

News from the

ECUMENICAL FRATERNITY

NEWSLETTER NO. 12
P. O. Box 249, 91002 Jerusalem, Israel

FEBRUARY 1995
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Dear Friends,

Two years ago (March 1993) a most important conference of Orthodox Christian and Jewish scholars and clergy was held in Athens. Although billed as "The Third Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism", various participants commented that it was in many ways the first one.

On the one hand, following the liberation of Eastern Europe, a full range of representatives could come from the great centres of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. On the other, the issues were discussed more openly and deeply than ever before.

We are happy to announce that the proceedings of that meeting will shortly appear in No. 26/27 of our series *Immanuel*. Entitled *Orthodox Christians and Jews on Continuity and Renewal* (255 pp.), the volume will appear in April this year and should reach all subscribers during May or June.

Readers will be able to follow how even the most sensitive matters

were pursued with honesty and mutual respect. They will note, too, how questions thrown out in one session were picked up and developed in later ones.

It was a model of true dialogue. Without doubt, the greatest credit goes to the two co-presidents, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland and Dr Gerhart Riegner of the World Jewish Congress.

Although by no means all differences were resolved, everyone left as the best of friends. Expressing the feeling of many participants, Prof Jean Halpérin will be found describing his "impression that many days and weeks have gone by since we started talking together".

Our volume contains even more. We added essays tracing the history and theology of this dialogue from its beginnings, as well as a bibliography. So readers will find, in a single book, a complete introduction to this little-known area of dialogue, as well as new insights and stimulus for the dialogue between the Western Churches and Judaism.

Journal

Part One of *Immanuel* No. 26/27, *Orthodox Christians and Jews on Continuity and Renewal*, contains the four aspects of that theme that were discussed in Athens. Each aspect was presented by one Jewish and one Christian referent, then thrown open to discussion.

"Scripture and Hermeneutics" was presented by Rabbi Prof Walter S. Wurzburger and Prof Elias Oikonomou, "Memory and Responsibility" by Prof. Jean Halpérin and Bishop Ireneos of Batska, "Christian Orthodoxy and Judaism in the Modern World" by Judge Israel Finestein and Rev Prof Vitaly Borovoy, and "Faithfulness to the Roots and Commitment toward the Future" by Prof R. J. Zwi Werblovsky and Rev Prof Theodore Stilianopoulos.

Of significance, too, are the Message of Welcome sent by the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomaios I, and the opening addresses of Mrs Virginia Tsouderou, Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece, Mr Israel Singer, representing the Hon. Edgar Bronfman, Chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, and the two co-presidents. Photographs of the participants at work give a further taste of the atmosphere.

Part Two includes the essays "Vladimir Soloviev Listens to Israel: The Christian Question" by Prof Jean Halpérin, "A Brief History of Dialogue between Orthodox Christians and Jews" by Rev Petra Heldt, and "Truth and Tolerance in Orthodoxy" by Metropolitan Damaskinos, as well as Rev Heldt's "Bibliography of Dialogue between Orthodox Christians and Jews".

The many organisations and individuals that helped to make the volume possible are listed there. In particular, the team that organised the conference was led by Prof

Vlassios Phidas and Ms Theodora Titaki-Nicolopoulos, while Mr Gary Vachicouras invested great care in preparing the texts sent to us. For financial help, we are grateful especially to the Evangelisches Missionswerk of Hamburg, the Northelbian Church, the Jerusalem Foundation and the Moderamina of the Dutch Reformed Churches.

Immanuel 26/27 is available from our office: Ecumenical Fraternity, P. O. Box 249, 91002 Jerusalem, Israel. The price (including surface mail) is US\$27 (US\$24 in Israel), £17, DM 40, FF 140 or Fl 45. Those subscribing to No. 28/29, on "Thirty Years of Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Israel" (in preparation), can also receive No. 26/27 at the lower subscriber price: US\$24 (US\$21 in Israel), £15, BF 720, DM 36, FF 120, Fl 40.

Still available, at the same prices, are No. 22/23, *People, Land and State of Israel: Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, and No. 24/25, *The New Testament and Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, besides some earlier issues. For more details, including agents in various countries through whom you can subscribe, see the closing pages of our latest issue.

Study Programme

Our programme for 1993/94, on "(Jewish) Tradition and (Christian) Traditions", began at the **Annual Retreat** on June 6, 1993. We heard a brilliant presentation from **Rev Dr Ottone Cantore**, comparing Theodore of Mopsuestia and Midrash Tehillim on Psalm Eight. It was followed by the reflections of our President, **Canon William Broughton**, on "Leadership and Idolatry", which were prompted by recent archaeological discoveries in Ascalon.

The theme was continued in the autumn (see our previous newsletter) and concluded with lectures by **Dr Judith Lieu** on "Biblical Theology and Johannine Thought: Tradition

and its Uses" and **Rabbi Chagi Ben-Artzi** on "Tradition and Development: Concept and Tradition in the Thinking of Rav Kook", held on March 24 and April 28, 1994. On March 29, Dr Peter Walker introduced his thesis on "Early Christian Pilgrimage to Jerusalem" in a small-group session.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, was a great mentor for observant Jews in the early Zionist period, and for young Rabbi Chagi too. But the decades that have since passed raise a crucial question. Should Jews today be guided more by his *example* (the specific views he expressed then) or by his *inspiration* — his ability to perceive a religious significance in unforeseen secular developments?

At the **Annual General Meeting** on May 17, Sr Carmen Farrugia was re-elected Treasurer and Dr Kirsten Pedersen to the Steering Committee for two years. (We congratulate Sr Carmen on her MA from the Hebrew University!) Dr Pedersen and Rev Rien van der Vegt were re-elected as supervisors of our Student Christian Forum, assisted by Canon Broughton. The study theme for 1994/95 was chosen: "Redeeming Creation — In the Wider Sense". During the **Annual Retreat** on June 3, at the monastery of the Sisters of St Joseph in Kiryat Yearim, the theme was introduced with the help of **Rev Dr Benedict Viviano**, OP.

The 1994/95 lecture series began on October 27, when **Prof Daniel Schwartz** asked: "Do Jews Need the Book of Genesis?" Since Genesis deals more with nature than law, it was neglected during the years of Jewish exile. Yet that very emphasis on nature awakens fresh interest for Jews returning to the Land of Israel.

November 17 was devoted to the role of women in redemption. **Dr Aviva Zornberg** spoke on "Women and Exodus through the Looking Glass", **Rev Gudrun Laqueur** on

"As Being Heirs together of the Grace of Life" (1 Peter 3:7). The Jewish Midrash notes a whole series of essential acts by women, without which there would have been no redemption from bondage in Egypt.

On December 15, **Prof Jacob Milgrom** presented a foretaste of the second volume of his Anchor Bible commentary as "The Role of the Redeemer in Leviticus 25". It was his first lecture after his recent *aliyah* to Israel. The chapter may seem to deal only with intricate details of the law of buying back property. Yet at the same time, he showed, the priests of ancient Israel were conveying their deep sense of God as the Redeemer of His people.

Rev Prof Alviero Niccacci, OFM directs the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. On January 26 he discussed "An Alternative Way to Redemption: Nature and Man in Wisdom Literature". Drawing on his recent book, *La Casa della Sapienza* (Milan: San Paulo, 1994), he showed that acute biblical scholarship can be animated by the love of creation and commitment to redemption bequeathed by St Francis.

Visitors

We give more examples of our many visitors. In March 1994, over twenty groups used the Fraternity's study services. They included a group of pastors from the former East Germany, students from the University of Leipzig led by Prof Seidel, teachers of religion with Rev Keller and a study group led by Rev Denecke, both of Hamburg.

During April, a women's delegation of the German Federation of Lawyers came to a seminar at the Fraternity, besides groups from Chemnitz with Rev Winfried Amelung, from the Northelbian Church with Rev Ingrid Homann, and from Berlin with Rev Cord Hasselblatt.

We are also grateful to the Northelbian Church for sending us Gunhild Warning on a scholarship. Among many contributions, she has added hundreds of bibliographical references to our data bank on the Jewish-Christian encounter.

In May, a group of Christians and Jews from North Carolina came for a seminar. In June, a lecture was given to a group from the Centre for Political Education of the Federal German administration.

Rev Prof Michael McGarry, CSP and Sr Prof Celia Deutsch of the American Christian Study Group came in July and explored ways of future co-operation. Prof Leonard Swidler, long-time editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, was also with us.

In September, Rev Klaus Geyer brought a group from Germany. The new volunteers of Aktion Sühnezeichen in Israel came to learn about our work.

October was an especially busy month. Besides Lutheran bishops and theologians (more below), we saw Rev Dr Hartmut Metzger, the group of international students associated with the Har El synagogue, a group of Christian leaders from Arizona, the Council of Christians and Jews of California, Rev Sommer of the Northelbian Church and his parish, Dr Glessner with students from the University of Hamburg, and Rev Denecke again.

A small delegation of members of the British Council of Christians and Jews came to the Fraternity for information in November. By kind invitation of the Swedish Theological Institute, there was a chance to meet Emilio Castro, the former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Rev Eva Vöhringer brought members of the Working Group for Jewish-Christian Co-Operation of the German Co-Ordinating Council for this activity.

In January 1995, leaders of the Italian Council of Christians and Jews visited the

Fraternity. There also came journalists from Paris on a study tour.

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During October 9-23 last, the Ecumenical Fraternity was privileged to co-organise the visit of fifty-five official delegates from nine Lutheran churches all over the world, including various bishops. They came at the invitation of the Centre for Church World Service of the Northelbian Church and were led by Bishop Maria Jepsen of Hamburg, Rev Paul Gerhardt Buttler, Director of the Northelbian Centre, and Rev Ingrid Homann, Secretary for its Middle East Desk. The countries represented were Brazil, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania and Zaire.

The theme of their Jerusalem Consultation was: "Sharing in the Bread of Life: companionship to serve each other and together share with others." It had two aspects. In some sessions, participants from one country would communicate their particular experience. In other activities, the visitors as a whole went out to discover the religious significance of Jerusalem and Israel.

Besides Christian holy sites, the group visited places of special significance to Jews or Muslims. There were also ample opportunities to meet a variety of local people at the Redeemer Church, where the visitors were hosted by Bishop Naim Nassar and Propst Ronecker, and on our premises. Here our President and Executive Secretary introduced them to Jews and Christians whose dialogue during thirty years has created a "biblical ecumenism" in Israel.

Yours Fraternally,

Rev Petra Heldt (Executive Secretary)