

## EXTRACANONICAL TRADITIONS AND THE HOLY LAND

Conference summary by Jan Bremmer

Dear friends and colleagues,

At the end of this fine conference, it might be good to look back a bit about what we have done and to what extent this fits the idea of Beyond Canon. Our conference has concentrated on the Holy Land but from a specific perspective. The idea clearly was to focus on the fact that in the course of Late Antiquity the Holy Land was mapped, perhaps better to say, transformed into a sacred landscape that was littered with traditions, both real and invented, which originated in canonical and apocryphal writings and perhaps in simply new inventions of tradition. As these holy places invited bodily acts and performances, we might expect a complicated interplay in their development of texts, rituals and material religion. As there was no higher authority to guide this development, although some emperors might favour certain developments, the developing traditions could compete with one another, as it was obvious advantageous for towns or places to acquire religious capital, in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu, in order to profit from these developments. Religion and economy may be thought to be incompatible in the Puritan Protestant tradition, but this is of course a point of view alien to many religions or currents within religions. In our conference we have seen various examples of such a competition. For example, Osnath well showed that Eusebius seems to have wanted to promote Caesarea over Jerusalem, and that point of view perhaps also came to the fore in the curious dialogue with the Roman governor who is represented as having never heard of either the earthly or the heavenly Jerusalem. Another fine example we heard in the contribution of Andreas Merkt about the location of the transfiguration scene. Here we can see not only how an extra-canonical scene becomes adapted to the canonical tradition by insertions of quotes from the Gospels in the Ethiopic tradition, but also to the competition with other mountains, such as the Mount of Olives and Mount Sinai. In general, I think, one can say that competition is an important factor in the development of the sacred landscape, but of course also in the worship of saints and their influences on the landscape of the whole of Christianity. In fact, hagiography, as Sergey Minov, argued is an important body of collective memory which can hardly be left out of sight in a study of the Christianisation of the Holy Land. But with the advent of the Holy Man, made famous by Peter Brown, one also seems to move outside the area of canon and beyond canon. However, the characterisation of the opponents of the Holy Man brings us back into the area of canonical writings although used in a completely extra-canonical manner, which seem to point to non-orthodox groups that do not accept the orthodox rulings about the canon.

Now the title 'extracanonical traditions' raises some questions which also pertain to the title of the project as a whole: Beyond Canon. The first question obviously is: which canon or whose canon? The title seems to suggest that this is transparently clear, but we know from the history of the canon that not all early Christians shared the same canon. The Ethiopians and the Armenians, to take two obvious examples, had and still have ideas about the canon different from those shared in Western Europe. And the term 'canon' itself seems to suggest a certain fixity where this was hardly the case in a world in which it was virtually impossible to own bibles as we know them today. Of course, we have the famous list of Athanasius, but how many Christians did immediately

acknowledge and accept that list? In other words, when we speak of extracanonical traditions, we may well be using here our own outsider language instead of the contemporary insider language or, in anthropological terms, in etic rather than emic terms.

And what about the Jewish canon? Hillel Newman introduced us to the Galilee, but not to Peter in Capernaum, as we might perhaps have expected, but the Messianic redemption from the North with the Arbel valley becoming the preliminary to the end of days. His discussion raises the question if these Jewish traditions with their developments of the axis Jerusalem/Tiberias as such belong to the Regensburg project or belong there because there were connections with late antique Christian traditions, such as Pseudo-Methodius.

The question of what is the canon of our title has of course also a chronological aspect. When we think, for example, of the figure of James, as discussed by Joerg Frey, we largely seem to move in a time before the emergence of the canon even though Hegesippus already adorns the figure of James with curious features. Surely, it is hard to think of this non-drinking, vegetarian figure who never bathed and thus will have been smelling awfully as a respectable person in the Jerusalem higher circles and as a leader of the emerging Jesus movement. Here we have certainly extra-canonical information, even though we would not call it apocryphal. On the other hand, by later making him into the first bishop of Jerusalem his tradition was clearly adapted to local contemporary circumstances and in a way normalised. Apparently, our distinctions and categories, which often work with a binary distinction of canonical vs apocryphal, perhaps need to be refined further and adapted to a more fluid vocabulary. Yet on the other end of our chronological spectrum Stephen showed that the Qur'an could incorporate the motif of what I would call an ancient Palm Springs. Yet should such a single motif be part of a project on extra-canonical traditions. In other words, where are the limits of this project or are there no chronological and religious boundaries?

Moving on to the conceptual framework used with in our conference, I noticed very little usage of theoretical concepts. Admittedly, Harald Buchinger, used the Foucauldian term 'heterotopia', that is a term to 'describe certain cultural, institutional and discursive spaces that are somehow "other": disturbing, intense, incompatible, contradictory or transforming. Heterotopias are worlds within worlds, mirroring and yet upsetting what is outside.' Although it is clear to see that the new holy places in Palestine could have been transforming, we have not really seen examples of upsetting. Yet it is typical of modern thinking that it favours the transgressive, upsetting aspect, as we can also see in the well-known idea of Thirdspace of the Edward Soja as challenging conventional ideas about space. One wonders indeed to what extent the pilgrims, like the Piacenza pilgrim or Egeria, were transformed, let alone upset, by their visits. In the case of the former visit to the Jericho area, as we saw in the lecture by Lorne Zelyck, we could observe how he accepted miraculous happenings without any scepticism, but we do not of course know his thoughts before he started off.

In this respect I also wonder if instead of Foucault and Soja, we should not look more to other models. One would be the so-called 'spatial turn', one of the many turns of course in recent decades, which has been concentrating on the cultural meaning of space and has attached much attention to architecture. In this connection, one could think of Jens Schroeter's paper on the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem or Oded Irshai's on Eusebius' oration on the new basilica in Tyre. It is clear that in both cases Jerusalem and its temple played an important role and that there must have been, apparently, an interplay between the real and the imagined Jerusalem in the second Temple period,

which lasted certainly unto the book of Revelation, but which perhaps can also be seen in the mosaics of late antiquity, just as the Madaba Mosaic.

Another approach that might be helpful is the thinking about space as developed by the French scholar Henri Lefebvre with his distinctions between perceived, conceived and lived space. Space is not a neutral thing but something that is produced and lived in. People have to adapt to space and space can force them to certain behaviours. Here one thinks of the various liturgies but also of the architecture required by, for example, caves. Again, another way of looking would be the application of the idea of 'lieu de memoire', something Tobias has done already with his article on early Christian landscapes of memory. I don't want to argue that we have to use all these concepts, but it seems to me that various papers could fruitfully use some more recent theoretical ideas in connection with the Christianisation of the Holy Land.

Now if we take a closer look at the Holy Land itself and ask which traditions have come to the fore, it is clear that, as Christoph Marksches showed, not everybody was interested in this sacred landscape or its development. Rather surprisingly, Marksches could convincingly argue that his biblical paratexts did not display any real interest in the Holy Land. I think that we should keep this observation in mind, as we might be moved by our own enthusiasm for the subject to presuppose that every early Christian shared that interest. In this respect, one wonders if the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, as discussed by Tony Burke, the Armenian Infancy Gospels as analysed by Mari Mariyan, or the Acts of Pilate as studied by Jean-Daniel Dubois were ignorant of the Holy Land or simply were not very interested in it; the Acts of Pilate may even play in Caesarea of all places. In this connection, one would also like to gain a better insight in the chronological developments. It seems that it was only at the end of Constantine's reign, that is, around the 330s, we can observe an acceleration of the Christianisation of the Holy Land. But what about his successors? Or did the Christianisation of the landscape develop its own autonomous course? And what was the influence of the increasing fixity and authority of what we now call the Bible? Did these developments go parallel? Was there an interplay or what?

Finally, which figures or scenes from the Old and New Testament appealed sufficiently to the Christian imagination to be remembered? Let us start with the Old Testament. Here we have not had that many persons discussed. Adam is a rather surprising figure, but Jan Dochorn has shown that we must think here of theological reasonings as a background, which seems rather rare. Another figure, as Ora shows, is Mozes. Very interesting, though, that there is no scriptural reference but a mention of rather vague predecessors. Evidently, this must have been a local invention of tradition. Rahab the Prostitute clearly appealed to the imagination and one can think of ancient pilgrims as curious about this local Jericho red light district as modern tourists in Amsterdam.

Gunther Stemberger has pointed out that the rabbis were very selective in their geographical mentionings. Given that Jesus was supposed to be a descendant of David, it is perhaps surprising that we do not hear of more about David's tomb. The tradition that David's tomb lay in Bethlehem reappears throughout the earlier Byzantine period. Our first witness, the Bordeaux Pilgrim (333), lists the graves of Ezekiel, Asaph, Job, Jesse, David and Solomon in Bethlehem, adding that the names are inscribed on the tombs in Hebrew letters. One may wonder about that and think of local re-interpretations of older graves, but apparently predating the Christian 'conquest'. Yet the account of Arculf, about 670, is the last to mention it near Bethlehem. Later it is located near Hebron, where the anonymous pilgrim usually called Antoninus around 570 records a devotion of Christians and Jews.

One can be sceptical about that, but communal worship of saints is well attested in the history of religion, so that I would not be necessarily sceptical.

As regards the New Testament, there is obviously the figure of Jesus himself. As Jan Dochorn showed, Golgotha was an important place, obviously so, one would think, but that was not the case before Constantine's mother Helena. We must always remember that we have to do here we constructions of traditions which were not always relevant to all early Christians. Yet the finding of the true cross says something of the importance of the cross for the early Christians as also evidenced at that time by the stauogram. However, it was not only Jesus' death, but also his birth and early youth. Christians seem to have identified a cave in Bethlehem at an early stage, although Justin Martyr and the Protevangelium of James may have used the same material rather than the latter the former. The Protevangelium shows, I think, the very early interest of the Christians in Jesus' mother, which we Protestants usually have underrated. Yet the interest in Mary also seems to have fluctuated in the course of time. Justin and the author of the Protvangelium, who both may have used the same local traditions, clearly know the birth in the cave in Bethlehem. The Protevangelium was probably known to Clement and certainly to Origen, but is subsequently mentioned only in the fourth century. However, it is only in the sixth century that we see a powerful increase in Marian building activities with several new churches. Why then and not earlier? Compared with Mary, Joseph remains a rather shadowy figure, but it must have been hard to compete with God as the father. From the Apostles, it is perhaps only Peter who in Galilee had a place of interest, but Paul has no tie to speak of with the Holy Land and the other apostles all went on their various missionary journeys which also prevented them of becoming figures of interest. Finally, we should probably not underrate the martyrs, to whom Osnath introduce us so well. They were not canonical nor extra-canonical figures but all over the Christian world they attracted the faithful with chapels and churches. Even though perhaps secondary figures in the production of the Christian space, they certainly should not be forgotten.

To sum up: the conference has given us a series of most interesting papers, which will stimulate our triad of Andreas, Harald and Tobias, to further stink and develop the scriptural, geographical and chronological parameters of their great project. Obviously, future conferences should pay more attention to the ways liturgical practices helped to 'Christianise' the Holy land. These future studies should then also focus more than we have been able to do now to such fascinating items as the footprints of Jesus, which can be paralleled with those of Muhammed and even those of the Buddha. We should then perhaps also pay more attention to the reactions of other inhabitants of the Holy Land, such as the pagans, the Jews and, later, the Moslims. Conquests, however peaceful, are rarely without contestations. They are all part of that process that our conference so well initiated to study.