

**Christian Rutishauser, Barbara Schmitz,  
and Jan Woppowa, Eds.**  
*Jüdisch-christlicher Dialog:  
Ein Studienhandbuch für Lehre und Praxis*

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Sixty years after the Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, a critical overview of what has been achieved and what needs to be done is a very timely enterprise, especially as it regards teaching and Church practice. This is the task that the volume under review, titled *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Study Guide for Teaching and Practice*, has set for itself. The three editors, Catholic theologians specialized in Jewish Studies, Old Testament, and religious education respectively, have gathered an impressive group of Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic scholars to deal with Jewish-Christian dialogue from their various viewpoints.

The volume owes its origin in part to the editors' collaboration in the "Subcommittee for Religious Relations with Judaism" of the German (Catholic) Bishops Conference and thus offers a basically Catholic perspective but devotes space to other perspectives as well. Indeed, Section A offers Catholic (Christian M. Rutishauser), Protestant (Bernd Schröder), and Jewish (Susanne Talabardon) perspectives on Jewish-Christian dialogue. Each of these chapters discusses the different phases of the dialogue, its main actors, and current challenges. Rutishauser and Schröder begin their survey essentially from the Seelisberg Conference (1947), whereas Talabardon gives a concise overview from the initial "parting of the ways" to the views of Maimonides, Mendelssohn, Buber, Heschel, and others. She concludes: "Jewish-Christian dialogue has intrinsic legitimacy because it provides an opportunity to preserve the diversity of positions, identities, and concrete forms of spiritual practice" (56).

In addition, Part I includes sensitive and well-informed chapters on broad topics such as anti-Judaism and antisemitism (Christina Späti), popes and Jews (Thomas Brechenmacher), and Zionism and the State of Israel (Tamar A. Avraham). Each of these contributions offers in less than twenty pages a concise,

critical overview of the main concerns, players, and historical developments, followed by a brief bibliography for further reading, mostly in German, but also in English and other languages.

The second part focuses more on Catholic approaches. It devotes a chapter to each theological discipline and examines its relationship to Jewish-Christian dialogue. These chapters are structured similarly, each beginning with an overview, followed by a selection of exemplary topics and problems, and a discussion of current challenges.

Barbara Schmitz opens this second part with a chapter on "Old Testament Exegesis in Light of Jewish-Christian Dialogue." She traces the developments of the Jewish and Christian canons and the various views about the "parting of the ways." She further provides a critical look at Christian use and misuse of the "Old Testament." She speaks of—at least from a Christian perspective—the "discursive dialogical character" ("discursive Dialogizität" [117]) of the relationship between the two Testaments and concludes by discussing texts and concepts that have been misused in order to affirm a superiority of the New Testament over the Hebrew Bible and offers a list of challenges for Christians in their approaches to the Hebrew Bible: 1. To eliminate anti-Judaism and instead learn to integrate modern and classical Jewish interpretations into Christian readings. 2. To enter into serious discussion with the question of the land promise and its Jewish interpretations. 3. To recognize the independent value of the Hebrew Bible with its different voices without pretending that the New Testament brings an answer to all those questions. 4. To recognize that what Christians call Old Testament and New Testament are ancient Jewish writings, and therefore to formulate Christian positions in light of the history and present reality of the people Israel, as the people called by God who stand in an unrevoked covenant with him (122).

In a somewhat parallel chapter, Thomas Schumacher deals with New Testament exegesis (124-139). He recognizes in *Nostra Aetate* one of the main impulses for a paradigm shift in exegesis, away from anti-Judaism and supersessionist interpretations. After a brief look at the questions raised by the differences between Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus and by the complex phenomenon of the "parting of the ways," Schumacher succinctly but substantially discusses some of the most difficult or controversial texts such as Matt 27:25, 1 Thess 2:14-16, John 8:44, and several passages in Rom 9-11. He distinguishes between the original mostly inner-Jewish context and the catastrophic later anti-Jewish reception history. More generally, he briefly but critically discusses deicide charges (128), stereotypical presentations of the Pharisees (132-133), and Jesus's attitude toward the Torah (133).

Johannes Heil contributes a chapter on church history and the history of theology in light of Jewish-Christian dialogue (140-154). He points out the intimate connection between the history of Christian theology and its often polemical, supersessionist, and even antisemitic relation to Jewish texts and Jewish people. He briefly but insightfully discusses examples of problematic situations, beginning with Augustine's *City of God*, moving to the limited protection of Jewish communities under late antique and medieval popes and their later marginalization amid

an often fluid distinction between anti-Judaism and antisemitism among Catholic and Protestant leaders. Heil suggests that antisemitism was widespread much earlier than often thought (152), in part following David Nirenberg's *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (2013).

Gregor M. Hoff approaches Jewish-Christian dialogue from the perspective of Systematic Theology, where *Nostra Aetate* serves as the *Magna Carta* of Catholic-Jewish dialogue after the Shoah as it offers guidance on how to situate Christian faith in relation to Judaism. He stresses how necessary that dialogue is for a Christian theology (157), by citing Paul Petzel's book, *What We Are Missing in God When We Are Lacking Jews*. With this in mind, he focusses on covenant and Christology and concludes that the people Israel must be treated as an essential source of Christian theology (a *locus theologicus*): "Without the historically fundamental and ongoing reference to Judaism, Christian discourse about God loses its footing. At the same time, Judaism remains a counterpart to the Church" (167). Hoff, like other contributors (Index s.v. "Land Israel"), brings up the quest for a Christian theological consideration for the land and state of Israel in his final section where he concludes, "A Christian theology of the Land and State ... belongs to the list of tasks for dialogue" (167-168). Such a theology, which will reaffirm the validity of the land promise while seeking justice for all inhabitants of the land, remains a desideratum.

In addition to the opening chapter, Christian Rutishauser contributes thought-provoking reflections on the relatively new discipline of spiritual theology. He provides examples where Christian spirituality can interact with and learn from what may be called Jewish spirituality, expressed in various forms by figures such as Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Abraham Heschel, and even Marc Chagall. Early and later rabbinic exegesis may fruitfully be integrated into Christian meditative Bible reading (*Lectio Divina*). He concludes: "The real challenge for the theology of spirituality lies in tapping into this treasure (namely, rabbinic spirituality) and communicating it in such a way that it becomes relevant to Christian life" (203).

Albert Gerhards and Stephan Wahle contribute a chapter on liturgy in general, while Heinz-Günther Schöttler offers one on how homiletics has changed and must further change in light of *Nostra Aetate* and related documents. Whereas a typological reading of Old Testament passages is still prevalent and encouraged by the current Catholic lectionary, other ways of presenting the Old Testament readings with their own intrinsic value must be found. As an example, he treats at some length the typological juxtaposition of Num 21:4-9 and John 3:14-15 with their references to the bronze serpent, showing how awareness of Jewish interpretations can provide important correctives to supersessionist readings.

The final chapter, by Jan Wopowa, is devoted to religious education. It addresses a wide array of theoretical and practical questions concerning the ways in which religious education in German-speaking countries has changed after the Shoah and after *Nostra Aetate*. It provides a checklist of about a dozen questions that need to be adequately addressed (225), such as the presentation of Jesus, his interaction with scribes and Pharisees, the permanent election of Israel, and the

continuing value of the Hebrew Bible. Woppowa argues that the entire edifice of theology and its presentation in various teaching formats needs to be reexamined in light of changed views of Judaism and of Jewish-Christian relations. Ways to prevent or overcome antisemitism have to be carefully followed, bearing in mind that even subtle forms of “Othering” can have important negative consequences. Related to that are various aspects of “Erinnerungskultur” (culture of remembrance) and Holocaust Education (228-229). Woppowa is not only attentive to theoretical models but also offers concrete suggestions for teacher education in these areas.

In a relatively tight space, this volume earns its subtitle as a *Study Guide* (or *Handbook*) *for Teaching and Practice*. Its structure is lucid and practice-oriented. The editors are to be commended for bringing together an excellent team of scholars to cover such broad areas in an accessible way (only Theological Ethics, Canon Law, and Patristics are missing). A translation to English would be highly desirable.