

## JUDAISM &amp; POSTCONCILIAR CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Topic: Covenant & Mission—How Differing Understandings Affect Catholic Identity: An Ecclesiological Perspective in the Light of Postconciliar Approaches to Judaism

Convener/

Moderator: Carol Ann Martinelli, Independent Scholar, Detroit

Presenters: John D. Dadosky, Regis College  
Ellen M. Leonard, University of St. Michael's College

The Interest Group's focus is the renewal of Catholic identity and theology based upon the transformation of Catholic approaches to Judaism post Vatican II. The way in which differing and developing understandings of covenant and mission, emerging from postconciliar approaches to Judaism, affect Catholic identity was addressed in the Group's first of three programs. Providing a basis for discussion, systematic theologians, Ellen Leonard and John Dadosky, presented papers for the consideration of session participants.

John began with a reflection on *Lumen Gentium's* teaching that Catholics are one in spirit with Jews, but noted that the document does not teach how this 'unity in difference' is to be understood and incorporated into Church theology. The Council's paradigm shift in the Church's relation to the Other—a shift to mutual relations—has not yet been fully addressed theologically or pastorally.

He stated that based on the Church's acknowledgment of God's unrevoked covenant with the Jews, the Church has a new relationship with the Jewish People which causes the Church to renew its own self-understanding. The Church's new covenant is an extension or an addition to God's covenant with the Jews. Reconsidering Church identity in light of the covenantal relationships including both Jews and Christians is central to *Nostra Aetate's* call for mutual understanding. He pointed out that this call complicates the Church's ecclesiology since it causes encounters within seemingly irreconcilable differences and open-ended questions.

When noting that the Vatican II documents reflect a significant and permanent incorporation of 'mutual' into the Church's relations *ad extra*, resulting in the Church's relation to the Other by way of 'mutual self-mediation' rather than by 'strict self-mediation,' John asked "If the Church relations to the Jews are to foster mutual self-understanding, what ecclesial self-understanding will accompany this?" He acknowledged that a method of dialogue conducive to mutual understanding is required but, regardless, difficult contradictory differences are encountered, particularly with regard to the person of Christ.

Ellen pointed out that an articulation of ecclesiology today must take into consideration Israel's vocation in God's plan of salvation and that the impact of Jewish Christian dialogue on ecclesiology is very much a work in progress built on more than 40 years of dialogue and scholarship. Post Vatican II understandings of Church in non-supersessionist terms, together with scholarly consensus rejecting replacement theology, impact Church identity.

She noted that the recognition of God's unrevoked covenant with the Jewish People and the incorporation of the continuing reality of that still living covenant into Church teaching are central to a renewal of ecclesiology. Such an incorporation into official theology establishes a premise with far-reaching implications for both the Church's relation with the Jewish People and for theology itself. The present and future development and implementation of these implications affect the Church's understanding of mission.

Ellen highlighted that mission and Church are inseparable, but that with regard to Jews, however, in accordance with the 2001 Document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Church, confronted with Israel, must leave behind every presumption and supposition of self-sufficiency and remain in a relationship of solidarity with Israel. In light of such a relationship mission may be an area of cooperation between Jews and Catholics in order to bring life to the whole world as both communities prepare the world for the Messiah—the coming or the return. Mission 'to' the Jews may be considered replaced by mission 'with' the Jews.

Discussion following the presentations engaged all in attendance. Building on the ideas presented, additional points were addressed as were those in the papers. Highlights of issues considered in the almost hour-long exchange included the following: (1) God's covenant with the Jewish People as salvific; (2) Church's understanding of salvation generally and particularly for Jews; (3) World perception of Church as affected by its acknowledgment of Jewish salvific covenant; (4) 'Unity in difference' in co-existence with supersessionism; (5) Triune God and Jewish Catholic mutual relations; (6) Maintaining the universality of Christ; Centrality of Christology to the renewed ecclesial identity; (7) Abraham as basis of Jewish Christian relationship and implications for Islam; (8) Diversity of Catholic faithful in dialogue; again expanded by the dialogue experience; and (9) Parish Catholics' understanding of covenant and mission with regard to Jews.

Thank you Ellen, John and all for a great program! The Group's 2009 program will focus upon Christology in light of postconciliar approaches to Judaism, and its impact on Catholic identity and theology, tying into the convention theme of "Impasse . . . and Beyond."

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