

Fifty Years after Vatican II: The Catholic Church and Interreligious Dialogue

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梵二後五十年： 天主教會與宗教對話

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[ABSTRACT] There has been vigorous debate over the degree of continuity and discontinuity between Vatican II and the earlier Catholic tradition. In the area of interreligious relations, the Council undoubtedly brought about a radical change from the exclusivism taught by Pope Eugenius IV and the Council of Florence. Though *Nostra Aetate* is very short, it has had a profound and positive impact on Catholic relations with other religious traditions. The post-conciliar path toward better relations has been complex and tortuous but is nonetheless irreversible. The dramatic gestures and journeys of Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI powerfully expressed unprecedented respect for other religions and their followers. As Catholic relations with followers of other religions, especially with Jews, dramatically improved, there has been vigorous debate over the various models in competing theologies of religions. At times a restorationist agenda for the church has had a chilling effect on efforts at interreligious dialogue;

various papal missteps have complicated the quest for interreligious understanding.

A theology of the Holy Spirit can contribute to understanding the universal reach of God's grace. A recognition of the finite humanity of Jesus can allow for other manifestations of God's presence to other peoples. The debate over the mission of the church can be informed by recognition of the Jewishness of Jesus and his earliest followers, by recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in other religions, and by attention to the importance of the church's mission among and with non-Christians. Pope Francis has offered an example of respectful, heartfelt, receptive dialogue in his published conversations with Rabbi Skoroka. Like his patron, Saint Francis of Assisi, the pope offers a simple, humble approach to Christian life that inspires trust and hope.

Since the end of Vatican II, there has been a veritable avalanche of publications, in practically all the main languages of the world, on the council as a whole and in particular on its Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, known by its first two Latin words *Nostra Aetate* [In Our Day] (*NA*). Commentaries upon commentaries on the sixteen documents of the council have been published, as single-authored monographs or as multi-volume edited collections, of which the five-volume *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* deserves special notice.¹ In addition, detailed histories of the council have been written, the most notable among which is the five-volume, equally of door-stopper size, *History of Vatican II*, directed by Giuseppe

¹ *Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, 5 vols., ed. Peter Hünemann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Freiburg: Herder, 2004-6).

Alberigo, of the famed Istituto per le Scienze Religiose in Bologna, Italy.² In its recent issues, the premier English-language journal *Theological Studies* hosted a number of first-rate studies on the history, interpretation, and reception of Vatican II. Even the most dedicated specialists on Vatican II, let alone an amateur historian like me, would be lying were they to claim to have read all of the most important publications on the council, even in a single European language.

In spite of this plethora of publications on Vatican II, it remains true that, to use a cliché, we have barely scratched its surface. Fifty years is a long period in a person's life span and may provide sufficient perspective to assess his or her legacy, but within the history of a two-thousand-year-old institution whose reforms often move at glacial pace, five decades is but a blip on the screen. It normally takes a lapse of several centuries before we can gauge the impact, especially worldwide, of an event as transformative and complex as Vatican II, which, according to Karl Rahner, ended the nearly two-millennia-long Hellenistic-Roman or Constantinian era of Christianity and ushered in what he terms the "world church." Indeed, just as scholars are still debating today the meaning of what is referred to as the "post-Tridentine church," nearly five hundred years after the council of Trent (1545-1563), it will no doubt take hundreds of years before we can fully grasp the global impact of Vatican II.

The intent of this presentation is not to assess the theological and practical impact of *NA*, much less of Vatican II. Its scope is much more modest and limited, that is, to survey the theology and practice of interreligious dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church

² *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Giuseppe Alberigo; English version, ed., Joseph A. Komonchak (Louvain: Peeters, 1995-2006; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995-2006).

since the end of Vatican II in 1965 and to project its future directions. It leaves out of consideration other Christian bodies such as the World Council of Churches, whose activities in interreligious dialogue have been extensive. My essay on interreligious dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church is structured around three questions: Where did we come from? Where are we now? and, Where will we be going? In other words, the three issues we will examine are: First, how did the Catholic Church see other religions in relation to itself before the 1960s? Second, what are the most notable events in the relations of the Catholic Church vis-à-vis non-Christian religions and have there been any significant changes in its theology of religions in the last fifty years? Third, what will the directions and trajectories for interreligious dialogue be in the first decades of the third Christian millennium? What can and must we do to build up a harmonious common life among believers of different religions, a fruitful collaboration among them to achieve a more just and peaceful world, a mutually enriched understanding of theological matters, and a deeper sharing of religious experiences?

Where Did We Come From?

Ever since Pope Benedict XVI's address to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2005,³ there has been a widespread debate whether, to echo the title of a popular book, "anything happened" at all at Vatican II.⁴ According to Benedict, there are two opposite hermeneutical approaches to Vatican II—the "hermeneutics of discontinuity and rupture" and the "hermeneutics of reform." The

³ Benedict XVI, Christmas address to the Roman Curia, December 22, 2005, in *Insegnamento di Benedetto XVI*, vol. 1 (2005) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), pp. 1018-32.

⁴ See John O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

pope rejects the former in favor of the latter, with its "combination of continuity and discontinuity," and consequently opposes the popular disjunction between the "pre-conciliar" and "post-conciliar" church. Whichever side one comes down on this question with regard to the council as a whole, there is no doubt whatsoever that there was, at least with regard to the Catholic Church's attitude toward other religions, a 180-degree turnabout, or to put it mildly, there is a "discontinuity," a caesura between "before-Vatican" and "after-Vatican II." No clever hermeneutical prestidigitation can bridge the gulf separating the official teachings on non-Christian religions of the two ecumenical or general councils, Florence (1438-45) and Vatican II (1962-65).

With regard to Judaism, in his bull of union with the Copts, Pope Eugenius IV declares "in the name of the Lord in this solemn session, with the approval of this sacred ecumenical council of Florence, the following true and necessary doctrine":

(The Holy Roman Church) firmly believes, professes and teaches that the legal (statutes) of the Old Testament or Mosaic Law, divided into ceremonies, holy sacrifices and sacraments, were instituted to signify something to come, and therefore, although in that age they were fitting for divine worship, they have ceased with the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom they signified. (With Him) the sacraments of the New Testament have begun. Whoever puts his hope in these legal (statutes) even after the passion (of Christ) and submits himself to them as though faith in Christ was unable to save without them, sins mortally. Yet (the Church) does not deny that between the passion of Christ and the promulgation of the Gospel they could be observed,

provided one in no way believed that they were necessary for salvation. But she asserts that after the promulgation of the Gospel they cannot be observed without the loss of eternal salvation. Therefore she denounces as foreign to the faith of Christ all those who after that time observe circumcision, the Sabbath and other laws, and she asserts that they can in no way be sharers of eternal salvation, unless they sometime turn away from these errors. She therefore commands to all who glory themselves in the Christian name that they must, sometime or other, give up circumcision fully, either before or after baptism, because, whether one puts one's hope in it or not, it cannot in any way be observed without the loss of eternal salvation.⁵

The papal bull goes on to affirm the impossibility of being saved outside the Holy Roman Church, a doctrine tersely summarized in the oft-quoted axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*:

(The Holy Roman Church) firmly believes, professes and preaches that “no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans,” but also Jews, heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but they will go to the “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41), unless before the end of their life they are received into it. For union with the body of the Church is of so great importance that the sacraments of the Church

⁵ English text in *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, revised edition, ed. J. Neuner and J. Dupuis (New York: Alba House, 1982), pp. 277-78.

are helpful to salvation only for those remaining in it; and fasts, almsgiving, other works of piety, and the exercises of a militant Christian life bear eternal rewards for them alone. "And no one can be saved, no matter how much alms he has given, even if he sheds his blood for the name of Christ, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church."⁶

Between February 4, 1442, when Pope Eugenius's bull was promulgated in the council of Florence, and October 28, 1965, when *NA* was solemnly promulgated at Vatican II, with only 88 of the 2,312 voting bishops dissenting, oceans have flowed under the ecclesiastical bridge, with the wine of the council of Florence's rigorist exclusivism much watered down. Theologians and the official church magisterium, while professing that Christ is the unique and universal savior and the church the sacrament of salvation, have tried, especially after the discovery of America, Asia, and Africa, to find ways to explain the possibility of salvation for their huge unbaptized populations. Numerous theories have been put forward in defense of the possibility of eternal salvation for the non-baptized, from the patristic era through the early modern period to the twentieth century of the Christian era, by postulating the existence of such realities as the seeds of the Word (*logoi spermatikoi*) disseminated throughout human history, a special interior revelation by God to individuals at the moment of or shortly after their deaths, general and universal revelation, implicit faith, baptism of desire, invincible ignorance, and anonymous Christianity, to cite the well-known ones.

⁶ Ibid., p. 279.

Even if one subscribes to the hermeneutics of reform and argues that there has only been a “development” of doctrine, a process of doctrinal evolution characterized by continuity-in-discontinuity, and not a volte-face or a rupture, from Florence to Vatican II, in the Catholic Church’s teaching on its relation to non-Christian religions, still there is no mistaking the novelty of Vatican II’s teaching on this subject. Ironically, it is Catholic traditionalists such as the followers of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905-91), rather than theological liberals, who have most clearly perceived the radical change between the traditional teaching that there is no salvation outside the church and Vatican II’s statement on non-Christian religions in *NA*. In their view, Vatican II contradicts the teaching of the council of Florence, the infallibility of which is unmistakably signaled by the solemn introductory phrase: “(The Holy Roman Church) firmly believes, professes and teaches.” It is highly likely that in opting for the hermeneutics of reform Pope Benedict was attempting to convince—in vain so far—the Lefebvrists that they should accept the teaching of Vatican II because, contrary to their interpretation, the council has made no doctrinal changes.

To assess whether Vatican II has made a change, as a thought experiment, let us compare and contrast the above-quoted text of the council of Florence affirming that “no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans,” but also Jews, heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but they will go to the “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” with the following three statements of Vatican II.

The first text is from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), no. 16:

Finally, those who have not yet accepted the Gospel are related to the people of God in various ways. There is, first, that people to whom the covenants and promises were made, and from whom Christ was born on the flesh (see Rom 9:4-5), a people in virtue of their election beloved for the sake of the fathers, for God never regrets his gifts or his call (see Rom 11:28-29). But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, first among whom are the Moslems: they profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day. Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since he gives to everyone life and breath and all things (see Acts 17:25-28) and since the Savior wills everyone to be saved (see 1 Tim 2:4). Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—these too may attain eternal salvation. Nor will divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life. Whatever of good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men and women that they may at length have life.

The second text is from the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*), no. 9:

Through preaching and the celebration of the sacraments, of which the holy Eucharist is the center and summit, missionary activity makes Christ present, who is the author of salvation. It purges of evil associations those elements of truth and grace which are found among people, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God, and it restores them to Christ their source who overthrows the rule of the devil and limits the manifold malice of evil. So, whatever goodness is found in people's minds and hearts, or in the particular customs and cultures of peoples, far from being lost is purified, raised to a higher level and reaches its perfection, for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of humankind.

The third text is from *NA*, no. 2:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions [primal religions, Hinduism, and Buddhism]. It has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women.... The church, therefore, urges its sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and

collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, together with their social life and culture.⁷

By any standard, there has been—to use an expression that is overwrought but exquisitely accurate in this case—a “paradigm shift” between Florence and Vatican II. Call it “evolution” or “revolution,” as you please. But there is no doubt that Florence was where we came from, and Vatican II is where we came to. It was a journey of over five hundred years, not a straight but zigzagging one, with lots of detours and side roads. As a destination, Vatican II represents not just a new place but also an “event,” one marked by a deep intellectual and spiritual conversion and transformation, quite unexpected for the thousands of conciliar Fathers who had been schooled in the old Florentine exclusivistic theology of religions. The significance of Vatican II cannot be measured simply by its literary corpus of 16 documents, a total of over 100,000 words, but also as an event brought about by the Holy Spirit who breathed new life into the old bones of blindness and arrogance that had prevented Christians from recognizing the “seeds of the Word,” “elements of truth and grace” and the “ray of that truth which enlightens all” in those whom they called “pagans” and condemned to the “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

⁷ The English text of *NA* is taken from *Vatican Council II: Constitutions Decrees Declarations*, general editor Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello, 2007), pp. 569-74.

Where Are We Now?

Lest it is thought that the church's new attitude of respect and its encouragement to "acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, together with their social life and culture" is the result of an easy and well-planned agenda of the council, we must remember that *NA*, in the words of Cardinal Franz König, who knew what he was talking about, "almost did not happen" and that it was "almost a miracle that it was ever passed."⁸ There is no need to rehearse here the troubled five-year long history of *NA*, from its inception September 1960 to its approval in October 1965, which has been well told by Thomas Stransky, a staff member of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, the organization that was responsible for not only ecumenical unity but also the so-called "Jewish Question."⁹

Suffice it to recall that the first draft of the Secretariat on the Jews was not even received by the Theological Commission for consideration on the ground that it was purely "pastoral." Its second draft, entitled *De Judaeis*, was withdrawn from the council agenda in 1961 because of the pressure of the Arab states. In 1964, a revised, weakened text, with the statement that the Jews are not guilty of deicide removed, reached the council floor for general comments. Three different groups, each with its own reason, objected to the text. The first, the conservative group *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* rejected it because of its failure to affirm that God's old covenant with the Jews has been superseded by the New Covenant. The second group, made up of the patriarchs and bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the Middle East, vigorously objected to the text

⁸ Franz König, "It Must Be the Holy Spirit," *The Tablet* 21/28 (2002), p. 6.

⁹ Thomas Stransky, "The Genesis of *Nostra Aetate*," *America* (October 24, 2005), pp. 1-4.

perceived as favoring the State of Israel. The third group, the Asian and African bishops, argued that it was unsatisfactory because it failed to mention religions other than Judaism. There was also a strong pressure to discard the text as a self-standing document and to merge its contents into other conciliar documents.

To meet these objections, another revised text was produced, now titled "The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." It is by far Vatican II's shortest document, composed of only 41 sentences in five paragraphs. Despite its brevity, *NA*, or more precisely, its teaching on non-Christian religions, has become, quite improbably, one of Vatican II's most influential documents and has had an extraordinary impact even beyond the confines of the Catholic Church itself. Its five paragraphs can be quickly summarized. The first provides the theological ground for interreligious dialogue, namely, the one and same origin and destiny of humankind in God. The second speaks of primal religions, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The third discusses Islam. The fourth, the longest, expounds Judaism. The fifth reproves (the word "condemn" is removed) any form of discrimination against any individual or group. The rest, as they say, is history.

But the post-*Nostra Aetate* history, where we are now, has been far from straightforward. It is impossible to trace within a brief space the tortuous, yet irreversible path of interreligious dialogue in the last fifty years. It runs through the very different pontificates of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. In what follows, to describe the place where we currently are in interreligious dialogue, I first recall some of the dramatic gestures on the part of the three aforementioned popes that eloquently express their concerns for interreligious dialogue. Second, I mention some of the significant magisterial documents on this theme. Third, I examine one area where interreligious dialogue has been greatly successful. Fourth, I

outline recent Catholic theologies of religions and interreligious dialogue. Fifth, I point to some key problematic areas where interreligious dialogue needs a breakthrough.

Gestures speak louder than words, and this is especially true where relationships have been marked by suspicion, contempt, and even war and violence. A handshake, a smile, a kiss, or simply a friendly visit can erase centuries of mutual hostility and hatred. Pope Paul VI is the first pope to visit India and to cite a prayer from the Upanishad *Brihad-Aranyaka* I, 3, 28, which he says is “so full of the spirit of Advent”: “From the unreal lead me to the real; from darkness lead me to light; from death lead me to immortality.” He also established the Secretariat for Non-Christians, later named as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Perhaps, of the three popes, John Paul II understood the power of symbolic gestures best and made an extremely skillful use of them, and indeed he has done for interreligious dialogue more than all the previous popes combined. Of his many prophetic gestures one can single out his visit to the synagogue in Rome, his convocation of the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, his many meetings with Buddhists and Muslims, his visit to the Holy Land, and his placing of a prayer in a crack in the Western Wall in Jerusalem begging God to forgive Christians for their sins against the Jews. Pope Benedict XVI, admittedly more reserved than his immediate predecessor, was nevertheless not without symbolic gestures of his own, especially with Jews and Muslims, as witnessed by his visits to the Western Wall and to Auschwitz, and to the Blue Mosque in Turkey, the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

Supporting these dramatic gestures is a host of magisterial documents on interreligious dialogue, more numerous in the last five decades than in the entire previous history of the church. Of Paul VI’s writings on dialogue, the most significant is his encyclical

Ecclesiam Suam (1964). John Paul's prolific writings that have an enormous bearing on interreligious dialogue include his encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986), and *Redemptoris Missio* (1990). Benedict has written extensively on interreligious dialogue before his election to the papacy. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has been very active, and among its many documents the most notable is *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, which the council issued jointly with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in May 1991. Of episcopal conferences, no doubt the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, because of the multi-religious situation of Asia, has been the most actively engaged in interfaith dialogue, especially through its Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, and has issued innumerable statements on this theme.

Among the dialogues that the Catholic Church has undertaken with various religions in the last five decades, the Jewish-Catholic dialogue is beyond a shadow of doubt the most extensive and the most successful. After his meeting with the French Jewish historian Jules Isaac in June 1960, Pope John XXIII was determined to end the "teaching of contempt" that had been embedded in the Christian tradition, and *Nostra Aetate* is essentially his legacy. In 1974 Pope Paul VI established the Pontifical Commission for the Relations with the Jews, which now functions within the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. This Commission issued *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate, no. 4* (1974). Under Pope John Paul II, a series of documents was issued, the most notable among which are *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis* (1985), *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998), and *The*

Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (2001). In response to Catholic initiatives for dialogue, various Jewish organizations and leaders have participated in a great number of biblical and theological conversations with Catholics. In 2002, a document entitled *Dabru Emet—Speak the Truth: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity* was issued and signed by over 220 rabbis and intellectuals from all branches of Judaism. A response to it by a number of Christian scholars issued in the same year entitled *A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People*.

Theologians, too, many of whom are Catholics, have also been extremely productive in elaborating a Christian theology of religions responsive to the situation of religious pluralism of our time and conducive to a fruitful dialogue among religions. Perhaps the most helpful summary of these theologies has been offered by the Catholic theologian Paul Knitter. Knitter expands the common threefold typology of exclusivism, inclusivism of contemporary theologies of religions into four basic types, which he terms “replacement,” “fulfillment,” “mutuality,” and “acceptance” models. The first affirms that Christianity is the only true religion and that it will replace, totally or partially, all other religions, which are considered basically humanity’s sinful attempts at self-salvation. The second, while affirming that Christianity possesses the fullness of truth, acknowledges the presence of elements of truth and grace in other religions and advocates a mutual, though not equal, complementarity between Christianity and other religions through dialogue. The third holds that there are many true religions, none necessarily superior to the others, which are all called to dialogue and collaboration with one another, especially in projects of liberation, in order to realize their true nature. The fourth stresses the diversity of religions and refuses to seek a common ground among them; rather it urges each

religion to foster its own aims and practices.¹⁰ This is not the place to adjudicate among these four models, except to say that they are models, which is to say, they are helpful heuristic devices, not mutually exclusive paradigms, to distinguish various theological tendencies and to locate where an individual theologian or a church stands.

This account thus far of interreligious dialogue in the Catholic Church during the last fifty years may suggest that there has been nothing but a forward progress and sweetness and light. Nothing is further from the truth. One need not be a theological curmudgeon to say that in interreligious dialogue, and in its cousin, ecumenical dialogue, as well, there seems to have been, especially in recent years, a one-step-forward-and-two-steps-backward dance, a kind of "reform of the reforms," a restorationist agenda for the church as a whole. This is especially true in interreligious dialogue, where the danger of the "dictatorship of relativism" is most acutely perceived and frequently denounced.

Again, it is not feasible to list all the events smacking a doctrinal retrenchment. Let me mention only some of the most obvious ones. First, nothing attracts the careful scrutiny by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith more than works that contain the expressions "religious pluralism" and "interreligious" in their titles, and there have recently been several disciplinings of theologians, big and small, who attempt to expand the theological boundaries in this field. Second, there is the Declaration of the CDF entitled *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church* (2000), whose affirmation that objectively speaking, non-Christians are in a gravely deficient

¹⁰ See Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002).

situation has provoked a storm of protests. Third, there is Pope Benedict's lecture at Regensburg University in September 2006. The pope's quotation of the statement by the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologos: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached" has provoked violent acts of retaliation on the part of some Muslims. Fourth, there is the lifting of excommunication in 2009 of the Holocaust-denier bishop Richard Williamson, a follower of Archbishop Lefebvre. Fifth, in 2008 Pope Benedict amended the prayer for the Jews in the Tridentine Mass on Good Friday to read: "Let us also pray for the Jews. That our God and Lord may illuminate their hearts, that they acknowledge Jesus Christ is the Savior of all men. (Let us pray. Kneel. Rise.) Almighty and eternal God, who want that all men be saved and come to the recognition of the truth, propitiously grant that even as the fullness of the peoples enters Thy Church, all Israel be saved. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen." It is understandable that this prayer for the conversion of the Jews, however well-intentioned, causes anxiety among the Jews and has occasioned the protest of the Anti-Defamation League.

These documents and actions on the part of the magisterium have no doubt had a chilling effect on efforts at interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, they have also served to highlight areas and issues in which interreligious dialogue requires a deeper reflection to go forward, and to this I turn in my final part of my essay.

Where Do We Go from Here?

My focus will be primarily theological, and not pastoral and organizational. Yet, it is a natural curiosity to ask which the directions and trajectories interreligious dialogue will take under the papacy of Pope Francis. I will first mention three theological issues that I think require further explorations to break the current impasse in interreligious dialogue and to propel forward and end with some crystal-gazing on its future under Pope Francis.

The first theological issue to be considered is the theology of the Spirit (pneumatology). Contrary to many theologians, I have suggested long ago that interreligious dialogue not begin with Jesus the Christ but with the Spirit.¹¹ In this respect I fully concur with the Irish theologian Dermot Lane who in his recent book, *Stepping Stones to Other Religions: A Christian Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, urges that we construct a theology of the Holy Spirit as the foundation for interreligious dialogue.¹² His argument is mainly biblical, that is, he shows how the First and Second Testaments witness to the pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit before, in and after Jesus, outside of Jesus, though not in opposition to him. While in full agreement with Lane, my argument is more interreligious than biblical. That is, instead of starting from the particular, spatially and temporally conditioned and situated fact of Jesus and then moving on to argue for his spatial and temporal universality—an ultimately unconvincing logical move—I suggest we start from a universal reality that is witnessed to in all the breadth, depth and height of

¹¹ See my most recent article, “L’Esprit Saint comme fondement du dialogue interreligieux,” in *Le Dialogue Interreligieux: Interpellations théologiques contemporaines*, ed. Fabrice Blée and Achiel Peelman (Montréal: Novalis, 2013), pp. 21-41.

¹² Dermot A. Lane, *Stepping Stones to Other Religions: A Christian Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011).

human history (and not only religious traditions). This universal reality is everywhere called “Spirit” or any other cognate term, whom/which of course Christians are justified to particularize and historicize as the “Spirit of Christ” and as the “Third Person” of the Trinity. This “Spirit” is not just another “name” or “modes” for God, divinity, the divine, the Absolute, the Transcendent, the Real, but also for the concrete yet spatially and temporally universal manifestations, in personal and impersonal ways, of “God” in creation and history, and therefore distinct from “God.”

The second area is Christology, and in any genuine interreligious dialogue, Christians must bear witness to Jesus. However, one of the stumbling-blocks in conversations with non-Christians is what *Dominus Iesus* terms the “unicity” and “salvific universality” of Jesus as savior. As a profession of faith, a claim of uniqueness and universality for one’s savior (Jesus) and even for one’s religion (Christianity) should not cause difficulty and scandal, as long as it is clear that it is a claim of faith, with an equal emphasis on “claim” and “faith,” and not a rational argument for an empirical, scientifically verifiable fact. Muslims and Buddhists, and any other believer for that matter, would have the same right to make the same claim of faith for their founders and religions. The issue is not whether such a claim could and should be made, but whether it is exclusive. In response, one could say with Jacques Dupuis that Jesus, because he is fully human, had a necessarily limited and in this sense incomplete and uncompleted, consciousness of the Absolute Mystery that is God. As a result, Jesus could manifest God only in a human, that is, limited and incomplete and uncompleted way. This then leaves open the possibility for other people to manifest God in ways different from that of Jesus. To strengthen this argument one could point to the fact that recent biblical scholarship has emphasized the Jewishness of Jesus. Needless to say, that Jesus was and ever remains

a Jew serves as an indispensable and fruitful common ground for the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

The third area for further theological reflection is the church and its mission. Much discussion has recently focused on whether there should be mission to the Jews if the covenant that God has made with them was, as Pope John Paul II has forcefully reminded us, never revoked and remains eternally valid. Another way of framing the issue is whether there is only one covenant or many covenants, or at least two, with the Jews and with Jesus. Again, it is useful to recall that recent biblical scholarship has shown that the Jesus movement started out as a reform movement within Second Temple Judaism, and that it was only gradually, for various reasons, most of which are not theological, that there was a parting of the ways, until both became separate, and for long time, mutually hostile "religions." Perhaps, by rediscovering the Jewishness of Jesus and the origin and character of Christianity as a Jewish reform movement, the issue of mission to the Jews will lose its edge. But the same thing must be said of other religions, analogously of course, if the Spirit (and not just the Spirit of Christ) is already present and active in all human history before, after, and beyond Jesus and the church. Then, the goal of mission is not to proclaim, convert, baptize, and incorporate the so-called unbelievers into the church but to work with them in and with the Spirit for the coming of the God's reign. There is no longer *missio ad gentes* (mission to non-Christians), but *missio inter gentes* (mission among non-Christians) and *cum gentibus* (with non-Christians).

I am deeply aware that I have broached broad and controversial theological issues, and lack of time does not permit a detailed argumentation in support of my views. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that the current logjam in interreligious dialogue cannot be broken

through unless some theological orientations akin to the ones I have sketched are undertaken.

Let me then end with a bit of crystal-gazing on the future of interreligious dialogue under the pontificate of Pope Francis. First of all, fortunately or unfortunately, Pope Francis, unlike his immediate predecessor, has not left a long paper trail. As far as I know, his only notable theological work is a book he co-authored with Rabbi Abraham Skorka, entitled *Sobre el Cielo y la Tierra* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2011), to which I will return. Nor does he, I think, pretend to be a theologian or philosopher. Most likely he will not spend much time penning learned theological tomes. So far his sermons and speeches are blessedly free of scholarly references. Perhaps the current situation of the church calls for a different charism than theological scholarship.

But what we have read and heard about Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio and now Pope Francis is refreshingly encouraging for interreligious dialogue. In the above-mentioned book, Cardinal Bergoglio wrote: “Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It assumes that there is room in the heart for the other person’s point of view, opinion, and proposal. To dialogue entails a cordial reception, not a prior condemnation. In order to dialogue it is necessary to know how to lower the defenses, open the doors of the house, and offer human warmth.”¹³ Respect, heart, reception, openness, warmth—all the things that make dialogue possible and fruitful.

¹³ Jorge Mario Bergoglio and Abraham Skorka, *On Heaven and Earth*, trans. Alejandro Bermudez and Howard Goodman (New York: Image, 2013), p. xix. See also Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: His Life in His Own Words* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2013), pp. 135-45 on what Bergoglio calls the “Culture of Cooperation.”

In his first conversation with the media, Pope Francis recognized that there were in the audience people who do not share the Catholic and Christian faith or have no faith at all. He did not want to impose his blessing upon them but chose instead to pray for them in the silence of his heart. Again, respect, heart, reception, openness, warmth.

There is another tidbit in the life of the former archbishop of Buenos Aires that I will mention with fear and trembling because I cannot independently confirm its veracity and because if it is true, it is truly explosive. It was reported by Alasdair Baverstock in the *Telegraph* (March 15, 2013) that then-Cardinal Bergoglio was unhappy with Pope Benedict's Regensburg speech and said to Newsweek Argentina: "Pope Benedict's statement don't [sic] reflect my opinions. These statements will serve to destroy in 20 seconds the careful construction of a relationship with Islam that Pope John Paul II built over the last twenty years."

What we are absolutely certain of, however, is how Bergoglio chose the name of Francis. Speaking to the media, he said that when he got 77 votes, the number required to be elected pope, his friend Cardinal Claudio Hummes, archbishop emeritus of Sao Paulo, Brazil, leaned over to congratulate him and said to him: "Remember the poor." Bergoglio chose the name Francis because he wants to follow Il Poverello to be poor and serve the poor.

But there is another story in Saint Francis's life that bodes well for interreligious dialogue. In 1219 St. Francis and Brother Illuminato accompanied the armies of western Europe to Damietta, Egypt, during the Fifth Crusade. Francis tried to stop the Crusaders from attacking the Muslims at the Battle of Damietta, but failed. After the defeat of the western armies, he crossed the battle line with Brother Illuminato, was arrested and was taken to the sultan Malek

al-Kamil. After an initial attempt by Francis and the sultan to convert the other, both quickly realized that the other already knew and loved God. Francis and Illuminato remained with al-Kamil and his Sufi teacher Fakhr ad-din al-Farisi for as many as twenty days, discussing prayer and the mystical life. When Francis left, al-Kamil gave him an ivory trumpet, which is still preserved in the crypt of the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi.

This encounter between Francis and Malek al-Kamil is a paradigm for interfaith dialogue in our time. Despite differences in religion, people can find common ground in their experiences of God. Dialogue demands that we truly listen to the other; but, to be able to do so, we must first see the other as a human being, loved by God and to be respected by us. There is no other path to peace in the twelfth as well as in the twenty-first century. It is of course vastly premature to judge Pope Francis's achievements in interreligious dialogue, but from the little he has said so far about how we should view the religious Other, and above all, from his simple and humble lifestyle, as symbolized by his choice of a common residence in Rome and his renunciation of papal accoutrements, it is reasonable to assume that he will follow the example of his namesake in dealing with people of other faiths. If so, interreligious dialogue will flourish once again as an intrinsic dimension of the church's mission, as envisaged, albeit dimly, by Vatican II.¹⁴

¹⁴ This essay originates as The *Nostra Aetate* Lecture on April 3, 2013. I am deeply grateful to Saint Edward's University for the invitation to deliver this lecture which, according to the publicity, "explores the interreligious values reflected in the groundbreaking Vatican II (1965) document of the same name, which expressed a commitment to dialogue and understanding among diverse faith traditions."

For Further Reading

Barnes, Michael. *Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality, and the Christian Imagination*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

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[摘要] 自梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議以來，一直都有關於梵二會議與梵二前的天主教傳統的傳承性及斷裂性的激烈討論。在跨宗教關係這領域上，梵二會議無容置疑地為教宗猶金四世及佛羅倫斯大公會議以來所提倡的排外主義帶來了沖激性的改變。雖然 *Nostra Aetate* - <教會對非基督宗教態度宣言>非常精簡，但這文件對天主教與其他宗教之間的關係有深刻及正面的影響。梵二強調友好宗教關係，但這條道路不但複雜及荊棘滿途，同時亦是無法逆轉的。從教宗保祿六世、若望保祿二世及本篤十六世的經歷及其姿態，我們可以看到他們強烈地對其他宗教及其信徒表示前

所未有的尊重。每當天主教與其他宗教信仰者之間，尤其是猶太教徒間的關係有所改善之際，均會有就各宗教理論模式之優劣進行激烈的討論。復辟主義偶而會對跨宗教對話帶來可怕的影響。某幾個教宗的失誤亦令到對跨宗教認知及探求變得複雜。

聖神神學可以令人認識到天主恩賜的普遍性。承認耶穌基督中有限的人性也能彰顯天主的存在。透過認知耶穌基督及他早期的追隨者的猶太特質，承認其他宗教出現聖靈，以及關注教會在基督及非基督徒間的使命的重要性這些議題，可以令教會使命的爭辯上有所得益。在已出版的教宗與思科卡(Skorka)拉比對話中，教宗方濟各提供了可作出尊重、由衷及包容性對話的一個例子。如同他的主保聖人亞西西的聖方濟一樣，他提出一個簡單謙虛但又可活出啟發信任及希望的基督徒的生活方式。