 20.2, quoted by De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, p. 646.

24 See Thraede, "Jerusalem, II (Sinnbild)," 752–54.

25 "When I start speaking of her, I can't stop." Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 93.24.

26 See Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study of Augustine's City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden, 1988). For the *Fortleben* of the idea, see Etienne Gilson, *Métamorphoses de la Cité de Dieu* (Louvain, 1952). Perhaps the most interesting of Augustine's elaborations on Jerusalem occur in his *Commentaries on Psalms*. Commenting on Ps. 64.2, for example, Augustine refers to the respective etymologies of Babylon and Jerusalem—the one meaning confusion (Heb. *bilbul*); the other, vision of peace. Although these two opposing entities are inextricably mixed throughout history, Jerusalem eternally represents the love of God, while Babylon signifies the love of the world. (cf. Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* IV, *in fine*). Hence, the criterion for recognizing one's own identity: Ask yourself what you love, and you'll know where you belong. Such an understanding of Jerusalem rules out localization: Jerusalem is everywhere, or more precisely, in the hearts of those who love God.

27 See Martine Dulaey, *Victorin de Poetovio, premier exégète latin* (Paris, 1993), 2 vols., esp. vol. 1, pp. 208–19 and 255–70.

28 Similarly, the *Disputatio Gregentii*, a text from the mid-seventh century, states that the church of the Anastasis is the new Temple, while the Temple Mount itself remains razed. This seems to reflect the renewed fear of the Christians that the Jews may rebuild their Temple, perhaps through the medium of the Saracens.

29 See for instance John of Damascus, *De Haeresibus*, 101. See further Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997).

30 See, for instance, Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Deroche, "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (Paris, 1991), 17–274; Cyril Mango, "The Temple Mount, AD 614–638," in *Bayt al-Maqdis: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, ed. Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns (Oxford, 1992), 1–16; Vincent Deroche, "Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam (7e–8e s.)," *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 57 (1999), 141–61; Averil Cameron, "The Trophies of Damascus: the Church, the Temple and Sacred Space," in *Le Temple, Lieu de conflit, Cahiers du Centre d'Etude du Proche-Orient Ancien*, 7 (Leuven, 1998), 203–12.

31 See for instance Günter Stemberger, "Jerusalem in the Early Seventh Century: Hopes and Aspirations of Christians and Jews," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York, 1999), pp. 260–70. See further Guy G. Stroumsa, "False Prophet, False Messiah and the Religious Scene in Seventh-Century Jerusalem," in *Redemption and Resistance in the Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William Horbury*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and James Carlton-Paget (London and New York, 2007), 278–89.

32 Oleg Grabar, "Space and Holiness in Medieval Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem*, ed. Levine, pp. 275–86 (=*Islamic Studies* 40 [2001], 681–92).

33 Annabel Wharton, "Erasure: Eliminating the Space of Late Ancient Judaism," in *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Zeev Weiss (Portsmouth, RI, 2000), pp. 195–213.

34 See Carl De Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig, 1883), and *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*, translated with introduction and commentary by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997).

35 See *Adv. Haer.* 5.25–30.

36 See Horbury, "Antichrist" (above, n. 5).

37 See Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven, 1992).

38 *Sebeos' History*, trans. Robert Bedrosian (New York, 1985), ch. 31.

39 On the wide circulation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* in the Western Middle Ages, see Hannes Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit: Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart, 2000), esp. pp. 54–104.

40 Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977).

41 See, for instance, Christian Robin, "Le judaïsme de Himyar," *Arabia* 1 (2003), 97–172.

42 As pointed out by Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich in their magisterial study, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 184–91.

43 See for instance Haymon of Auxerre: "Jerusalem quae interpretatur visio pacis, significat sanctam Ecclesiam Deum mente videntem ..."

44 Nicolas Cusanus, *De pace fidei*, XIX. With the dawn of modern times, such "interfaith dialogues," or rather "polylogues," have become more common. The most famous example of the genre, perhaps, is Jean Bodin's *Heptaplomeres*.

45 Alphonse Dupront, *Du sacré* (Paris, 1987), 301–303. Benjamin Z. Kedar reminds me that the idea appears already in Guibert of Nogent's version of Urban II's Clermont Address.