

CHRISTIANITY & JUDAISM/INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES

- Topic: Is there salvation outside the Church? An Interreligious Conversation
- Convener: John T. Pawlikowski, Catholic Theological Union
- Chair: Franklin Harkins, Fordham University
- Presenters: Peter Phan, Georgetown University
Mary Boys, Union Theological Seminary
Alan Berger, Florida Atlantic University

The convener John Pawlikowski offered a brief overview of this new consultation. It aimed at bringing the results of nearly four decades of Christian-Jewish scholarship and dialogue into the mainstream of Christian theology focusing on such questions as Ecclesiology, Christology, and Salvation. It also would plan to deal with the implications of Catholic statements such as *Dominus Iesus* and the recent controversial papal prayer for the Jews. Pawlikowski emphasized that much of the groundbreaking work in biblical studies, especially that emerging from the “parting of the ways” discussion, has thus far not been integrated into Catholic theological reflection. Such integration would also be a goal of this continuing consultation.

The chair of the session Franklin Harkins introduced the three presenters: Peter Phan, Mary Boys, and Alan Berger. Phan began by quoting a statement from the ecumenical Christian document *A Sacred Obligation*, which argues that the new understanding of Judaism and the Jewish People in Christianity forces upon us a reconsideration of Christology. This is especially necessary after *Dominus Iesus* and the new papal prayer. Phan stressed some ten points that need to be part of such a theological reconsideration. They include the following: (1) God’s covenant with Israel has never been abolished; (2) There are multiple covenants between God and humans; (3) God acts in history through his word as incarnated in Jesus and in God’s Spirit, the Logos. While deeply interconnected with Jesus, the Logos can act apart from, though not in opposition to, Jesus; (4) The Holy Spirit, though eternally one with the Logos and intimately united with Jesus, is distinct from the Logos/Jesus and can act outside and beyond the Logos/Jesus; (5) Both the Logos/Jesus and the Spirit operate in Christianity and in other religions, including Judaism, though not in the same measure and in the same way; (6) the usefulness of words such as “unique,” “absolute”, and “universal” to describe Jesus as savior may be questioned today; (7) There is a reciprocal relationship between Christ/Christianity and Judaism/other religions; (8) In an analogous way, Jesus as savior may be said to be related to, reciprocal with, and complemented by other religious figures in whom both the Logos and the Spirit may be active; (9) Christology and ecclesiology must be eschatologically determined; (10) Such expectation must be lived in a humble and sincere dialogue of shared life, action, theological exchange, and religious experience among all believers.

Mary Boys highlighted what she termed “the bipolarity of tendencies” in Catholic teaching on the salvation of those outside the church. There is a greater

respect for the faith of others in Vatican II Catholicism but no full resolution of the “salvation outside the church” issue as *Dominus Iesus* and the recent papal prayer show. With respect to the Jews she listed four foci that move the Church towards reconciliation and are silent about conversion: (1) understanding texts which appear negative towards the Jews in their historical context; (2) recognition of the continuity of the Jewish covenant; (3) a strong rejection of antisemitism; (4) the need for Christians to learn about Judaism as Jews define its meaning. But these foci have recently been challenged to some extent by contemporary figures such as Cardinal Avery Dulles, Cardinal Dario Castrillo Hoyos, and Archbishop Christoph Schonborn. Dulles has raised questions about the continuity of the Jewish covenant after Christ and Castrillo Hoyos and Schonborn have raised the issue of the need for Jewish conversion. Cardinal Walter Kasper has attempted to place the “conversion” issue into an eschatological context, something that seems to be supported by the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Bertone. However, she pointed to recent information about the possible establishment of a new Catholic women’s religious order that would explicitly be dedicated to the conversion of Jews. If such an order were to gain local approval in St. Louis and Vatican support it would undercut the “eschatological” thesis of Cardinals Kasper and Bertone. Boys concluded by discussing the central issues that would need to be raised in any discussion of salvation for the Jews and other non-Christians. They include: (1) Taking history seriously; (2) the importance of Catholic hermeneutical principles; (3) the role of post-*Nostra Aetate* documents; (4) the meaning of “fidelity to the Magisterium”; (5) the understanding of authority in contemporary Catholicism; (6) the new learning from the dialogue with Jews; (7) greater humility about what we know about God’s ways.

Alan Berger first addressed the views of Judaism on the issue of salvation. Overall, Judaism is far more interested in saving the world rather than saving souls. Jewish views do reject pagan gods but do not demand that all convert to Judaism though Judaism does hope for the repair/restoration of the world under the kingdom of God. Eschatology began to play a major role in the Jewish mystical tradition beginning with the sixteenth century writings of Isaac Luria. For Luria Jews could raise the fallen sparks of divine light, thereby re-uniting the “Shekinah”—the feminine element of deity—with her male counterpart. The Messiah would come as a symbol that restoration of the world had been achieved. Nevertheless, the process of “tikkun” may last for centuries. The late Emil Fackenheim saw Christian-Jewish dialogue as one form of “mending” after the Holocaust. Burger concluded by noting three points: (1) The conservative retreat from the reforms of Vatican II; (2) the long term process of dialogue; and (3) Christians and Jews may not complete the dialogical task, but they are not free to refrain from pursuing it.

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