



Jewish and Christian Perspectives



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Call for papers

Conference: 14.5 – 17.5.2018

Jerusalem, Israel

Jerusalem and other holy places as foci of multireligious and ideological confrontation

Holy places play a leading role in many religious traditions. Most important to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Jerusalem is considered a holy city and a religious center that contains numerous sacred places. Occupying a place of pride in the experience of believers, the sacred places commemorate historical events or venerate awe-inspiring features in nature. Although at first it appears that holy places are only significant to the adherents of a specific religion and not to other beliefs, upon closer investigation the matter is more complex. Often a holy place seeks to obscure an earlier veneration of the same spot by a preceding religion. This is true for many Jewish, Christian and Islamic sites located where there had previously been a so-called "pagan" center. Such sites include the Bethesda Pool, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Cave of Elijah in Israel. Likewise, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was preceded by a Church, which was preceded by the Temple of Jupiter while the Church of Maria sopra Minerva and the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome conceal the Temple to Mithras. There are many other examples. Holy places continue to display a multireligious character despite religious and political efforts to obscure that fact. Examples include Rachel's tomb, the Shrine of John the Baptist in Damascus, the supposed Celtic sources preceding Christian sources of holy water, and the mosque/cathedral of Cordoba. Curiously, despite the antagonism that often exists between two religions, a site's sanctification by one religion seems to attract veneration by another. Apparently, the rejection of holy places by another religion does not always lead to physical distance.

On a theological level, the matter is also complicated. Although Protestantism claims to have branded all veneration of holy places as idolatrous, nevertheless there is a constant stream of religious Christian Protestant tourists to Israel and to Jerusalem. Despite the

opposition to holy places by Jewish thinkers such as Abraham Joshua Heschel (the Sabbath is the Jewish "palace in time"), there is a deeply rooted religious fervor among certain Jewish groups when it comes to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem or other sacred places, such as the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

In a postmodern perspective, the huge increase in pilgrimages (Santiago de Compostela), the creation of sacred spots by a so-called "disaster ritual," the predilection for supposedly pre-Christian holy places (Stonehenge), and the creation of secular/national sites of pilgrimage, all demonstrate that the issue of holy places cannot be confined to traditional religions.

In our upcoming conference we plan to explore the relationship between holy places and their significance for various identities. The conference will be held in the Schechter institute in Jerusalem, 14.5 - 17.5.2018.

We invite scholars from various disciplines to submit proposals of 400-600 words describing casus and methodology, before October 1, 2017 to one of the members of the organizing committee. Acceptance, depending on the suitability within the program, will be decided before November 1.

This conference is part of an ongoing scholarly exchange between the academic institutions mentioned above. The proceedings of the conferences are published in the Jewish and Christian Perspectives series (www.brill.com/publications/jewish-and-christian-perspectives-series).

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