

Scholars Corner – Issue 5
News, Reviews & Publications

Dr. Stephen Travis on *the Galilee that Jesus knew.*



The Very Reverend Adrian Dorber on
Palestinian Liberation/Contextual Theology.



Dr. Lutz Doering on *the relationship between ancient Jewish and early Christian letter writing.*



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Dr. Stephen Travis

Visiting Lecturer in New Testament at St John's College, Nottingham, UK

Stephen is retired from the full-time faculty at St John's College, Nottingham, where he was also vice-principal. He has written several books including *Christ and the Judgement of God* (Paternoster/Hendrickson, 2009), and co-authored the text book *Exploring the New Testament: Letters and Revelation* (SPCK/IVP, revised 2011). It was my privilege to lead seven groups of theological students from Britain and Ireland on three-week courses, superbly arranged for us at Tantar, between 1999 and 2008. Over those years I became fascinated by the special character of Galilee – and how easy it is for visitors not to look below the surface of Galilee today in order to discover what it was like in the time of Jesus. So in a 9000-word booklet I have summarized recent scholarly debates on questions such as: Who were 'the Galileans'? How did they make a living? How often might you meet a Gentile if you travelled around the region?

What was the effect of the new cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias, on the rural population? How does all this form a context for Jesus' message about the kingdom of God? It is so easy for Christians to think of Jesus apart from his specific context. So I have written particularly for students, visitors to the Holy Land, and those who teach and preach from the gospels with the aim of helping them to understand the gospels in the light of real first century conditions. And the process of writing has increased my longing to get back there! Dr. Stephen Travis is a regular visitor to Tantar and has just published a book entitled **'The Galilee that Jesus Knew'**. (Grove Books Cambridge). Written with those who preach and teach from the Gospels in mind, it explores the nature of village life, the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, rich & poor amongst other topics.

The Very Reverend Adrian Dorber

Dean of Lichfield, UK

Adrian Dorber is an Anglican Priest who is currently Dean of Lichfield, England. The role carries responsibility for one of England's oldest cathedrals (originally built as a pilgrim church and shrine for the first great missionary bishop to the English midlands, St. Chad) and a share in the oversight of the diocese. Ordained in 1979 Adrian has worked in four dioceses as a parish priest, a university chaplain and lecturer and, in his last post as Director of Ministry and Training in the Durham Diocese, he developed provision for clergy formation and new patterns of lay ministry.

Over the past few years he has led pilgrimages to the Holy Land and this has led him to Tantar for a sabbatical. During his stay Adrian has been making a special study of Palestinian Liberation/Contextual Theology. He has been conducting a series of meetings with Christian leaders, Theologians and people involved in human rights and humanitarian work. The complexities of Israel/Palestine and the inter play of history, faith and politics pose some big questions for an adequate Christian response. Adrian has been gathering material for a series of lectures he will be delivering in Lichfield later this year and he is also writing a briefing paper for his own Church. There are many opportunities open to Cathedrals to partner the Church in the Middle East and to play a part in the quest for lasting justice and peace. Adrian hopes to be able to share some of his experience and knowledge, gained at Tantar, with other Christian communities and to help encourage a greater awareness in the UK of the support and understanding the people of Palestine/Israel are asking for. Tantar has proved to be the ideal place for this mixture of field-work, travel, research and net working. The strength of living in an ecumenical community with colleagues coming from all over the world, representing all the major churches, has been an inspiration and source of personal renewal. Access to a splendid library and visiting speakers and lecturers has also proved invaluable; the mixture of worship, community and learning has been just what a Dean seeking sabbatical refreshment has needed! Adrian can be contacted on adrian.dorber@hotmail.co.uk

Dr. Lutz Doering

Reader in New Testament & Ancient Judaism, Durham University, UK

My name is Lutz Doering, and I am Reader in New Testament and Ancient Judaism at Durham University in the North East of England. In 2010 I spent three months at Tantar on a Woods-Gumbel Fellowship from the British Trust for Tantar. I had two aims then: to advance a monograph on the relationship between ancient Jewish and early Christian letter writing, provisionally entitled *May Your Peace Abound*, and to prepare another research project, a translation of, and commentary on, *Tosefta Shabbat*, an important rabbinic treatise that deals with details of Sabbath observance but features also an extended excursus on certain types of magic. In my book on letter writing I argue that early Christians are more indebted to uses, forms, and thematic emphases of Jewish letters than often allowed for. Thus, for example, First Peter is an early Christian Diaspora letter that applies to its addressees in certain areas of Asia Minor the (originally Jewish) notion of 'sojourners and strangers of the Diaspora', with clear consequences for the addressees' demeanour in the midst of a hostile environment. Interestingly, First Peter deploys a greeting (literally: 'May grace to you and peace abound') similar to that of letters, partly to the Diaspora, which are ascribed to Rabban Gamaliel in the Tosefta.

Tantar is an excellent place for research and the Library holds a good number of editions, tools, commentaries, and monographs relevant to my projects, so that I was able to do part of my work on the spot. I am currently back for three weeks in order to check final references for the letters book and to work on the Tosefta volume. Importantly, my stay in 2010 allowed me to formulate a fellowship proposal for my new project to our research council, which was accepted, so that I am now freed from teaching and administration for the current academic year – an achievement in which Tantar played no small role.