



BIBLE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT

The Newsletter of the Bible & Religion Department at Eastern Mennonite University

Summer 1999

Hello Haverim!

On behalf of the Haverim Steering Committee I want to thank you for the interest and support you've shown toward the EMU Bible Department! This newsletter gives you a glimpse into departmental happenings; you'll also read of some of the ways Haverim is seeking to strengthen the study of the Bible at EMU. We believe that forging vital links between the Bible Department and the Church is a good thing. Connected, the Church benefits from the intellectual resources of the Department; likewise the Department stays in touch with the embodied wisdom of the Church community. Thanks for helping to make that vision a reality!

Mark Wenger.

Chair, Haverim Steering Committee

Reflections on Bible teaching

Nancy Heisey

At the end of my first semester of teaching at EMU, I offered students in one class the following exercise: "Describe your own pilgrimage with the Bible, and reflect on how studying the history of the Bible has affected that pilgrimage." Here are excerpts from two responses. Student one: "I grew up in a Baptist environment that takes the Bible very literally and as highly authoritative. In my Christian high school the Bible was taught as a powerful and mystical tool. When I went on to Mennonite higher education, I learned about historical context, inductive study, and literary criticism. Studying the history of the Bible has been one more step on my journey. I am amazed at how God uses people to make God's word known. All of this has brought up tough questions, but I continue to walk forward with my God to my next encounter with his word." Student two: "Growing up, the Bible was not emphasized for me as the authoritative Word of God that was meant to be taken literally. In high school, reading the Bible was not an important part of my daily life, but when I did read it, I didn't hesitate to be incredibly skeptical. Studying the history of the Bible has provided me with more tools with which to read the texts critically and has also given me an appreciation for the Bible again. It has actually made me think, "Hmm. Maybe I

should really be taking this book more seriously than I do."

As a teacher I find these responses both daunting and exciting. Each student who comes into my classroom is on a journey. I may serve that student as a shepherd, stretching out a staff to guide, while other times the student may introduce insights that illuminate too much reliance on my own training. Together, we may catch new glimpses of how God has spoken through human voices and pens.

One biblical term which has become part of the furniture for biblical scholars and students is the word "testament," referring to the former or the latter collection which make up the Bible. Yet as we translate this same word as "covenant," we are reminded, as biblical scholar Raymond Brown has pointed out, that before this term referred to texts it referred to God's seeking out and establishing a relationship with human beings. Likewise we may be pushed to read the Bible for its record of the ongoing covenant between God and God's people, and as signposts for our own commitment to God in Jesus Christ and to the community of faith today.

Haverim notes

With 184 members, Haverim has proven itself to be productive this year. The Phonathon drew in \$3,331.50, bringing the contributions to date to \$5,201.25.

The Bible department has used gifts from Haverim in various practical ways. Department fellowship dinners were funded by \$250 given for faculty enrichment, and \$300 was given for honorariums to invited guest lecturers.

1999 Haverim Scholarship Recipients

Each year Haverim awards several debt-reduction grants to eligible graduating Bible and Religion department majors. Haverim has established an endowed fund to build the ability of increasing these much appreciated grants in the future.

Jonathan Bowman

Finished with schooling for now, I am at a crossroads regarding my future. I have been trained and I feel drawn to teach, but I honestly struggle to sense specific direction in the areas of

subject matter (English or Bible) and context (U.S. or overseas, private or public). I hope and pray for clarity, but I also am realizing that walking in faith and seeking truth and direction are not solo endeavors – I should not go it alone.

In this, I express my gratitude to Haverim for some support along the way. While I sometimes hesitate to equate money and blessing, I am, in this case, grateful for both the practical assistance and encouraging symbolism of the Haverim scholarship. It is meaningful to know that there are those who are interested and supportive of me and others in similar situations. Thank you.

Jill Landis

One mighty huge thanks to Haverim! I was excited to hear that I had been one of the students chosen to receive the Haverim Scholarship. As I face the harsh reality of college debts, the addition of your post-grad Scholarship will help to relieve some of the stress of having to pay off college bills.

Right now I am busy wrapping up plans for the Mennonite Young Adult Convention in St. Louis this July. Once August rolls around and I am finished with that, I will focus on the next stage of my life. In the immediate future, I see myself entering into work with an emphasis on missions, the marginalized, or youth.

Eventually, I see additional schooling (perhaps seminary, Ph.D.) as being something I will be interested in pursuing. Until then, what can one do with a Religion and Philosophy degree, but hope that someone will hire me for my wit and wisdom, and pray that the opportunities for a fitting ministry will arise.

Tom Mast

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of Haverim for their continued interest in and support of the EMU Bible Department. I plan to complete the requirements for the Culture Religion and Missions major this coming fall. After that, my wife and I are planning on serving in a voluntary service or short-term missions capacity. I have appreciated and learned from my experience here at EMU. I have been exposed to new ideas and fresh perspectives. This has caused me to examine and solidify my own beliefs and has renewed my desire to serve God actively with all of my life. Thanks again for your assistance, it is very much appreciated.

Sherrie Reinford

The time that I've been thinking about all semester is here. No more classes, no job, no schedule or deadlines to meet. Some aspects of this are nice, but I now have the fun of job-searching.

Although I have two majors, Congregational & Youth Ministries and History, I have more general options than clear direction for what I should do. I feel that I have accomplished my goal in my college career. I chose my Congregational & Youth Ministries major not intending to look for a career in that area, but to gain knowledge and skills applicable to whatever church setting I find myself. I feel that through my classes and practicum I was able to gain some helpful tools for church ministry.

While I am uncertain as to what my future holds, I realize that I can place my worries and concerns in God's hands. In the midst of this unknown, I was very glad to receive the debt reduction scholarship, and would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who made that possible.



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