

HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH-CHRISTIAN BIBLE WEEK

The Bible week grew out of an annual Catholic Bible study week at the Hedwig Dransfeld Haus, Bendorf near Koblenz. The Haus was under the direction of Anneliese Debray who had pioneered dialogue activities after the war. Through one of her projects contact was made with some young rabbinic students from the Leo Baeck College in London and their presence at the Week sparked interest in introducing this Jewish participation into the programme. The first Jewish Christian Bible Week took place in 1969.

Three elements were at the heart of the week from its inception: the German-Jewish post-war encounter, Jewish-Christian dialogue, and the shared study of the Hebrew Bible. At different times one or other element has been more significant in the encounter but increasingly the shared study of the Biblical text, enjoying the diversity of interpretations available from within and beyond the two traditions, has taken centre stage.

Side by side with the text study we find dialogue in the form of personal discussions and shared daily encounters. Contributions and abilities of all participants are what lend the Week its lively nature. The diverse origin of the participants, who come from various European countries as well as Israel and the United States, gives the Bible Week its unique international atmosphere. Therefore it has become one of the principles of the Week that conference languages are English and German and all official events must be translated into both of these.

Following the retirement and subsequent death of Anneliese Debray the Haus went through financial difficulties and was finally forced to close. In searching for a new home the organising team, from Germany and the UK, made contact with Dr Uta Zwingenberger at Haus Ohrbeck, whose invitation to relocate the week there opened up a new period of development. Over the years the team has evolved to ensure that a younger generation of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish theologians contribute to its continuity and development. The joint sponsorship between Leo Baeck College and Haus Ohrbeck makes this a unique Jewish-Christian project in Germany in the field of interfaith dialogue.

For further details:

Daniela Koepler: *Zelte der Begegnung: Geschichte und theologische Bedeutung der Ständigen Konferenz von Juden, Christen und Muslimen in Europa und der Internationalen Jüdisch-Christlichen Bibelwoche*, Verlag Otto Lembeck: Frankfurt/M. 2010.

Edith Petschnigg: *Biblische Freundschaft. Jüdisch-Christliche Basisinitiativen in Deutschland und Österreich nach 1945 (Studien zu Kirche und Israel. Neue Folge 12)*, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: Leipzig 2018.

Marie-Thérèse Fachon, Maria Adelheid Schneider, Werner Jakob Stueber (eds.): *Suche den Frieden und jage ihm nach. Anneliese Debray – ein Leben für den Frieden*, St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag 2018.