

## CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM – CONSULTATION

Topic: Christology and the Mystery of Israel After *Nostra Aetate*  
 Convener: Carol Ann Martinelli, Independent Scholar, Detroit, Michigan  
 Moderator: Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, Boston College  
 Presenter: Matthew Tapie, St. Leo University  
 Respondent: Mary Doak, University of San Diego

In acknowledgment of the convention theme of One Baptism, together with recognition of the seventeen-hundredth anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the sixtieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the consultation addressed Catholic belief in the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ combined coherently with belief in the never revoked covenant of God with Israel.

Matthew Tapie, presenter, began by pointing out that the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ) affirmed fundamental elements of Nicaea in its 2015 document, “The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable,” with the teaching that the God of Israel is Jesus Christ, the universal mediator of salvation and that there cannot be different paths to God’s salvation. Such affirmations of classical Christology may be read as undermining the church’s positive affirmation of the election of the Jewish people in *Nostra Aetate*. Tapie argues, however, that Romans 11:25-26, as interpreted by the Council fathers means that the salvation of the Jews is a mystery beyond human understanding and an eschatological promise. He points out that scholars have overlooked that the Council drafters of *Nostra Aetate* appealed to a theological interpretation of Romans 11:25-26 in their rejection of the proposal that *Nostra Aetate* should express a hope for Jews to enter the Church.

Tapie proposes that ideas from within the “Paul within Judaism” school of biblical scholarship and Pope Benedict XVI’s exegesis reinforce the Council’s interpretation of Romans 11:25-26. God has a mysterious plan for salvation of the world involving the continued existence of Jews as Jews at least until the eschaton. As a part of this consideration Tapie delves into the English text’s translation of the Greek word which is translated as “hardening” having come upon Israel, noting that the word with its negative disposition distracts from the overarching point of Romans 11:25-26. Recent scholarship has determined that a correct translation of the Greek word used in the text is not a negative attribute, but rather intended as a protective and healing interpretation meaning a “callus.” This interpretation lends itself to the olive tree analogy immediately preceding Romans 11:25-26, referring to a callus formed for the protection of the injured branches of Israel. Tapie proposed that the mystery of the callus leads to recognition of God’s positive will that Jews maintain a distinctive existence.

Catholics in accordance with a theological interpretation of Romans following *Nostra Aetate*’s drafters and Pope Benedict XVI’s exegesis, must not have a mission toward conversion of Jews and instead serve the dialogue between Jews and Catholics and wait patiently for an eschatological fulfillment of Romans 11:25-26.

Mary Doak, respondent, recognized Tapie’s scholarly contribution as significant, enabling explanation on theological grounds that Catholics have no mission to convert Jews. She noted that he demonstrates that the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*, though its

message was clouded by the document, “The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable,” was strongly clarified by Pope Benedict XVI as rooted in an appropriate exegesis of Romans 11:25-26. Doak suggested that Tapie’s analysis might be benefitted by more explicit attention to biblical interpretation as developed in Vatican II’s *Dei Verbum*. She noted that Tapie does follow a Catholic approach to scripture as he includes historical and canonical criticism and a living tradition of the whole church in his study. In following Pope Benedict XVI’s argument, Tapie achieved the difficult task of bringing three forms of interpretation and resulting insights into balance with a harmonization of the best from each. She cautioned, however, that Tapie may not want to refer to the refusal of a mission to convert Jews as a part of the deposit of faith inasmuch as that suggests a permanency and clarity rather than a development of understanding, though his work demonstrates strong biblical and theological support. Tapie clearly shows a genuine case of the church growing in understanding as it addresses the meaning of revelation.

For Doak, Tapie’s work points to several additional areas for further theological exploration including learning the value of persisting diversity through prayerfully exploring the gift of our mutual engagement; considering a divine will for other religions and working to avoid a new form of the teaching of contempt and developing more nuanced race and colonial theories. Doak pointed out that “...all good theological work raises more questions than it answers and this is excellent theological work!”

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