Michel Bollag and Christian Rutishauser S.J.,

Ein Jude und ein Jesuit im Gespräch über Religion in turbulenter Zeit. Ostfildern: Matias Grünewald Verlag der Schwabenverlag, 2015. Pp. 211. Pb, 19.99 euros.

Offered to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra aetate*, to reflect on the progress of the past half-century, and to stimulate continued widespread thinking in the German-speaking world, *A Jew and a Jesuit in Dialogue about Religion in Turbulent Times* consists of a series of conversations between a halakhically observant Jew and a Jesuit, the product of a decades-long collaboration and friendship between the authors (9). Both Bollag and Rutishauser lecture in Swiss academic contexts dedicated to interreligious learning (the Lehrhaus in Zurich and the Lassalle-Haus Bad Schönbrunn, respectively), an experience that also shapes the volume.

The book begins with brief forwards by Kurt Cardinal Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with the Jews, and Rabbi David Rosen, a leading voice internationally representing the American Jewish Committee in dialogue. The following seven chapters are topically titled, but in reality are rather free-flowing in their contents and collectively range over most, if not all, subjects of contemporary dialogue. They are: 1. Faith in Secular Society; 2. Creation, Revelation, Redemption (with discussions of mission and evangelization, Zionism, resurrection); 3. Humanity in the Divine Image (see below); 4. Sacredness in Space and Time (discussing liturgy and sacraments, liturgical spaces, the home, calendar, and Israel); 5. The History of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue (including the dynamics of dialogue); 6. Jewish-Christian Dialogue in the Present (including the process of dialogue, its benefits, and tensions around the topics related to the State of Israel for Christians and Jesus and Christian mission for Jews); and 7. The Encounter with Islam (its history, the necessity, modes, and content of this dialogue).

Each chapter begins with a substantive dialogue (eleven to twenty pages) derived from actual conversations between the authors. A six to eight page jointly written "Reflection" follows. This reflection systematically reviews and deepens many of the topics that emerged in the chapter's relatively unstructured dialogue. Finally, each chapter concludes by presenting two fairly brief primary texts, one from each tradition, each accompanied by a commentary (author identified). Five of the Catholic texts come from the Second Vatican Council, appropriate to the anniversary that the book marks. A sixth is biblical, and the seventh, "A Sacred Obligation" is an ecumenical Christian statement. Three Jewish texts are from leading twentieth-century thinkers, two are biblical, one rabbinic, and one, *Dabru Emet*, the most important Jewish statement

about dialogue from 2000. It and “A Sacred Obligation” receive a single jointly-written comparative commentary.

This volume addresses key topics in the theological dialogue, consciously and pervasively set within the authors’ contemporary European reality. The authors regularly demonstrate the relevance even of discussions that could be purely theological. The result is a very rich interweaving of topics, each presented dialogically, with a frequent circling back to individual topics in the layered subsections both of each individual chapter and across the volume. This effectively evokes the experience of living dialogue, but one wishes the book were indexed to enable the reader to locate the multiple discussions of many critical themes, like Jewish understandings of the incarnation and Trinitarian theology, or Christian understandings of the land of Israel, Zionism, and the current state. The volume does not so much repeat content as present different angles and nuances as appropriate to the individual chapters’ contexts. Thus, the reader experiences a process in reading the book.

The third chapter demonstrates well the book’s complexity. It discusses not only how Jews and Christians understand God and theological anthropology (75–77), but it addresses the challenges to acceptance of God raised by the Enlightenment and its aftermath, particularly in today’s secular society. The authors compare their understandings of the human community and how their communities have responded to changing understandings in modernity (78–82, 92–93). In course, they also argue for the insufficiency of a purely scientific approach to reality at an intellectual and, above all, an ethical level (90, cf. 44–46 in ch. 2). “Ethics” leads to a comparison of understandings of sin and atonement, a category they apply to both the Holocaust and the societal breakdown in the Middle East that has allowed the rise of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. The latter they understand as a fruit, in part, of a destabilization caused by Europeans (82–84, cf. 183). One of the problems on which this chapter dwells is the turn to individualism and the loss of communal consciousness (81–82, 92f).

This provides an opportunity to discuss the historical Christian claim to have replaced Jews as God’s people, to discuss briefly its sad consequences, and to name explicitly its critically important reversal in the Catholic Church’s post-conciliar recognition of “die bleibende Bedeutung des Judentums als Volk des nie gekündigten Bundes vom Sinai” (the enduring significance of Judaism as the people of the never-revoked Sinai covenant). Consequently, both communities stand “side by side, [...] each with its own meaning and mission for humanity” (93.) This anticipates the articulation of this point in the reflection issued by the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews to

mark the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra aetate* 4 in December 2015 (“‘The Gifts and Calling of God are Irrevocable’ (Romans 11:29): A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (no. 4),” (December 10, 2015, especially sections 4–5, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20151210_ebraismo-nostra-aetate_en.html). Finally, the texts offered for study are excerpted from the Second Vatican Council’s “Declaration on Religious Freedom” (*Dignitatis humanae*) and Mordechai Kaplan’s *Judaism as a Civilization*, both dealing with the role of religion in the greater society. This necessarily inadequate summary neither names every thread offered within this chapter, nor does justice to its rich interweaving of themes.

The authors explicitly hope that this volume will help broaden the community valuing and participating in dialogue (9, 164), and one senses that they have written with their own students in mind. The critical question, then, is to assess the potential broader impact of this volume. The authors presume religiously-engaged European readers who care about contemporary society. They do not present an academic volume; its dialogic presentations lack a systematic development of ideas, and although they cite many important thinkers in passing, they include, unfortunately, neither footnotes nor recommended bibliography for further reading. But one could imagine a group of intelligent adult learners, Jews and Christians together, fruitfully using the chapters serially to inform and stimulate their own dialogue, including a joint study of the primary texts presented. The authors point with consistent accuracy to important content, including both more and less basic material. Most importantly, they model dialogue admirably, presenting both non-apologetic self-critical stances (e.g., 104–5, regarding their own community’s contemporary desecrations of the holy) and an ability to listen to and politely challenge each other to deepen communication, even about difficult topics. The subtext of this volume, thus, is as important as its overt contents, and the readers’ and dialogue participants’ awareness of this is critical to the authors’ achieving their goals.

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