

Dietmar Neufeld, 1949-2015

Dietmar Neufeld was born in Paraguay in 1949, and moved to Canada at the age of eight. After studying at the University of Winnipeg, receiving a BA in 1977, then at the Mennonite Seminary (receiving his MA in 1979), he was awarded a Ph.D. at McGill University in 1991, having studied under Professor Frederick Wisse. Dr. Neufeld was a contract instructor at McGill University and Carleton University until he arrived at the University of British Columbia in 1989. He spent the next five years as a contract instructor, before winning a tenure stream appointment in 1994. In 2001, he was promoted to Associate Professor, and in 2015, a few months before his death, he was promoted to Full Professor. The Canadian Society of Biblical Studies was honored to have Dr. Neufeld as their Vice-President in 2013-14, and President in 2014-15. His Presidential Address, delivered on May 30, 2015 can be viewed on the CSBS website (<http://goo.gl/HX6gyQ>).

Dr. Neufeld's first book (*Reconceiving Texts as Speech Acts: An Analysis of I John*; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), as well as many of his first academic articles showed an early interest in richly theoretical questions. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that he was attracted to the work of The Context Group. He joined the group in 1995, the following year publishing an article on ecstasy. He continued to engage in standard historical critical conversations, publishing on first-century messianism, apocalypticism, historical Jesus, and history of religions, but as time passed, Dr. Neufeld's publications focused increasingly on social scientific subjects. Dr. Neufeld was one of the first in the group to publish on diet and food, as well as clothing and ornamentation, and then finally mockery and secrecy, all of them cutting edge topics in biblical studies. The 2015 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature included a review panel session of Dr. Neufeld's last book, *Mockery and Secretism in the Social World of Mark's Gospel* (Bloomsbury, 2014), but he was not there for it.

Dr. Neufeld was not merely a scholar. He was also an accomplished and dedicated administrator. He served as Chair for two terms of the department of Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies at UBC, and devoted himself to weighty university administrative tasks. These duties often kept him from the academic meetings he loved so much, yet he did not shirk them. He also served in administrative capacities in the Society of Biblical Literature (as a steering-committee member and program chair of various sections) and in the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies (as treasurer, vice-president, and president over a fifteen year period).

Dr. Neufeld was also an accomplished teacher. This I know from first hand-experience. It was Dr. Neufeld teaching that drew me into this field. But others agreed too. Dr. Neufeld won a student organization prize that reflected his exceptional devotion to students in 2002. And in 2006, he won UBC's prestigious Killam Teaching Award. This teaching award is given to six people annually, and recognizes teaching excellence at all levels of teaching. Over his teaching career, he served as the principle supervisor for 21 Masters and PhD students.

On September 9, 2015, mere weeks after first being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, Dietmar Neufeld died with his family by his side. He was a much-loved and admired father, grandfather, friend, colleague, administrator, teacher, and scholar. His infectious laugh and warm smile, his thirst to engage his colleagues and students intellectually, and his contributions over 20 years to the academic study of the Bible broadly and to the Context Group more narrowly will be missed tremendously.

Zeba Crook