



The International Center of Bethlehem/Dar Annadwa
5th International Conference
Bethlehem
August 23-29, 2009

**"The Invention of History: A Century of Interplay between Theology
and Politics in Palestine"**

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The International Center of Bethlehem (ICB) is planning to hold its upcoming international conference entitled "Invention of History: A Century of Interplay between Theology and Politics in Palestine" in Bethlehem, from August 23 to August 29, 2009. This conference is part of a series that was launched with the 2005 intercultural conference on the topic of "Shaping Communities in Times of Crisis: Narratives of Land, Peoples and Identities". As a result of that conference, the participants recommended having a series of 5 conferences over the next 10 years to work on this significant topic from different perspectives and angles, so as to ensure an accumulation of research, discussion and writings that will bring about the needed change. The next conference was held 2 years later in 2007, which focused on "God's Reign and People's Rule: Religious Communities, Political Entities and Civil Societies in the Middle East".

In the 3rd conference to be held in August 2009, we will shift the focus from understanding the Bible text itself to examining how theology has been developing in relation to politics of the Middle East in general, and of the historic land of Palestine in particular during the last 100 years. The conference will take as benchmarks 3 important dates which are: the year 1897 when the first Jewish Congress was held at Basle, Switzerland during which the Zionist platform was formulated and the World Zionist Organization was founded; the year 1948 which marked the creation of the State of Israel and the dispossession of approximately 750,000 of Palestinians from their lands, rendering almost half of the Palestinian population as refugees; and the year 1967 which witnessed the Arab-Israeli War that had resulted in Israel occupying the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The conference will also analyze major trends in Jewish, German, Scandinavian, South African and Latin American theologies.

The conference will comprise of 5 days, 3 of which are conference days and 2 are further orientation of the context and visits to related institutes in the area. The conference is aiming at 50 persons who represent different interdisciplinary backgrounds, including theologians, historians, sociologists, archaeologists and filmmakers.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT

The “Invention of History” conference will examine the interplay between theology and politics in the last 100 years and will research how a history was re-invented where the myth of a land without a people for a people without a land started circulating, to the notion of the exodus of the Jews into the promised land to turning the desert to green.

The proposed conference will seek to analyze how theology was shaped by the political developments in the historic land of Palestine in particular and the Middle East in general, and how political decisions were based upon theological convictions. This endeavor is the more important now, especially since there are new and interesting Jewish voices that are starting to talk about the invention of the Jewish people, such as Professor Schlomo Sand. A special attention during the conference will also be given to how the Palestinian people were viewed, ignored or dealt with theologically. It is our conviction that time now is ripe for a critical evaluation of the theological heritage of the last 100 years, marking as benchmarks the years 1897, 1948 and 1967 as they are key years that have changed the course of history of the area, and that something new is starting to emerge that will shed new light on the Palestinian people and history, and will contribute to justice, peacemaking and reconciliation in the region.

CONFERENCE DESCRIPTION

Goals

- To research major trends and developments of the relationship between theology and politics of the Middle East in general, and of the historic land of Palestine in particular during the last 100 years
- To provide a platform for meaningful discussion of the interplay between theology and politics in Palestine in light of the new writings
- To accumulate knowledge important for developing contextual theology that would be more critical and able to meet the challenges of the 21st century
- To publish and advocate for a new understanding of the history and the current realities in Palestine/Israel through the important angle of theology

Objectives

- Organize a 5-day conference where 50 persons from different contexts, disciplines and backgrounds are gathered
- Produce papers that analyze the relationship between theology and politics and examine the major trends of theological thought with regards to the historic Palestine in specific and the Middle East at large during the last 100 years
- Document and publish the conferences’ papers, proceedings and results

Target Groups

The direct target group will be the 50 persons who will gather at the conference, 20 of whom are speakers while the rest are participants. The direct target group is resource persons who represent different disciplines and contexts, such as theologians, historians, sociologists, archaeologists and filmmakers.

The indirect target group will be the Palestinian as well as the international community at large, since this topic is very important in analyzing and assessing the current situation, while it also provides new perspectives and approaches that may help to meet the challenges of the 21st century and provide alternative solutions to conflict.

Duration

The duration of the conference entitled “Invention of History: A Century of Interplay between Theology and Politics in Palestine” is 5 days, starting with arrivals of speakers and participants on August 23, 2009 and ending with departures on August 29, 2009.

Participation Costs

The final rates for the conference are:

Intercontinental: \$978 per person in double and \$1158 per person in single.

Grand/ Star Hotel: \$678 per person in double and \$798 per person in single.

Rate includes accommodation on full board for 6 nights from the 23rd till the 29th of August, 2 days bus, and 6 coffee breaks.

Flight Tickets & Transportation from and to the airport is not included.

For Registration & Reservations, please contact:

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