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1003-01-557 **Christian Tapp***, Lehrstuhl fuer Geschichte d. Naturwiss., Museumsinsel 1, D-80538 Muenchen, Germany. *Georg Cantor, the founder of set theory, in contact with catholic theologians of his time.*

Georg Cantor (1845–1918), the founder of set theory, had a large correspondence with some, for the most part catholic, theologians of his time. The results of a careful examination of these scholarly contacts, which go beyond traditional borderlines of particular scientific disciplines, are presented in this talk.

Cantor’s letters to theologians provide not only biographical data. They also point to his hitherto unknown use of pseudonyms and to his Jewish ancestry. In spite of his formally belonging to the Lutheran Church, a very close relationship to Catholicism shows up. The founder of set theory is presented both as a scientist admiring theological scholarship and as a private person interested, and sometimes engaged, in a broad range of practical religious affairs.

Cantor contacted the theologians primarily as conversational partners for the philosophical problems of the foundations of set theory. He discussed with them the traditional (attempts to) proofs of the impossibility of actually infinite numbers. In this context an elaborate system of distinctions in the notion of infinity arose.

In religious matters Cantor showed both devotion and reserve—analogueous to enthusiasm and disappointment, the two characteristic extremes that drove his personality. (Received September 22, 2004)