

Scholars Corner – Issue 8
News, Reviews & Publications

Rev. Dr. David Neuhaus *on the challenges of expressing Christianity through Hebrew*



Dr. David Holt *on his role as Middle East Studies Program (MESP) Director for the Council of Christian Colleges & Universities*



Prof Tom O'Loughlin *on his focus on one Gospel, "Mark the Evangelist in the Landscape of Jesus" while teaching the course at Tantur*



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Rev. Dr. David Neuhaus

Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel and a regular Lecturer at Tantur, Jerusalem

One of the fascinating new developments in the Church of the Holy Land is the increasing vitality of Hebrew speaking Christians.

The first steps were taken in the 1950's, after the establishment of the state of Israel, when thousands of Catholics found themselves integrating into Israeli society along with their Jewish spouses. They sought out a church and found either Arabic speaking or expatriate communities. Therefore in 1955, the Work of St. James was established in order to cater to these faithful, sensitive to their Israeli Jewish milieu and at the forefront of the developing theology of Jewish-Christian relations in the post-Shoah Church.

Among the founders were Jewish converts to Catholicism and Europeans who sought to live in profound solidarity with the Jewish people after the Shoah. Christianity had never been expressed in Hebrew before so the first challenge was to translate and invent a Catholic Hebrew that could express the faith – liturgy, catechism, music etc. Drawing on Old Testament Rabbinic texts, synagogue prayer and modern Hebrew literature, these pioneers laid the foundations. After all Hebrew was not simply a vernacular among others but a language profoundly related to Christian roots, being profoundly affirmed in that period.

Today the challenges are myriad. How can the faith be transmitted from generation to generation in a secular Jewish society highly conscious of the ambivalent role Christians played in Jewish history? Yet today, there are many Catholics arriving in Israel who are in need of this Hebrew speaking church, particularly for their children born and educated here. These include tens of thousands of new immigrants (particularly from Eastern Europe), migrant workers (mainly from Asia) and asylum seekers (mainly from Africa).

For more information please visit www.catholic.co.il

Dr. David Holt

Doctorate from The University of Chicago, Illinois, USA

Dr. David Holt is currently residing at Tantur with his wife Dr. Suzanne Holt where they run the MESP Program (Middle East Study Program) attracting undergraduates from Christian colleges all over the USA and some from Canada.

David has always loved reading history, politics and philosophy with his first two degrees in History (BA) and Government (MA). However for his PhD at the University of Chicago he bowed the knees and began specializing in comparative politics of the Middle East. After teaching at two small Christian colleges in the USA an opportunity arose to direct the Middle East Studies Program for the council of Christian Colleges and Universities.

The CCCU serves the needs of over 110 institutions of Christian higher education in the US, providing mainly a forum for the discussion of common agendas as well as faculty and student development. Students of the program engage in all aspects of the study of Abrahamic traditions. They have the opportunity to listen to many speakers on the culture, politics and religions of the region. In addition to these studies the classroom is brought to life in that the students get to travel and experience the culture of the region. So, in addition to site visits in Israel and Palestine, the students also travel for over a month to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey and for the first time the Moorish and Arab settlements of Southern Spain, Granada in particular. In the end the culture of the region becomes a mirror in which they hopefully see themselves more clearly and honestly as people of faith.

David still enjoys learning from his students and host friends – Jewish, Muslim and Christian and his long sojourn as a guest in the Middle East has left him uncertain about many things. But Tantur has been a wonderful haven for him while the journey and adventures continue!

Prof. Tom O'Loughlin

Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham, UK

Tom O'Loughlin is professor of Historical Theology in the University of Nottingham and first came to Tantur on a short visit in November 2010 after taking part in a conference on the image of Jerusalem which was being held in the Hebrew University. Then in conversation with Tim Lowe and Bridget Tighe the idea came about of him giving a two-week course focusing on just one gospel and what it could tell us about Christian origins.

This course, which was dedicated to just Mark's Gospel, took place in September 2011 – and it appears a good time was had by all.

Tom's work examines how memory has shaped, and continues to shape, Christian theology: the Church is always remembering and always forgetting (as Rahner said), and so the theologian looks back at how the memory shaped belief and practice for good or ill, while the theologian can look back to see how memory can challenge the present and help us to imagine the future. An example of what he means by this can be seen in his two recent books: *The Didache: A window on the earliest Christians* (2010) and *Making the Most of the Lectionary* (2012) which is the first explicitly ecumenical introduction to the lectionary (developed by Catholics for Vatican II) now used by most western Christians over the years

Tom has also worked on the significance of the Holy Land for Christian theology; so when those on the course went on a day trip to the shores of the Dead Sea, he gave them a lecture (sheltering in the bus from the sun) on how it has influenced Christian views on hell and God as punitive! Hot stuff!

For more on his book on the Didache, watch::

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gx0SeurInts&feature=edu&list=PL52C4CE0B7593CFC8>

For more on his book on the Lectionary, watch::

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaTjC6V79cI&feature=edu&list=PL52C4CE0B7593CFC8>