

JEWISH–CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM–CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES
AS CHALLENGES TO CATHOLIC THEOLOGY:
THE VIEW FROM EUROPE – INVITED SESSION

Convener: Wilhelmus Valkenberg, Catholic University of America
 Moderator: Wilhelmus Valkenberg, Catholic University of America
 Presenters: Marianne Moyaert, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
 Klaus von Stosch, Bonn University
 Respondent: Rita George-Tvrtković, Benedictine University

This session was organized at the invitation of Francis X. Clooney, President-Elect of the CTSA to hear from two prominent Catholic comparative theologians on the European continent about their experiences with Christian–Jewish and Christian–Muslim theologies as challenges for Catholic Theology.

In her presentation, “Comparative Theologies Old and New: Exploring the Present of the Past,” Marianne Moyaert told about her experiences in a program of interfaith pedagogy in the Netherlands. She reflected on the fact that in such a program, differences between faith traditions are easily de-politicized. That is they are seen as personal, not political issues. She mentioned the normative behavior of quite a few of her Dutch participants who saw themselves as examples of tolerance while they saw religious others, embodied by Muslim participants, as hiding their true identities under the veil of religion. Moyaert observed that many of these anti-Muslim forms of discourse reminded her of traditional Christian anti-Jewish phraseologies. She saw a paradoxical discourse of othering in which the ideal of “Dutch innocence” (a small but ethically just nation that has a liberal vision to offer to the world) intersected with “dialogical innocence” (the attitude of not intending to do harm but not implicating harm experienced by others). In this way, people who see themselves as tolerant and are proud of a history of tolerance can at the same time be very intolerant. The same people who see themselves as victims of political and ideological suppression by Spanish inquisition and Nazi racism can be unaware of the fact that they still bear the remnants of one of the largest colonial empires.

Klaus von Stosch gave a presentation on “The Qur’anic Theology as Catholic Challenge for Catholics.” He tries to learn lessons from what is, in Germany, often called Israel-theology for Christians today in relationship with Muslims. He uses Qur’anic challenges to both Jews and Christians, such as the challenge of supersessionism, but also of imperialism. As Christians try to appreciate the vocation and the everlasting value of Israel, Muslim theologians try to appreciate Judaism and Christianity from the very middle of their own scripture. Von Stosch used a number of examples from the Qur’an to make clear how it interrogates Christians to find answers to its probing questions about the position of Jesus and Mary.

In her response, Rita George-Tvrtković confirmed the importance of trying to get the relations with Muslims at the level of relations with Jews, which she connected with the initiatives of Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago.

A discussion among the presenters and the attendees of the session followed the presentations.

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