

REVIEW

Gilbert S. Rosenthal, Ed.

***A Jubilee for All Time:
The Copernican Revolution
in Jewish-Christian Relations***

(Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014)
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The anthology of articles in his volume offers wide-ranging reflections on the history and significance of Chapter Four of the “Declaration on the Relation of the [Roman Catholic] Church to Non-Christian Religions” (commonly known by its titular Latin incipit, “*Nostra Aetate*”), from the Second Vatican Council. Published to inform and help celebrate the golden jubilee of the document’s promulgation by Pope Paul VI on 28 October 1965, the book includes a preface, an introduction, and an afterword by the editor, together with essays by 25 contributors from five countries and a range of Jewish and Christian communities. The text of *Nostra Aetate* #4 is included in one appendix; a second appendix offers the text of an apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* [“On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World,” issued 24 November 2013], with its extensive discussion of interreligious dialogue.

Five sections of varying lengths illustrate Rosenthal’s effort to inspire religious people and leaders to seek “a deeper understanding of the roots of their faith and the relationship between ‘the elder and younger brother’—Judaism and Christianity” and to “stimulate conversation and dialogue between members of the faith groups” (p. xxxi). Six “retrospective reflections” by internationally-recognized figures, four Jewish and two Roman Catholic, lead off the book. The relationship of NA to the mainline Protestant, evangelical, and Orthodox

Christian traditions is then explored in three chapters by participants in those traditions. Part three includes six explorations of the impact of NA in communal and pastoral dimensions from Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Israeli Jewish perspectives, and part four offers a look at “Unresolved Issues” from Orthodox Jewish, Reform Jewish, and Roman Catholic perspectives. The fifth part is a “symposium” of individual reflections by five Jews and two Roman Catholics on how they were affected by this “landmark document” (p. xii).

The book is distinguished by the profile of its authors. Among them are notable Roman Catholic and Jewish leaders in interfaith affairs, who support and celebrate the legacy of NA but also bring a critical perspective to it. In several essays, history is told by those who were present for the events; Susannah Heschel’s memoir of her father Abraham Joshua Heschel’s involvement with Vatican II is particularly enchanting. The focus of the book results in an unavoidable repetition of that history, along with repeated encounters with the key themes that regularly accompany discussion of NA: praise for its dramatic emergence and its rejection of the deicide charge; recognition of its limitations and the importance of reading it with subsequent Vatican documents (especially the 1974 “Guidelines”; 1985 “Notes”; 1998 “We Remember”; and 2001 “Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures”); the absence of reference to Israel and the impact of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict on Jewish-Catholic relations; the importance of personal relationships in building interfaith understanding; and the need for deeper reception of NA and its insights in both communities. Beyond these, many chapters offer insights and present questions that could well stimulate dialogue in a study group or deeper exploration by the individual reader.

Elena Procario-Foley offers a generous and measured analysis of the 2008 curricular framework for American Catholic high schools that demonstrates its limited embrace of NA and its implications. She then offers a detailed, stirring report on a pilot project that could serve widely as a model for cultivating in

teenagers the “mutual understanding and respect” that NA sought to foster. John Pawlikowski contributes a broad survey of implications for church teaching, ranging across biblical and Pauline studies, Christology, ethics, ecclesiology, mission, evangelism, and relations with other religions. David Rosen discusses the importance of the Neocatechumenal Way as a vehicle for spiritual formation in the post-NA era. Deborah Weissman, one of three Israeli authors, provides compelling insights into the distinctive factors in Israeli society that have tended to marginalize the impact, and even the awareness, of NA among Israeli Jews. Liam Tracey illuminates NA helpfully by setting its emergence within the broader development of the 20th century liturgical movement in the Roman Catholic Church.

The longest chapter by far at 48 pages is Alan Johnson’s “Vatican II and *Nostra Aetate* at Fifty: An Evangelical View.” Johnson earns the extra space with an extensively researched and well-documented essay that offers readers a concise and robust primer on a perspective not often seen in the literature on NA. Similarly helpful on a more limited scale is Antonios Kireopoulos’ discussion of Jewish-Orthodox Christian relations, including a syllabus of topics for ongoing engagement by his Christian community. Joseph D. Small takes a narrower focus in describing his involvement in developing a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 1987 study document on Judaism. He omits much of the mainline Protestant activity and even the signal contributions of Paul Van Buren, Clark Williamson, Krister Stendahl, Marilyn Salmon, Kathryn Henderson, and Friedrich Marquardt to post-NA Protestant theology.

David Berger and Byron Sherwin in different ways challenge the generally upbeat tone of the book by pointing to both communal and theological issues that remain unsettled in spite of the apparent clarity of NA. Their critiques are offered in a constructive spirit, pressing for fuller realization of NA’s promise while restraining the temptation to see it as a panacea for all interfaith tension. Philip Cunningham explores the internal church dynamics around the more problematic ongoing is-

sues, notably in regard to the controversy prompted by the 2002 publication of “Reflections on Covenant and Mission” from participants in the U.S. Jewish-Catholic dialogue. He observes that the church faces a serious ongoing challenge actualizing Romans 9-11, the key biblical reference of NA, into its regular magisterium. Eugene Korn makes the strongest case for rethinking Jewish theology in light of NA, and Irving Greenberg synthesizes his thirty years of work in re-thinking Christianity from a Jewish perspective. Korn helpfully draws attention to several “seeds” in pre-20th-century Jewish thought that might be nurtured into fruitful new outgrowths (p. 293)

In a work as wide-ranging as this there will always be points of dispute and questions unfortunately left unanswered. Those who use the volume as Rosenthal intends—as an inspiration and as a stimulus to dialogue—will be able to discover these and build them into engaging projects or exchanges. One issue that recurs implicitly and does not receive direct address is the place of history in Jewish and Christian construals of theology. The issue emerges here in both Jewish and Christian writers, in ways that make clear that the two traditions relate more dialectically than diametrically. Is Christianity “rooted” only in biblical Israel and Second Temple Judaism, or does the “spiritual bond” of which NA speaks imply that it is also “rooted” in later (i.e. post-Jesus) Judaism? In using the image of the olive tree stock to which Gentiles have been engrafted as branches, does NA also invite reflection on the degree to which the root may be altered by the new growth that it supports? Does the *Heilsgeschliche* model that informs even Greenberg’s generous and creative work necessarily imply a fuller knowledge of the divine will than NA’s more circumspect recognition of the “mystery” of the Church and of “that day, known to God alone,” which all God’s people await? Can any salvation-history hermeneutics fully avoid the pitfalls of supersessionism? The pervasive and diverse references to history and eschatology throughout the volume constitute an unarticulated call to address such fundamental questions.

Two mechanical and editorial elements mitigate the book's appeal in unfortunate ways. First, with the variety of documents, events, figures, and movements that appear in the various essays, a timeline plotting these "characters" in relation to one another would make it much easier to follow the several narratives and analyses and to relate them to one another. Second, the presence of about four dozen *errata* and typographical errors is simply annoying and on occasion undermines the credibility of the work being presented.

Rosenthal's afterword represents a strong example of what David Berger has called the "maximalist reading" of both NA and the changed Jewish-Christian situation it has helped to engender (see p. 236). Whether its celebratory spirit and optimism are vindicated in coming decades cannot, of course, be known, but those who invest themselves in using his anthology as it is intended will make a significant contribution in that direction.