

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.

Following the author's initial response, the more than ninety participants had the opportunity to join the discussion. A lively conversation ensued, with Haight fielding questions from right and left, literally and metaphorically speaking.

Mary Catherine Hilkerter noted that the book should be read for the questions it raises alone, to say nothing of its lucid synthesis of wide fields of research. As a major attempt to deal with historical consciousness and religious pluralism, it faces the challenge to construct a viable christology that is at once "faithful to the tradition, intellectually credible, and empowering of Christian life." Hilkerter agreed with Haight's emphasis that the key to interpreting christology is its soteriological structure, which in turn necessitates an approach from below. Her questions revolved around the relative adequacy of his constructive proposals. What is the actual difference between a Spirit Christology and a Logos Christology from below? Can we avoid making metaphysical or ontological claims when speaking of Jesus' relationship to God? Is a thoroughgoing historical christology adequate to liturgical experience? Can Jesus' death not be interpreted as having its own significance in the light of the world's suffering? And must we not say more about the universality of Jesus as Savior not just for Christians but for all?

After congratulating Roger Haight on writing a christology that is "elegantly coherent, methodologically responsible, and acutely responsive to the demands of the contemporary context," and after praising the author for courage in refusing to duck the hard questions, William Loewe registered his profound disagreement with Haight's positions. Baldly stated, Loewe interpreted Haight as ending up with a unitarian God and a merely human Jesus. This conclusion is deduced largely from the book's treatment of the Logos Christology of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which are seen to be thoroughly historically conditioned, as well as Haight's acknowledgment of the probability that adherents of other religious traditions encounter God in other saviors who symbolize God's saving presence for them. Rooting Haight in a genealogy that stretches from Schleiermacher to Schoonenberg, Loewe endorsed the classic christological confession which is normed not by history but by the light of faith. At the same time, he welcomed Haight's contribution as from a partner in the struggle to articulate a faith-filled christology for today.

In his response, Haight categorically rejected Loewe's characterization of his position. *Re God*: his chapter on the Trinity underscores how we must use trinitarian language for God because it sums up the Christian story. While wary of being overly descriptive of the immanent Trinity, for God is Absolute Mystery, he affirmed that the confession of God as Trinity is the fruit of Christian experience of how God acts in creating, saving, and empowering the world. *Re Jesus*: in Rahner's dialectical concept of the symbol, two things that are not the same are at the same time one. For example, I as a human person am and am not my body. Chalcedon presents this kind of dialectical doctrine; it explains nothing, but affirms a unity in difference between Jesus and God. Jesus

is one in being with God as to his divinity, and one in being with us as to his humanity. Haight is thinking the former from the perspective of the latter; thinking the divinity of Christ within an Antiochean rather than an Alexandrian framework.

After clarifying the role of the resurrection as the linchpin of interpreting Jesus as the Christ, Haight's response to Hilkert dealt with the nature of God's presence, Jesus' relationship with God, and the role of other religions. God is always immanent and loving in the world. After Jesus, God is not "more" present than before—How would that be possible?—but present in a new way: christomorphic, Jesus-shaped. Jesus is universal Savior by naming, revealing, and focusing what is always going on in the world, namely, God's saving presence, meant for all. To say that "no less than God" is present in Jesus is not reductionist. Rather, given the dialectical character of symbol, Jesus *Symbol of God* asserts that we truly encounter God through Jesus, the mediator, who in his concrete, finite, historical life is thereby confessed as divine. But this does not rule out other mediations through other figures in other religions. Haight takes very seriously God's universal saving presence; all religions are in some way vehicles for the self-communication of God. We need to learn from each other's differences.

Participants spoke strongly of aspects of Haight's project they found congenial: that God is constitutive of salvation and a priori we cannot refute this reality in other religions; that Haight's christology would serve in encounter with intelligent life in other worlds; that we need to exorcize the old metaphysical categories and enter anew into the christological problematic with an historical paradigm; that preaching would benefit from his approach to the Trinity. Others spoke vigorously in defense of traditional patterns of understanding; queried why one would now engage in missionary activity; criticized Haight's use of Rahner's notion of symbol, which in Rahner has an ontological realism; and asked whether there is truly a *novum* in Jesus apart from God as Creator Spirit. Summing up, Haight noted that at least two-thirds of the book works on retrieving and interpreting the Christian tradition in the belief that what has been handed down is of immeasurable value and has to be claimed anew for our postmodern age. There is a genuine *novum* in Jesus, the historical life of Jesus himself and the experience of encounter with God given through him to the disciples. The revelation released through this event into history is universally relevant. What is revealed, the truth that Christians enjoy and are motivated to share in dialogue with the religious traditions of others, is that God is Love.

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