THE WORD OF GUEST EDITOR

JERUSALEM: RELIGIONS AND POLITICS

When we decided to start the journey of writing a special edition about Jerusalem we did not know where this experience will lead us. But we started this journey believing that Jerusalem deserves more than one edition... Jerusalem deserves all our venerations and energies along with our academic and scientific contributions.

We are always surprised to see that different perspectives approach the topic of “Jerusalem” but amazed to witness that not a lot of space is given to elaborate and focus on the academic and scientific approach that can lead to the discovery of the communality and the holiness of the City. This edition wants to be a sign that reminds every researcher and peace builder that this holy city is holy because it assembles or withholds all our different heritages and traditions together. It is called Jerusalem (al – quods) because it contains deep inside its own tradition all our traditions: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic.

In Judaism, Jerusalem has been the holiest city since, according to the Biblical Old Testament, King David of Israel first established it as the capital of the kingdom of Israel in c. 1000 BCE. And King Salomon, his son, commissioned the building of the First Temple in the city. The centrality of Jerusalem in Jewish faith and tradition are reflected in the 2000 year old prayer “next year in Jerusalem”. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, politics, culture, religion, national life and consciousness of a people as has Jerusalem in the life of any single Jew. We do believe that the paper submitted by Rabbi Adam Rosenwasser will help us to discover part of the holiness of this city. Moving from war to peace to holiness is a journey of life and Jerusalem symbolize such process.

In Christianity, Jerusalem has been a holy city since, according to the Gospel, Jesus was crucified, and 300 years later Saint Helena identified the pilgrimage sites of Jesus’ life. Jerusalem is that place of important events in the life of Jesus happened. It is the place where Christ died and raised and it is the place that symbolizes the first missionary movement when the Disciples of Christ left Galilee and went to Jerusalem. Dr. Elie Al Hindy from his Christian Oriental perspective revisited in his paper what he called the controversial issue of Jerusalem from a new perspective. He included the spiritual understanding of the “new Jerusalem” that is completely separate from the physical city of Jerusalem but that sheds light on the Christian approach to conflicts in general. Then he reviewed the political, technical, and human challenges that are facing the current negotiations and any possible future solutions, based on the analysis of the literature and declared positions; An exciting and challenging invitation. Ms. Laury Hatyan examines in her paper the presence of the Armenians in Jerusalem for the past 1700 years. This historical account sheds the light on the importance of Jerusalem for the Armenians, especially for the Armenian Church that was granted the authority to safeguard the Holy Places in the Holy Land with the Greek and Latin Churches.
In Islam, Jerusalem is the third holiest city. It became the first Quibla, the focal point for Muslim prayer in 610 CE, and, according to Islamic tradition, the prophet made his Night Journey there ten years after. Dr. Fatimah Husein described on her paper the views of Indonesian Muslim student activists, who are studying in two different categories of university, namely secular and religious-based, on Jerusalem and the Jews. In her paper she offered us the students’ points of view regarding this topic.

All the papers aim to offer us a common space to think on how important the mission of Jerusalem is. They reminded us also of our own mission, inviting us to use all the opportunities to establish a deep dialogue and a critical thinking journey toward the peace building process within the religions who believe that peace is possible on earth. Jerusalem as a holy city cannot be fulfilled by drawing lines and building walls and creating separations and boundaries. Jerusalem cannot assume its mission by creating more divisions. Solutions can be found by multiplying our researches and creating more opportunities and offering common ground to elaborate scientific researches oriented toward building a city of tolerance and coexistence... a city where all believers can join their voices to pray and glorify God.

Ziad Fahed¹

¹ Notre Dame University – Louaize – Lebanon, ziadfahed@ndu.edu.lb