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Prelude

Why Jerusalem in Scandinavia?

Jerusalem has been invested with thicker layers of meaning than most places in the world. In the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Jerusalem is a significant place, a *topos* in the most fundamental sense of the word. For the Jews, it is the ancient capital of Judea, where King Solomon had the first Temple erected for the God of Israel; for the Christians, it is the centre of Jesus of Nazareth's life, death, and resurrection; and for the Muslims, it is the site of the first *qibla* (praying direction), from which the Prophet Muhammad journeyed to the heavens. Within the Christian tradition, the city became a rhetorical and poetical *locus communis*, a commonplace, drawing on a cluster of biblical metaphors from which a whole set of ideas about human society, divine revelation, eschatological expectation, and the connection between these, could be drawn. In conflict with Jewish and Muslim traditions, the Christians have claimed to be the legitimate heir to, and interpreter of, Jerusalem.

In cultures influenced by Christianity, the idea of Jerusalem, earthly and celestial, has engendered a certain structure of literary and visual religious language, applied time and again throughout the last two millennia. In Scandinavia, however, the time span is only half the length, as the Christian faith arrived late to the Nordic shores. Still, a well of sources indicate that Jerusalem has been significant also to the inhabitants of this part of the world. Scandinavian sources are understudied in international scholarship on Jerusalem interpretations, so consequently the current book series fills an important gap. We have investigated the image – or rather the imagination – of Jerusalem in religious, political, and artistic sources in a *longue durée* perspective, in order to describe the history of Christianity in Scandinavia through the lens of Jerusalem.

The impact of Jerusalem on Christian European culture has been extensively explored during the last decade, above all by scholars from the fields of art history,

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architecture, and liturgy.¹ These research efforts have concentrated on material from the medieval and early modern periods. The present three books on Jerusalem in Scandinavia have, however, a wider chronological scope, as they follow Jerusalem interpretations all the way up to the twentieth century.

Two historical processes have been of extraordinary significance for the reception of the idea of Jerusalem in the Scandinavian countries. The first one is the late conversion to Christianity (tenth to eleventh centuries) and the subsequent formation of church and state in the twelfth century, largely coinciding with the emergence of crusade ideology. When Scandinavians articulated and interpreted their own cosmographic position within the scheme of Christian salvation history, an urgent issue seems to be that of connecting to Jerusalem, the moral and eschatological centre of the world, by translations of Jerusalem's holiness and authority.

The second formative process is the Lutheran reformation in the first half of the sixteenth century and the following efforts to transform the Scandinavian monarchies into confessional, monocultural states. This process implied a reinterpretation of Jerusalem's significance. The early modern Protestant legitimations of God's chosen people were based on a paradigm of justification by faith, and no longer on physical transfer of holiness or authority. Nevertheless, the idea of Jerusalem continued to legitimate secular and religious authorities and to construct a Lutheran identity.

The understanding of Jerusalem founded in premodern Christianity was inherently paradoxical and transcendent. It remained intact, although transformed, in early modern Protestantism. To pursue its manifestations into the modern paradigm, dominated by science, nationalism, increased secularisation, and individualization of religion has proved more complex and challenging. Still, Jerusalem remains a vital point of reference in nineteenth and twentieth century Scandinavian sources.

In this book series, we trace the impact of Jerusalem through a millennium of Scandinavian history. We argue that the models of understanding and the varied metaphorical repertoire connected to Jerusalem may be conceived as a *cultural code*. How this is done and what the implications of that have been are explained in the following introductory pages.

¹ See for instance the rich and varied material presented in the following collected volumes: Annette Hoffmann and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *Jerusalem as Narrative Space / Erzählraum Jerusalem* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012); Lucy Donkin and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West*, Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, CELAMA (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Renata Bartal, Neta Bodner, and Bianca Kühnel, eds., *Natural Materials of the Holy Land and the Visual Translation of Place, 500–1500* (London – New York: Routledge, 2017).

Foundation: The Biblical Jerusalem Cluster

The foundation of the Christian idea of Jerusalem with its spectrum of connotations is obviously found in the Bible. In order to recognize the structure of literary and visual Jerusalem references in the sources we investigate, it is necessary to briefly recapture how biblical language describes Jerusalem.

In the Bible, Jerusalem functions within the framework of a special linguistic mode, according to the Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye (1912–1991). This linguistic mode is *poetic* in its essence, and it is constituted by metaphorical speech. It hence avoids precise linguistic specification and encourages productive multivalence.² Hence, biblical Jerusalem came to constitute a flexible, almost elastic linguistic framework for talking and thinking about human community and its relation to the Godhead. This is why biblical language is suited to verbalize the transcendent, Frye claims.³

Guidelines for metaphorical thinking are explicitly given in the Christian Bible itself. One of the fundamental premises is the distinction between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary. According to the Bible, God had dwelled in the Garden of Eden. After the Fall of Man and the expulsion from the garden, God dwelled in sanctuaries built on his command by his chosen people: first in the transportable tabernacle, carried by the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness, designed after divine instruction and considered to be a replica of God's heavenly abode (Exod 26–27). Later, God dwelled in the temple in Jerusalem, erected under King Solomon (1 Kgs 5–8) as a stable place for God to abide for ever (1 Kgs 8:13). It was built on Mount Moriah, the place of Abraham's sacrifice, of Jacob's dream, and where God had shown himself to David (2 Chr 3:1). The Christian interpretation of the biblical temple(s) rests on the conviction that Christ is the new Temple, according to his own words (John 2:19–22). Ultimately, the Christian salvation history ends with the vision of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9–27), descending out of heaven from God. This eschatological city, the goal of history, has in contrast to the earthly Jerusalem no need for any temple, as "Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev 21:22).

In Galatians 4, Paul applies this multivalent Jerusalem interpretation when he comments on the two women who carried Abraham's children:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing

² "It seems that the Bible belongs to an area of language in which metaphor is functional, and where we have to surrender precision for flexibility," Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York – London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982), 56.

³ Frye 1982, *The Great Code*, 56.

children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (Gal 4:22–26)

Paul construes Hagar and Sarah as specific sites: Hagar is the Mount Sinai in Arabia, where Moses received the law, and she also corresponds to Jerusalem of the Jews: Her children will forever be slaves under the law and have no right to inherit from the patriarch. The “free woman” Sarah, on her side, is Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, and her children will inherit his kingdom according to the promise God gave Abraham. Thus Heavenly Jerusalem is the foremother of God’s people. This connection between the city of Jerusalem, motherhood, God’s promise to the legitimate children of Abraham, and freedom from the Law represents a lasting metaphorical correlation of huge theological, cultural, and political consequence.

When Paul construed Heavenly Jerusalem as *mother*, he drew on a strong tradition in Jewish exegesis, included that of Jesus himself (Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34), which associated Jerusalem with female roles. Repeatedly, we hear about the *Daughter of Zion* (for instance Isa 62:11), and in the book of the Apocalypse, John sees “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a *bride* adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2). But Jerusalem is also “the city of the great king” (Matt 5:35), situated “on the high hill” (Matt. 5:14). Hence, Jerusalem in her female roles as mother, daughter, and bride connects closely to the son, father, and groom who resides in her: the living God. The expectations of God the groom’s joyous union with his bride Jerusalem connects another line of biblical metaphors to the same cluster: that of fertility and abundance. The metaphorical repertoire of lush gardens (Eden), sprouting green vegetation, fertile land, and trees abundant with fruit, is ubiquitous in biblical language. Linked to the Jerusalem *topos*, it is contrasted by the equally ubiquitous images of barrenness, wasteland, ruin, and desolation. In this network of metaphors, Jerusalem the bride is contrasted with Babylon the whore.

As mother and bride, housing the king, Jerusalem is distinguished from every other city built by human hands. The temple of Yahweh, abode of the one and true God, is situated within her walls. The sacred architectural structure of the Temple, often blurred with the city itself, becomes the node in this biblical cluster of metaphors, gaining significance because it is set in the midst of God’s chosen people. The biblical Jerusalem cluster involves a dynamic relationship between God and this people, served by a priestly hierarchy and ruled by a lineage of legitimate kings, anointed by God. In Old Testament narrative, however, Jerusalem the Bride does not meet the measures expected from her and hence is abandoned by her groom. The wickedness of the children of Israel causes her to be deserted and abandoned. *Jerusalem desolata* (Isa 64:10) mourns her loss, longs for the reunion with her groom, and anticipates the consummation of their alliance.

This poetic narrative, with multiple archetypal features also found in folktales, has considerable potential for ideological interpretations. As such, it has

permeated the entire history of Christianity. Through the ages, there are repeated examples of how the biblical Jerusalem cluster is applied in strife for legitimation of political and religious structures. A key question has been who represents the true Jerusalem and constitutes its legitimate heir, the chosen people of God. Different answers to this question have elicited schisms, reforms, revolutions, wars, and agonizing polemics, and they continue to do so.

The Insider Perspective: Jerusalem as Allegorical Structure in the History of Salvation

Political and cultural uses of the Biblical Jerusalem metaphors are conditioned by a certain perspective on human history, namely that of transcendent teleology: history has a direction, and mankind navigates towards its transcendent destination. The Christian Master Narrative about humankind is a kind of travelogue framed by the Bible. From man's creation, fall, and increasing alienation from the creator, he finds his long and winding way back to a state of bliss in the countenance of God with the help of his redeemer Jesus Christ. This journey begins in the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis, and ends in the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of the Apocalypse. The narrative of salvation history thus unfolds between a rural and an urban vision of Paradise. At the end of history, God's abode is societal and civilizational: it is set in a city, in an architectural structure and a political entity. Through the centuries, the prophecy of the heavenly Jerusalem has not only articulated the Christian hope for eternal life, but also equipped Christians with a potent, poetic language suitable to describe the ideal political state or utopian community.

Early Christianity made Jerusalem the focal point of salvation history, as the point to which everything converges – like in the premodern *mappaemundi* (world maps), where Jerusalem was the physical, mental, and conceptual centre, “the navel of the world.” This designation originates from Jerome's commentary on the prophet Ezekiel.⁴ According to Ezekiel, God claims that “this is Jerusalem, I have set her in the midst of the nations, and the countries round about her” [Ista est Jerusalem, in medio gentium posui eam, et in circuitu eius terras] (Ezek 5:5). This understanding of Jerusalem as the focal point for salvation history was systematically codified in the epistemological model of the *quadriga*, the fourfold interpretation of Scripture.⁵ This scheme of interpretation first appeared in John Cassian (360–435), and

⁴ Alessandro Scafi, *Mapping Paradise. A History of Heaven on Earth* (London: The British Library, 2006), 145.

⁵ See Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale, les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 4 vols. ([Paris]: Aubier, 1959–1964).

came to have paramount impact on medieval exegesis. In a comment about Psalm 147, in which Jerusalem is called to praise her Lord, John Cassian states:

One and the same Jerusalem can be taken in four senses: historically as the city of the Jews, allegorically as the Church of Christ, anagogically as the heavenly city of God “which is the mother of us all,” tropologically, as the soul of man, which is frequently subject to praise or blame from the Lord under this title.⁶

To medieval theologians, this functioned as a holistic and dynamic model of understanding. On the *historical* level, Jerusalem denotes the physical city, capital of David’s kingdom and the Children of Israel, the place where Solomon erected his temple and Christ suffered death on the cross. Because of the transcendent implications of these events, this denotation also contained other layers of meaning. *Allegorically*, Jerusalem signified the Christian Church, *eschatologically* (“anagogically” in John Cassian’s terminology) it pointed to the heavenly city for which humanity was bound, and *morally* (“tropologically”) it represented the individual Christian soul. This model thus facilitated an understanding that combined past, present, and future, time and eternity, the singular and the universal, and the human and divine into one single rhetorical figure – and onto one single spot: Jerusalem.

This hermeneutical model, further developed and applied in the medieval Christian world, was Christianity’s take on society. In post-medieval Christian cultures, it has undergone transformation and even fragmentation according to shifting religious paradigms. However, its fundamental components – the biblical metaphors – have remained stable and interconnected, and continue to inform Christianity’s conceptions about itself and the world.

The Outsider Perspective: The Jerusalem Code Operating in Christian Storyworlds

Our object of research is the historical application of the biblical Jerusalem cluster, the structuring principle derived from its interconnected metaphors, and its potential for cultural production and meaning-making. To describe these phenomena through shifting historical periods, we needed analytical terms that capture the pervasiveness and complexity of the Jerusalem connotations, their recurrent and manifold applications, and the shifting preconditions for their impact. Our attempt is to consider Jerusalem a cultural *code*.

The term “code” has a range of applications in different fields, from genetics and biochemistry (“genetic code”) to information technology (“programming code”) and popular culture (Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code*). In everyday usage, “code” may also refer

⁶ John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. by Edgar C. S. Gibson, CCEL 438.

to a selected arrangement of digits, like pin codes, bar codes, and QR codes. Diverse as these usages indeed are, they still have certain features in common. All of them concern transmission of messages communicated in languages enigmatic to other than the addressees, and they thus require decoding or translation in order to be understood. So, in all these cases, the term “code” is conceived of as a communicative key: it is a (hidden) script or formula that is applied to make things happen.

All these usages of “code” have a common root in the early stages of telegraphy during the Napoleonic wars, which necessitated military communication across long distances. In the process of developing new signal systems, the commander Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington (1769–1852) required what he called “a code of signals for the army.”⁷ This usage of “code,” designating a set of symbols agreed upon by a specific group, was in common use with the Morse code at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, especially in the 1960s, the practically applied concept of “code” was adopted as a descriptive, analytical term in several scholarly fields. It became a key term in structuralist linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, but first and foremost it proved fertile in modern semiotics and communication theory. Here, “code” came to be understood as a framework of conventions within which singular signs make sense in a certain way. Although the repertory of signs may change over time, the communicative potential of such codes presupposes a certain semantic stability. The spoken language, as well as the body language, religious rituals, and cultural preferences belonging to a given social group, are obvious examples of semiotic codes. Such codes are means by which meaning is produced, hence they shape the world of their practitioners.

According to this understanding, Jerusalem is the organizing principle of a semiotic “code” because it connotes with a set of signs (established metaphors, see above) that stand in relation to each other and thereby enable meaning production. In Christian cultures, Jerusalem brings together a host of poetically potent images, applicable to express ideas of the sacred and of the relationships between God, man, and society. This code has proven to have a remarkable power to structure a variety of Christian outlooks on the world, and to articulate them in different media. To investigate the applications of Jerusalem-related metaphors in texts, images, buildings, and rituals, and to explore how they interconnect and produce meaning is, then, to trace the Jerusalem code.

⁷ Quoted after Eric Ziolkowski, “Great Gode or Great Codex? Northrop Frye, William Blake, and Construals of the Bible,” *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* 1, no. 1 (2014): 18.

The Jerusalem code operates both within time and space, and hence in what we define as a *storyworld*. This concept, borrowed from narrative theory and applied in the design of computer games, may elucidate how the Jerusalem code works. The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* defines storyworld this way:

Storyworlds can be defined as the class of discourse models used for understanding narratively organized discourse [. . .] Storyworlds are mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response.⁸

The storyworld thus defines the limits of individual agency within the storyline. Individuals (historical or fictitious) may move freely around in its universe, but beyond it there is a void. Their horizon is defined by the master narrative, and they perceive everyone they meet and everything that happens to them in light of it, just like in a computer game: the master narrative shapes the world.

A series of binary categories serves as navigation marks for movements in the Christian storyworld and informs all efforts to answer the question of who has the heavenly legitimization as true heirs to Jerusalem. The good city or state always has its wicked opponent: Jerusalem opposed to Babylon. This is a recurrent theme in biblical exegesis, famously systematized in St Augustine's vast narrative of the two contrasting cities. Legitimate authority is contrasted with illegitimate rule, and true devotion with idolatry or false religion. Hence, Jews and Muslims, for example, are part of the Christian storyworld on the premises of that world. If they inhabit competing storyworlds framed by their own master narratives, this is beyond the boundaries of the game. The Christian storyworld is also regulated by moral guidelines: virtue is the opposite of vice – hence every injustice has to be atoned for. Protagonists are either the children of God or the children of the world. Love of God is contrasted with love of self, and ultimately life is contrasted with death.

A Continued Jerusalem Code?

In 1827 the English poet, artist, and eccentric mythographer William Blake (1757–1827) made an engraving of the famous Hellenistic sculpture group *Laocoön*, surrounded by a swarm of graffiti-like aphorisms, most of them about the nature of art. Among them is a statement that “The Old & the New Testament are the great code of art.” Scholars have discussed how this statement is to be interpreted. Blake, who made this engraving

⁸ David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London – New York: Routledge, 2005).

a few months before his death, had for a lifetime constantly reflected, interpreted, and reinterpreted biblical history, or biblical myth, in his literary and artistic works, shaping his own peculiar mythological universe. As cryptic or esoteric this universe may be, Blake still draws on the storyworld of salvation history in which Jerusalem is the eschatological centre.⁹ The literary scholar Eric Ziolkowski suggests in his study on William Blake's aphorism on "the great code of art" that the code is the productive poetical language "float(ing) in a multivalent sea of biblical and classical reception."¹⁰ If this is an operative understanding of the concept, we could add that this code, productive not only in the field of art but also in religion and politics, is working as long as that sea has not dried up. The cluster of metaphors that informs the Jerusalem code is productive in a culture as long as the framework of salvation history is regarded as a relevant scheme of understanding. In contemporary Western culture – and perhaps most significantly in Scandinavia – this is probably not the case anymore.¹¹ The storyworld is scattered, and competing storyworlds that also gravitate around Jerusalem are readily available in our neighbourhoods, or in the media. Perhaps Jerusalem is about to be a forgotten code, increasingly hidden and inaccessible, to the given interpretative space. Ironically enough this happens in a world in which Jerusalem, the material Middle Eastern city, continues to represent a pivotal point of tension and conflict. In contemporary society, we claim that the Jerusalem code still lingers underneath cultural, religious, and political discourses.

⁹ As is well known, Blake's literary works abound with "mythological," nationalist Jerusalem references, the hymn "O did those feet in ancient times" and his tale of Jerusalem being the daughter of the giant Albion being the most famous examples. See Morris Eaves, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Ziolkowski, 2014, "Great Gode or Great Codex?" 4.

¹¹ This is probably the case for Scandinavia more than any other parts of the globe. See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, "Uneven Secularization in the United States and Western Europe," in *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, ed. Thomas Banchoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Fig. 1.0: World map by Nicola van Sype, 1581. The map shows a portrait of Sir Francis Drake (1577–1580) and his circumnavigation as a dotted line.