

Communique from the Anglican Jewish Commission Fourth meeting, London 24-25 May 2010



'Treasures of Lambeth Library' exhibition
Photo Credit: Lambeth Palace

The fourth meeting of the Anglican Jewish Commission of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel took place at Lambeth Palace, the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury on 24th and 25th May 2010/ 11th and 12th Sivan 5770. The Commission's mandate is taken from the provisions of the joint declaration of the Archbishop and the Chief Rabbis at Lambeth Palace on 6th September 2006 and confirmed at their second meeting in Jerusalem on 31st October 2007.

The leaders of the Commission delegations, Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen of Haifa and the Rt Revd Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher, recalled with pleasure the previous meetings of the Commission and welcomed the confirmation and renewal of friendship which this fourth meeting of the Commission represents for Jewish Christian relationships.

At the opening session Bishop Michael Jackson welcomed the Jewish delegation to Lambeth Palace, and gave greetings to the group on behalf of Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The theme of the Commission's meeting was 'Creation' and papers were presented by Venerable Dr Michael Ipgrave on behalf of the Anglican delegation and by Rabbi David Rosen on behalf of the Jewish delegation. Vibrant discussions took place in a warm, frank and constructive atmosphere on the many issues raised by the papers. These discussions enriched and consolidated the deepening friendships between members of the Commission.

Archdeacon Michael Ipgrave in his paper described the way in which Anglican views of nature developed out of the interaction of theology and natural science in the early

seventeenth century. From then onwards, Anglicans have sought to relate the insights of science to the teaching of the scriptures, through motifs such as the *liber mundi* ('book of the world'), the idea that the cosmos is a series of signs which can be interpreted and read like a book. Creation as a gift of God is entrusted into the care of human beings; Anglicans have variously described this as a language spoken by God, a sacrament conveying his presence, and a responsibility laid on each in their particular context or 'station'. In the current ecological crisis, the faithful exercise of our stewardship of creation raises sharp challenges to all our communities - water politics and animal welfare were two particularly pressing examples. Anglicans could have confidence that their continuing theological tradition, rooted in scripture, had resources to help address these challenges.

Rabbi David Rosen explored Biblical and Talmudic insights into the moral dimensions of creation, based on the dual aspects of God, who is the one both of justice and of mercy. Drawing particularly on the account of creation in Genesis he noted the importance of affirming firstly the divine ownership of creation, and then the nature of humanity as the summit of creation. This leads in turn to human responsibility to care for and preserve creation. Rabbi Rosen emphasised the concept of *Bal Tashchit*, the prohibition against wanton destruction (based on Deuteronomy 20.19-20) which was expanded by the sages to include waste and over indulgence. He concluded by drawing attention to the key role of the Sabbath in ensuring the valuing and sustaining of creation.

While being enhanced by the particular perspectives of each tradition, the Commission noted the degree of confluence between the two papers. They wished to draw the attention of their respective religious communities to the importance of upholding the integrity of creation, and the need for responsible human stewardship and sustainable development within our world.

The Commission's meeting in London coincided with a reception given by Sir Sigmund Sternberg at the offices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in honour of Rabbi David Rosen, to mark the award to Rabbi Rosen of the order of the CBE. The event highlighted the importance currently given to developing Jewish-Christian relations in England, and the enthusiasm and commitment of those who were working in this field.

An additional pleasure of the meeting was the privilege of a private viewing at the British Library of a number of significant Jewish and Christian biblical manuscripts, including the famous "Golden Haggadah". The Commission was deeply appreciative of the generosity of Sir Colin Lucas, Chairman of the British Library Board and his colleagues, who had welcomed and hosted the group, spending considerable time and effort to ensure that the visit had been both memorable and informative. A visit to the 'Treasures of Lambeth Library' exhibition at Lambeth Palace itself was also valued, and the Commission expressed their thanks to the Lambeth Librarian.

The Commission members looked forward to the next meeting of the Archbishop and the Chief Rabbis of Israel in London and to the next meeting of the Commission in Jerusalem in 2011.

The Rt Revd Michael Jackson
Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen

Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel

Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Haifa, President of
Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber, Bar Ilan University
Rabbi David Brodman, Chief Rabbi of Savyon
Rabbi David Rosen CBE, AJC
Mr Oded Wiener, Director General of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel

Delegation of the Archbishop of Canterbury

The Rt Revd Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher
Mrs Clare Amos, Director of Theological Studies, Anglican Communion
Dr Jane Clements, Consultant in Christian-Jewish Relations
The Ven Michael Ipgrave, Archdeacon of Southwark
Revd Rana Youab Khan, International Inter Faith Dialogues Assistant, Lambeth Palace
and Anglican Communion Office.