

AUS RELIGION UND RECHT

Hesed and Tzedakah

From Bible to Modernity

Walter Jacob/Walter Homolka (eds.)

F Frank & Timme

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To the Most Reverend Donald W. Wuerl

on the occasion of his elevation

to

Archbishop of Washington D.C.

in gratitude for decades of personal friendship

and

devotion to the themes of this volume

The Abraham Geiger College is an heir to two centuries of modern Jewish studies in Germany and Europe. This volume is part of a series of theological, biblical and rabbinic studies which attempts to bring the best of modern scholarship together in symposia and the printed word. With this we seek to fulfill an intellectual obligation for the reborn Jewish community on the continent of Europe.

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Preface

It is an honor to dedicate this volume to Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl as he combines and personifies the biblical concepts of *tzedakah* (justice) and *hesed* (loving-kindness), the topic of this book, in a perfect manner - always seeking justice in its broadest sense and always with loving-kindness as he reaches out to many communities. He has done so during his years as bishop of Pittsburgh and throughout his ministry.

This volume entitled *Hesed and Tzedakah - from Bible to Modernity* presents the essays of a symposium held last year at the Abraham Geiger College, the new German rabbinic seminary in Potsdam/Berlin. My co-editor and I, who preside over this seminary, felt that nothing was more appropriate than this dedication.

My memories of Donald Wuerl go back many decades when he was a young priest serving with John Cardinal Wright who had been bishop of Pittsburgh. He was gracious, kind and collegial when we were in Rome at the Cardinal's elevation and that blossomed into a personal friendship which has endured through the decades.

He has always been an ideal partner in the Catholic-Jewish dialog with whom one could discuss any problem in our relationships as well as issues of broader concern. Many meetings on social problems which affected the Pittsburgh community brought us together. With his thoughtful manner he brought forth good ideas and potential solutions. Working with dozens of religious leaders was never easy, but with gentle wisdom, a touch of humor, and a great deal of patience he produced ways out of dilemmas.

Firmly grounded in biblical thought and rooted in traditional Catholic theology on which he has written, he could deal with both the commonalities and the differences of our religions. For the Jewish community he was a trusted, beloved, respected friend who graciously spoke in synagogues, at Jewish occasions, and visited Israel several times. For rabbis he was an intellectual and scholar who dealt with the nuances of interfaith relationships.

Busy as the eleventh bishop of the large diocese of Pittsburgh, he has written *The Teachings of Christ* (1976) and *The Catholic Way* (2005) which have been influential; the former has appeared in ten languages. His weekly television

broadcasts have brought him into the homes of his 800,000 parishioners. With degrees from the Catholic University of North America, the Gregorian University in Rome and the University of St. Thomas in Rome, he has combined an intellectual and spiritual approach to his priesthood.

Guided by deep faith and devotion to the Catholic tradition, he has been a religious leader in the new mold in this multi-ethnic and multi-religious city; he is both practical and spiritual and always keeps his eyes on idealistic goals. The Catholic community feels a deep sense of loss as he moves from Pittsburgh, so does the Jewish community.

Bishop Wuerl has also been a personal friend to my wife, Irene and me, always considerate and interested in our personal lives. We shared happy and sad moments, triumphs and defeats. We could smile or laugh together about the human comedy even as we tried to create some serious solutions.

May many blessed years lie ahead as he shares his God given talents and gifts, with the broader world. May *tzedakah* and *hesed* - justice and loving-kindness continue to guide his life.

May 21, 2006

Rabbi Walter Jacob