

If Christians orient their churches to the Easter sunrise (i.e. to the East), they are merely following the traditional orientation of the Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem, which probably faced East too.

St Bernard's call "to Jerusalem" ignited the crusading spirit of Christendom not only to capture (or liberate) the Holy Places but to build the City of God on earth – again as a symbol of a communication with the "Presence of the Lord", which the Jews had felt in themselves and filling their Temple, and which they called the holy *Shekkina* "the Glory of the Eternal", whereas the Moslems called it *Sakina* in Arabic. The Presence was, and is, the same.

Co-inheritors

For the Moslems, as co-inheritors of the Abrahamic tradition, the tradition of Jacob, and the Prophets (among whom they include Jesus), Jerusalem has a religious importance second only to Mecca and Medina. The Prophet of Islam describes in moving terms (Surat 17 of the Qoran) the "Night Journey" (*mi'raj*), the supreme religious experience of his life – when he rode in a dream on his winged horse one night from Mecca to Jerusalem and ascended from the Rock through the seven heavens to the Presence of God, to the Throne, returning to awaken in Mecca as a new man, one who had seen God and received a revelation for mankind. As Avicenna's famous Commentary on the "Night Journey" points out, the Rock from which the Prophet rose up to the Throne of God is the same as the Rock on which Abraham prepared his sacrifice, Jacob dreamt of the ladder raised to God, and the Temple of the Jews was raised. It is today the site of the octagonal Dome of the Rock, one of the earliest as well as the finest monuments of Islam, and (like Mecca) a traditional place of pilgrimage for all Moslems.

If I evoke these three great traditions converging on the Holy City, it is to affirm that all three communities have the right to be in Jerusalem. It is their city to be shared and cherished in common, not placed under the exclusive political sovereignty of any one of them. As long as the present situation lasts, it is my conviction that there will be no secure peace. And I see no way out but for the three religious communities together to internationalize the City, or rather to *denationalize* it by redrawing the national boundaries around it, leaving it free at the centre to run itself, with unlimited access from both sides, east and west, provided only that those who come into the city from outside return the way they entered.

To believe in the possibility of a "religious solution" for Jerusalem, one must be

convinced that it could be made to work, that the three religious communities could actually reach agreement on who should represent them and how their authority would be administered. A "Holy City" conception is all very well; but the garbage – and the taxes – must still be collected, and law and order be maintained, in what will continue to be an explosive situation. Could it be done without leaning on the military police and administrative resources of either of the neighbours, Israel and Jordan?

For both Christians and Moslems, it would certainly be difficult to resolve the many conflicting interests in deciding who should represent them, since neither community has a recognized central authority. As far as Christianity is concerned, neither the Vatican nor the World Council of Churches makes such a claim; and if they could jointly propose a Christian council for Jerusalem it would be challenged by the Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchs who share with the Vatican traditional responsibility for the Holy Sepulchre.

So, too, for Islam. The King of Saudi Arabia is the custodian of the chief holy places, Mecca and Medina; but the Hashemite King of Jordan might be held to have a prior claim to authority in respect of the Moslem shrines of Jerusalem, especially those in the Old City (the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque). If the Moslems could accept King Hussein's religious custodianship of the Moslem holy places of Jerusalem (without implying Jordanian political sovereignty), he would be a logical chairman of the Moslem component of the Holy City.

Once the Jews and the Moslems had been able to nominate their respective representatives to such a Council, the pressures on the various Christian churches to close ranks would become well-nigh irresistible. Christian disunity could not, in the final analysis, be allowed to block a religious solution once such a solution was perceived as attainable. It is only because we Christians can today convince ourselves that it is impractical – or that the squeeze on *us* is not yet intolerable – that we excuse ourselves from making any effort to overcome the obstacles. So long as the rights of *any* of the three communities are limited in practice, the light of *our* Holy City – and our *shared* tradition – is diminished. Do we not care?

But then, assuming that each of the three communities had been able to nominate its representatives to a Holy City Council, could such a religious Council actually govern the city? I have no competence to draw up a blue-print for such a city government, but I do have one suggestion as to how it might operate. If it is possible for Greeks, Russians, Serbs and

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