

- Topic: Vatican II on the Jews:
A Dramatic Example of Theological Development
- Conveners: M. Christine Athans, Saint Paul Seminary, St. Paul
John T. Pawlikowski, Catholic Theological Union
- Moderator: Ronald Modras, Saint Louis University
- Presenters: M. Christine Athans, Saint Paul Seminary, St. Paul
John T. Pawlikowski, Catholic Theological Union
- Respondent: Ronald Modras, Saint Louis University

This session was provoked by a 1986 address by Gregory Baum to the Catholic Theological Society of America in which he opined: "It could be argued, I think, that the Church's recognition of the spiritual status of the Jewish religion is the most dramatic example of doctrinal turnaround in the age-old *magisterium ordinarium*." Mary Christine Athans and John Pawlikowski joined forces to corroborate Baum's claim.

Providing historical context for the topic, Athans first discussed the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. She defined anti-Judaism as hostility toward Jews for religious reasons, the dominant Christian attitude from the late first century to the Enlightenment. Anti-Semitism, a nineteenth-century neologism, she defined as hatred toward Jews for "racial" reasons. She gave a historical overview of anti-Judaism, highlighting the sermons of St. John Chrysostom and the legislation of church councils that restricted Jewish freedom and promoted the view that Jews were peculiarly guilty of the death of Jesus and rejected by God.

Athans illustrated the reemergence of anti-Judaism in the twentieth century in the writings of Irish theologian Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp., who influenced "Radio Priest" Father Charles Coughlin, in the 1930s and early 1940s, a time she suggests that anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism came together. Claiming a basis in select statements of St. Thomas Aquinas, Fahey argued for the existence of a "Body of Organized Naturalism," headed by a "Natural Messiah," who was probably Jewish, a concept which inspired Coughlin to conceive of a "Mystical Body of Satan."

Pawlikowski focused on the redefinition of the church's relationship to the Jewish people to be found in chapter four of the Vatican II decree, *Nostra Aetate*. Eugene Fisher has observed that *Nostra Aetate* begins the church's teaching concerning a theological or, more precisely, doctrinal understanding of the relationship between the church as "People of God" and "God's people Israel." Johann-Baptist Metz maintains that the theological rethinking of Judaism begun by Vatican II has deep implications for the revision of Christian theology as such, especially after the Holocaust. These implications particularly affect our christological and ecclesiological statements.

Pawlikowski described four key ideas as emerging from *Nostra Aetate*: (1) The Christ Event did not invalidate the Jewish faith perspective, as Christians

formerly claimed. (2) Christianity is not automatically superior to Judaism, nor is it simply the fulfillment of Judaism. (3) The Sinai covenant is, in principle, as crucial to Christian faith expression as the covenant of Christ; there was no Old Testament for Jesus and there should not be one for us. (4) Christianity needs to reincorporate dimensions from its original Jewish matrix in a central way in its contemporary faith expression. Unfortunately, little has been done since the council to incorporate the theological revolution of *Nostra Aetate* into the core of Catholic theology and liturgy.

Ronald Modras's response to the papers highlighted the importance of maintaining the distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, even though it is difficult, since no institution, including the church, controls language. If anti-Judaism is identified simply as religious anti-Semitism, a subspecies along with political, cultural, and racial anti-Semitism, does that make the author of John's Gospel, St. John Chrysostom, Shakespeare, and Hitler all anti-Semites, just qualitatively different? If the New Testament writings of Christian Jews can be called anti-Semitic, why not the Book of Lamentations? The promise-fulfillment thematic in Christian tradition vis-à-vis the Hebrew Scriptures has its roots in the Gospel of Matthew and is not identical with the notion of the church superseding or replacing the Jewish people.

The ensuing discussion pointed out that the fulfillment thematic in Matthew can be interpreted as a claim to continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures, and that the council could have appealed to that thematic but preferred to cite only Romans, chapters 9 to 11. Also noteworthy is the fact that Neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain, in advocating reconciliation between Christians and Jews, helped prepare the way for *Nostra Aetate*.

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Topic: Jesus Symbol of God: A New American Christology
Moderator: Elizabeth A. Johnson, Fordham University
Presenters: Mary Catherine Hilkert, University of Notre Dame
William P. Loewe, Catholic University of America
Respondent: Roger D. Haight, Weston Jesuit School of Theology

This session discussed a cornucopia of issues raised by Roger Haight's new book entitled *Jesus Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), which participants were encouraged to read in advance. Elizabeth Johnson introduced the book by reviewing its rigorous genetic method, its sequence of subject matter, and its basic thesis. Each of the two presenters then posed appreciative and critical questions about Haight's method and constructive proposals.