

Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel

איחוד אקומני למחקר תיאולוגי בישראל

President: Rev Dr Geert Cohen Stuart

Executive Secretary: Rev Petra Heldt

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P.O.Box 249, 91002 Jerusalem, Israel

Tel. (02-)254941

Dear Friends,

We are very happy to report further help for our work from churches in Germany. The Evangelische Missionswerk in Hamburg, which is the roof organization for the overseas work of the Protestant churches in West Germany, has decided in principle to support the work of our Executive Secretary for the next three years. For the year 1990, in addition, it has made a grant towards the costs of producing our journal *Immanuel*. We are most grateful to the Evangelische Missionswerk for its generous recognition of the importance of the contribution of our Fraternity towards better understanding of Judaism and the Jewish People among Christians.

The first fruits of this new support are to be seen in the new issue of *Immanuel* (No. 22/23, dated 1989), which is now already in the press. Entitled "People, Land and State of Israel: Jewish and Christian Perspectives", it reflects the research work of our Fraternity during the academic year 1987-88. Some of the articles are based on lectures given to the Fraternity during that year, while others were invited in order to give a comprehensive range of viewpoints.

It is also the first example of our new policy concerning *Immanuel*. Hitherto, it appeared in two issues yearly, each of which was divided into several different sections. Now it will appear once a year as a double issue devoted to a focal theme connected with the ongoing research work of the Fraternity. The next issue (No. 24/25, dated 1990) will be a Festschrift for Prof David Flusser focusing chiefly on the Jewish background of the New Testament. All the contributions have been collected and it is due to appear later this year.

For financial support in producing these issues, our thanks go also especially to the Vier Moderamina of the Dutch Reformed Churches, the Church of Sweden and the Northelbian Church. Among individuals who gave help, we are grateful especially to David Bivin, Helmut Brauer and Clarence Wagner for technical assistance.

Journal

The contents of our new issue of *Immanuel* (No. 22/23, dated 1989) are: "Perceptions of the State of Israel in Modern Halakhic Thinkers" (David Hartman), "Theological Reflections - Land, People and the State" (Moshe Greenberg), "'The Holy Land' - History and Reality of the Term" (Kirsten Hoffgren Pedersen), "An American Evangelist and the Jews - Dwight L. Moody and His Attitudes toward the Jewish People" (Yaakov Ariel), "People and Land" (Martin Stöhr), "The Re-Judaization of Christianity - Its Impact on the Church and Its Implications for the Jewish People" (John T. Pawlikowski), "Concerto for Passover - A Christian's Notes from the Underground" (Peter Du Brul), "An Arab-Israeli's Theological Reflections on the State of Israel after 40 Years" (Naim Ateek), "The Land of Israel - A Christian Zionist View" (Halvor Ronning), "Theological Significance of the Rebirth of the State of Israel - Different Christian Attitudes" (Petra Heldt and Malcolm Lowe), "The Attitude of the Netherlands Reformed Church to *Israel's People, Land and State*" (Geert H. Cohen Stuart), "Jews, Judaism and Israel in the Theology of Saint Augustine - How He Links the Jewish People and the Land of Zion" (Marcel Dubois) and "Selected Bibliography on the Land and State of Israel" (Lena Skoog).

Immanuel was founded by Jacobus (Coos) Schoneveld. He was its first editor, followed by Marcel Dubois, who is now the journal's President. The present Editor is Malcolm Lowe and the Assistant Editors are Jeffrey Magnuson (who designed the much-improved layout of the new issue) and Ibolya Glancz.

Study Programme

This year's programme, devoted to Jewish and Christian "Aspects of Creation Theology", opened on October 26, 1989 with Prof Israel Knohl's lecture on "God of Creation and Revelation in the Priestly Source of the Pentateuch" and a response by Rev Andrew Chiu. On November 23 Prof Shemaryahu Talmon lectured on "Biblical Understanding of Creation and Human Commitment". The very fruitful interaction between him and his respondent, Dr Göran Larsson, made for an unforgettable evening. On December 14 Mrs Erella Yidgar gave a lively and penetrating exposition of "Hermeneutical Approaches to Creation on the Rabbinic Sages", showing how deep theological issues may lie behind the rabbinic discussions of apparently simple details of the biblical text.

On January 25, 1990 Dr Margaret Brearley's lecture on "Creation Spirituality and Modern Paganism" attracted the biggest attendance for several years. Prof Moshe Hallamish, Editor of the Israeli theological journal *Da'at*, discussed "Creation of the World: Its Meaning and Development in Kabbalistic Thought" on February 22. Prof Maurice Gilbert read a paper on "New Creation and Historical Experiences" on March 29, with a response by Prof Moshe Greenberg. Finally, a current topic of the World Council of Churches, "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation", was presented on April 26 by Prof Thomas Stransky.

For the first time, all the lectures took place at the Ratisbonne Christian Centre for Jewish Studies. We sincerely thank the Administrator of Ratisbonne, Msgr Dr Richard Matthes, and its Director, Rev Prof Marcel Dubois, for having regularly welcomed us graciously. The preceding fraternal meals, provided by the Ratisbonne kitchen, were not only a culinary experience but an additional opportunity for informal contacts.

A marked increase of attendance was noticeable at these monthly lectures, typically 80-90 and almost 120 for Dr Brearley. Also a group of Fraternity members met regularly to study a dossier of

articles on the theology of creation which was prepared by Lena Skoog. During the annual retreat weekend for members, on May 26-27, Br Pierre Lenhardt spoke on "Implications of Jewish Prayer for Christian Spirituality" and Rabbi Dr Abraham Lopez-Cadoso on "The Impact of Human Deeds on Nature".

The Annual One-Day Conference for members and guest-members of the Fraternity took place on March 23. Br Pierre Lenhardt provided us with rabbinic texts on creation based on Jewish prayer, which were studied during the morning by three groups, led by Br Lenhardt, Prof Maureen Fritz and Malcolm Lowe. In the afternoon Rev Jacob Willebrands delivered a well-thought and well-received paper on "Creation Theology in Irenaeus and Maximus Confessor".

Apart from the regular programme, the Fraternity and the Ratisbonne Christian Centre organized a Second Joint Annual Conference on May 9. The lecturer was Prof Michael Fahey of Toronto, speaking on "The Jewish Tradition and Training Ministers Today", with examples from his own experience.

At the Fraternity's Annual General Meeting, Rev Dr Geert Cohen Stuart was unanimously reelected for a further year as President. With marked reluctance the meeting accepted the resignation of Rev Vincent Martin from the Steering Committee after two years of unfailing service. Rev Prof Marcel Dubois was elected to replace him. Fortunately, Rev Martin will remain in Jerusalem at a time when several other long-standing members are leaving for tasks elsewhere: Dr Morris Inch for the USA, Miss Anna-Greta Norén for Sweden and Sr Stella O'Donnell for Australia. We wish God speed to them and to our former President, Sr Lucy Thorson, who is going to Canada on study leave.

Exhibition

In April the Fraternity's Office hosted an exhibition on the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* project of Bar-Ilan University. The original *Mikra'ot Gedolot* or "Rabbinic Bible" was published in 1524-25 by the Bomberg Press in Venice. It contained the biblical text printed page by page together with the traditional marginal notes (*masorah*), the Targumim and the medieval Jewish commentaries. It became both a regular feature of traditional Jewish homes and a valued source for generations of Christian Hebraists. Unfortunately, the first edition contained many errors, which were multiplied in later ones. The Bar-Ilan edition will be based on the best manuscripts, collated according to the highest standards of modern scholarship. Also "Rashi script" will be replaced everywhere by standard Hebrew script. It will be most helpful not just for scholars but also in suggesting ideas for sermons. The first volume, containing Joshua and Judges, is due to appear this summer. Further details are available from our office or directly from the Director of the project: Prof Menachem Cohen, Department of Bible, Bar-Ilan University, 52100 Ramat Gan, Israel (Telex: 342290 BARIL IL).

Visitors

Of many visitors only examples can be given. Prof A. Philipp Harnoncourt came from the Pro Oriente Foundation in Vienna, which has promoted relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches for 25 years. Prof Molner, Director of the Protestant Seminar in Debrecen, came from Hungary. From the Union of Lutheran Churches in Germany (VELKD) came Oberkirchenrat Manfred Jahnelt. Another notable personality was Rev Christiane Beisenherz, one of the earliest female pastors in Germany. From East Germany came Rev Lucian Jacobi, the leader of the Baptist community. It was especially moving to meet Rev Arndt, the pioneer of Christian-Jewish dialogue in East Germany, whose long and often painful struggle was described in the *Jerusalem Post*.

There were also numerous groups that received lectures on the Fraternity's work. Sr Margaret Shepherd brought a group from Britain on behalf of the Council of Christians and Jews. The annual group of Dutch and Belgian theologians was brought by Rev D.J. van der Sluis. Groups from West Germany were led by Rev Stecker of Hamburg, Frau Christa Bruns of Hameln and Rev Ingrid Homann of the Northelbian Church, in addition to a group sent by the Centre for Political Education of the German Federal Republic. Various groups came from North America. The Fraternity also again helped to organize the study programme for the annual group of German students at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute.

A most distinguished visitor to Jerusalem was Otto von Habsburg, a leading member of the European Parliament and President of the Paneuropean Union. In a lecture to mark his acceptance of an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew University, he stressed how his concern for good Christian-Jewish relations was inculcated into him at a very early age by his father, the last Emperor of Austria-Hungary. At a luncheon for His Highness and Dr Vittorio Pons, International Secretary General of the Paneuropean Union, in order to acquaint them with aspects of life in Israel, your Executive Secretary had the honour to be a spokesperson for the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

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A guest for six months, originally invited by our member Rev Dr Michael Krupp, was Rev Dr Eberhard Kerlen from Wuppertal-Elberfeld, formerly responsible for the education of prospective ministers of the Protestant Church of the Rheinland. He was taking sabbatical leave in order to prepare for a new enterprise: to make Jewish biblical exegesis and prayer better known among Christians on the parish level. Our office put him in touch with various Jewish teachers and institutions. He now envisages a long-term cooperation with partners in Jerusalem, particularly the Shalom Hartman Institute. We were also able to recommend the Folkertsma Stichting in Hilversum, the Netherlands, which already has long experience with such enterprises.

In a memorandum about his visit, Rev Kerlen notes the unusual opportunities offered by a sabbatical in Jerusalem for encounters both with Judaism and with the great variety of churches. He emphasizes, however, two preconditions: one must be ready to organize one's own programme; and one must first seek simply to understand the other, and change one's preconceptions accordingly, before considering oneself capable of entering into dialogue.

The second of these preconditions indeed needs to be emphasized again and again at a time when anti-Judaism is undoubtedly growing, not merely in the Middle East but also in many countries where it had seemed to be in retreat. Accordingly, the considerable research achievements of the Fraternity need to be made more widely known among the churches on various levels. It means strengthening those good traditions of our churches which are free of anti-Judaism and reinforcing our Christian identity through discerning its affinities to the Jewish faith that is alive among the People of Israel in their State. When this commitment arouses anxieties among Arab brothers and sisters in Christ, especially in the current tense period, we seek whatever means to reduce them that do not contradict our recognition of the Jewish roots of our faith. It should not become a matter that divides us as Christians.

Yours fraternally,
Rev Petra Heldt (Executive Secretary)

Please note our new telephone
number: (02-)254941