



#meeting14

Press Release n. 68
35th Edition
Meeting for Friendship amongst People
#meeting14

In History, the Company of Destiny to Man

History is adhesion to reality. It is the place where man's destiny manifests and expresses itself - a destiny which has not abandoned us, and which continues to give meaning to our existence.

Rimini, August 27, 2014 – Continuing the tradition of the Rimini Meeting: the title of this year's festival provokes a reflection and discussion around a theme, central to our lives. During this presentation, conducted in salone Intesa San Paolo (D5), the discussion took up the second part of the title "Destiny Has not Left Man Alone," rather than the first part "To the Ends of the Earth and of Existence." This statement has many implications and repercussions for our lives, particularly in difficult moments and times of crisis, and not simply economic crisis.

The discussion between Giorgio Buccellati, Professor Emeritus of Ancient Near East and History at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), USA, and Ignacio Carbajosa Pérez, Professor of Old Testament at the San Dámaso Theological University, Madrid, Spain, was moderated by Alberto Savorana, the Spokesperson of Communion&Liberation (CL), in this session titled "In History, the Company of Destiny to Man."

Alberto Savorana introduced the panel discussion by quoting Fr. Giussani, the founder of CL: "History for me is everything. I learned everything from history." This is the theme underlying the two speakers' contributions: what destiny is, what his relationship with man is, and how this relationship developed two thousand years ago, and continues today. This is not a rhetorical question, but rather a question begging for "a relentless adhesion to reality." It also emerged in the analysis of an apparently poetic and folk-like verse of the Bible, allowing for the reconstruction of a historic fact that changed man's life.

Giorgio Buccellati's talk starts from two different approaches to the relationship between man and his destiny: polytheism and monotheism. His analysis covers the peoples of Mesopotamia – the focus of his research from the beginning – as well as the people of Israel, as described in the Bible. According to Buccellati, the second part of this statement (i.e., Destiny Has not Left Man Alone) carries within two affirmations which could go unnoticed: "First, that destiny is a *subject*, capable of action. Secondly, that destiny, as such, at some point, can leave man alone, even though he was previously accompanying him."

According to Buccellati, these are two possible answers: "Either destiny is coherent or it is faithful. In the polytheistic approach, destiny is the coherence inherent to things, the DNA of reality, inscribed in all that exists or could exist. Thus, the underlying motive of such a position is the certainty of being's coherence. This is what we mean when we speak about 'mother nature.' Our conclusion in front what we cannot foresee or comprehend normally is 'there must be a reason for it.' This, however, implies a belief in a system in which everything is articulated in foreseeable and regular ways, where everything is, in fact, coherent."



#meeting14

The view springing forth from the monotheistic approach is radically different: “God is the destiny who questions man, who urges him, who even provokes him. Provocation is maybe the most surprising aspect of all, as it seems to declare destiny’s incoherence. Accepting that God is a ‘living being’ is at the root of such an approach and is one of the central characteristics of the biblical understanding of God. The root of this approach is the concept of a “living” God. Such ‘life’ implies a strong element of unpredictability, which can appear as ‘incoherence’. Thus, in the biblical viewpoint, basic coherence is built from the concept of faithfulness. Destiny is a person, someone faithful to the dynamism of life.”

Carbajosa, on the other hand, returns to the theme of ‘the periphery’. “The Mystery who makes all things never left man alone but encountered him in a dialogue, of person to person. In history, this happened in on the margins of the great empires of such times. He chose an unknown man from Mesopotamia, Abraham, and a small people, Israel, which was marginal, compared to the other nations of the first and second millennium before Christ.” Carbajosa moved ahead some centuries to arrive to the cultural center of those times, no longer Mesopotamia, but Egypt, to pause for a while on the last quarter of the first century before Christ, in the city of Alexandria. “Here we find a people who moved from the tension in the quest for truth – typical of the Greek civilization – to a hedonistic and cynical approach, characterized by despair, due to a lack of meaning in life.”

The parallel with our current times is evident, but Carbajosa points out how God “did not want to abandon this cultural center, now turned into an existential fringe and so similar to today’s world. He answered this despair through the presence of the small Jewish community.” It is the biblical book of Wisdom that witnesses how “that Jewish community is challenged, also within its own faith, by the skepticism surrounding it. In God’s answer to the chosen people, we see the caress of destiny who wants to even reach the margins of existence in the great cities.”

Carbajosa then discussed the Jewish community’s relationship with a cynical and disenchanting world, where pleasure and immediate satisfaction had become the only reason to live. This was an extreme form of ‘carpe diem’ (seize the moment) in which the horizon was completely stripped of any connection with transcendence, leading to the exaltation of suicide as free choice in the face of pain, old age, and illness. These issues characterize our time as well, where performance is the supreme value.

In the book of Wisdom, the Jewish community finds the answer to this cultural and human deviation. The answer is simple and direct: “God’s mysteries (destiny’s mysteries) are accessible to every good and just man, but cryptic to those who are not simple, for the foolish and evil ones.” Carbajosa continues by noting that the small Jewish people, wandering towards Alexandria, became the bearers of a more acute knowledge of reality, thanks to their coexistence with God’s *mysteria*. “This is how our destiny meets the fear of death that the heathens feel, by revealing the great mystery: God created man for immortality; we are made in His image.”

(F.Pi., L.T.)

Stefano Pichi Sermolli

Meeting Spokesperson, Head of the Press&Communication Office

Press Office: Erika Elleri

Tel: [3480138786](tel:3480138786)

E-mail: erika.elleri@meetingrimini.org



#meeting14



www.meetingrimini.org

47923 Rimini, Via Flaminia, 18
Casella Postale 108
Tel. + 39 0541 783100
Fax + 39 0541 786422