



FROM THE ORIGINS UP TO TODAY:

THE CARMEL AND THE ECUMENICAL PASSION

CITEs
UNIVERSIDAD DE LA MÍSTICA (AVILA, SPAGNA)

CEI

CARMELO ECUMENICO INTERRELIGIOSO

CEM

CARMELO ECUMENICO MONASTICO

In the thirteenth century, some Crusaders, who moved by the Holy Spirit to meet on the summit of Mount Carmel, became the symbolic ancestors of the Order of Carmel. In the same experience of Elijah:

They sought the Living One before whose Face Elijah stood. For these hermits Mount Carmel was a mystical space which drew them away from established patterns and into God¹.

Why did Ruach, the Spirit, choose Mount Carmel?

The ancient tree of the Carmel Order, born in the Diocese of Jerusalem, continues to flourish:

- In the sixteenth century it was Teresa of Jesus who gave life to what is called the Discalced Carmel, more properly Teresian Carmel;
- In 1631 the Spanish Carmelite Prospero of the Holy Spirit-since 1620 missionary in Persia- succeeded in his plan to bring the Carmelite Order on the summit of Mount

¹ K. WAAIJMAN, *The Mystical Space of Carmel. A Commentary on the Carmelite Rule*, Leuven 1999, 2-3.

forcibly abandoned in 1291. After the occupation of Haifa by the Mamluks, the monasteries on Mount Carmel have been destructed. Prospero obtained by the Emir Ahmed Turabay part of the property of the Mount and permission to build. He managed to find the original convent and the symbolic places of the symbolic fathers.

- In the twentieth century the *Ruach* continues to amaze with the flowering of CITES, the CEI and the CEM.

Some theological questions

The biblical *topos* of Mount Carmel brings together the three monotheistic religions:

- Israel: with the prophet Elijah who proclaims the ONE GOD on its summit;
- the Christians: with the Carmelite hermits who have chosen it as their home and then became the symbolic ancestors for all their descendants over the centuries;
- Islam: that worships Elijah el Khader, the green prophet. in the grotto at the foot of Mount.

Then some theological ecumenical questions arise:

- What is the significance for the entire CITES, CEI and CEM of the holy city of Jerusalem?
- How does the original source of Mount Carmel pulse as life in the Spirit of CITES, CEI and CEM?
- Is the spirituality of CITES, CEI and CEM structured by the realization of this ecumenical legacy so radical and significant?

We all Carmelites in fact inhabit Mount Carmel, we all belong to the diocese of Jerusalem.

The cradle of the Order still conserves the priceless traces of the first settlement and the history of the Carmelites amply demonstrates the attachment to the Holy Land.

The Passion for Israel and Islam

After the Vatican Council II one can fit into a precise historical theological framework in which the identity of the Carmelite, born in the Diocese of Jerusalem and always dwelling on the Mount Carmel - almost a treasure chest of the three monotheistic religions that is waiting to be hatched: Israel, Christianity, Islam - demonstrate how it becomes our own and we bring this sign of the times to historical reality.

Varied but precise is Carmel's response to the challenge that opens to the Trialogue with some different participants:

- The four Carmelite Teresian convents - Mount Carmel, Jerushalaim, Nazareth, Bethlehem;
- The Haifa Stella Maris monastery, all living immersed in the ever emerging challenge;
- The scientific initiatives of the Universidad Mística (CITES) in Avila with its three institutions:

-*Cátedra “Monte Carmelo” para el diálogo judeo-cristiano;*

- *Cátedra Islamocristiana “Ibn Arabi”;*

-*Premio Interreligioso Teresa de Jesus.*

CEI

Everything comes from Clara Caro.

After a first insight in June 1996 which focused on the verse John 17, 21:

they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

CEM

On July 31 2003 Hannele Kivinen de Fau began Ecumenical Monastic Carmel-CEM-on the secluded island of Vartiosaari, fully listening to Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross and the evangelical call to Unity. The first general meeting (laity, consecrated, religious/and priests) of the CEI was held from 17 to 19 June 2005. On September 23 2008 the diocese of Santander approved the statute, and CEI and CEM were supported by the Province of the Discalced Carmelites of Castile. Currently the members are 100; in 2011 five of the faithful of Finland Lutheran church consecrated in the CEI. Viva is the focus of the CEI and of the CEM to Judaism, to Lutheran and Orthodox world. On March 28 2009 Luis Aróstegui, Superior General OCD, joined the Ecumenical and Interreligious Carmel to the Teresian Carmelite Family.

The starting point is the heart of the *formula vitae*, whose structure is absolutely biblical and recognizes Jerushalaim as an unifying architecture.

Jerushalaim and not Jerusalem to stress with the termination ‘*ayim* the Holy City, earthly and heavenly, and life posture that results in its two dimensions precisely historical and heavenly.

If one listens, as taught by André Neher, Eretz Israel becomes a subject who speaks and expands as the horizon of the whole story. The Carmelite monastic life is a symbol, not abstract but real flesh, of the long-continued wandering in the Holy Land, of the *alyah* to the Holy City, in the Presence, in the dwelling in the Word. From the Rule of Albert, rooted in the *Tanakh* and in the Christian Bible, shines an icon, that of the menorah, which shapes the face of every Carmelite, with its seven openings, just as seven are the arms of the menorah.

It gives off light:

- Received by Israel but poured out as a gift to the same Israel;
- Who owns the journey (Acts 9, 2);
- To those who are submissive and it is *Muslim*.

Together with the *lev*, the purified heart, and turned in one direction, towards the face of Yahweh Himself. Presence of light that radiates from Jerushalaim, and makes the Carmelites and who dwell on Mount Carmel, for their ‘logic existence’, a *living menorah*, epiphany of salvation for all, in full communion:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love! (Jn 15, 9).

Carmelites and guardians of the *Ner Tamid*, the eternal light, that “offered to the people witness that the Divine Presence dwelled on Israel” (b Shabbat 22b), the sabbatical light which, in the diaspora, symbolized the everlasting fire that was burning on the altar of the Temple (Lev 6).

Moreover, we ourselves *Ner Tamid, menorah* that always burns and announces the visible presence of the God of Israel.

Jerushalaim, theophanic city, our diocese, because you were born, that illuminates history to walk in the Light of YHWH.

The Carmel, in watchful waiting, is the yeast that ferments and produces new realities which, today are the CITES, the Ecumenical and Interreligious Carmel Ecumenical Monastic Carmel.

In the deep *sentire cum Ecclesia*, mindful of Sunday, June 8, 2014, when Pope Francis and the presidents of Israel and Palestine, Simon Peres and Abbas have invoked the One God and planted in the Vatican gardens the Shalom olive and indicated the utopia of Jerushalaim because it is the holy City to all three religions descended from Abraham.