

## RENAISSANCE AND MODERN THEOLOGY

Topic: Jesus as a Jew in German Catholic Theology, 1918–1945  
 Convener: William E. McConville, Raleigh, North Carolina  
 Moderator: David Coffey, Marquette University  
 Presenter: Robert Krieg, University of Notre Dame  
 Respondent: Tobie Tondi, Rosemont College

Krieg's presentation on this topic developed out of his most recent book, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany* (Continuum, 2004). Krieg argues that even among the more progressive Catholic thinkers in Germany, their negative descriptions of Jew and Judaism at the time of Jesus unwittingly fueled Hitler's persecution of the Jews. He cites the works of three theologians: Bernhard Bartmann (1860–1938), Karl Adam (1876–1966), and Romano Guardini (1885–1968).

In Bartmann's view Israel has become entrapped in a legalistic religion that eclipsed "the radiance of the Temple." As a result of their refusal to accept the message of Jesus, God withdrew his grace from Israel. For Karl Adam the Jews overvalued the externals of religion, and were held tight in the grip of a materialist view of God's kingdom and selfish nationalistic instincts. Guardini's blood ran cold when he read the interminable list of commandments demanded by Judaism. The Messiah perished at the hands of the Jews and thus they represented humanity's second great failure (the first being that of Adam and Eve.).

After the defeat of the Nazis and the revelation of the horrors of the Holocaust, Guardini refrained from negative characterizations of Jews and Judaism, called on Christians to take responsibility for Auschwitz, and to support Israel. Karl Adam never spoke about these matters.

What factors contributed to this situation? Krieg cites four: (1) the dominance of supersessionism; (2) a precritical reading of the Gospels; (3) Catholic reaction to the liberal quest for the historical Jesus; and (4) lingering influence of Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*. The positive reception of Gibson's "The Passion of Christ" reveals the continuing challenge of anti-Judaism at every level of the Church.

Tobie Tondi's response highlighted the continuing contemporary discussion of these issues. She cited works by Dupuis, N. Lohfink, and D. Pollefeyt. Important themes center around (1) the continuing validity and vitality of Judaism, (2) the exploration of the place of Christ in a universal religion, and (3) and John Paul II's affirmation that the covenant with the Jews has never been revoked.

A lively discussion ensued in which participants shared their experiences of the pervasive anti-Judaism that seems to inform so much of Catholic life. Yet there is also a great deal of hope bound up with the energetic engagement of Christian and Jewish scholars on these issues.

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