

Dialogue with Judaism: Perspectives on the future

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Translated from the French original by Father Murray Watson

According to Cardinal Koch

The Catholic Church "should undertake a deepened theological reflection, to throw light on the new relationship with Judaism which has developed after *Nostra Aetate*," but should also "conduct the dialogue with the Jews alongside Orthodox Christians," suggests Cardinal Koch, who invites people to "continue with passion, patience and perseverance" in this field.

Father Norbert Hofmann, the secretary for the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, reported the ideas of Cardinal Kurt Koch (President of the Commission) in the January 17, 2013 Italian edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Father Hofmann mentions that a gathering of his Commission took place between October 28 and 30, 2012, with 8 consultors and 18 delegates who are responsible for relations with the Jews in episcopal conferences which are involved in the dialogue in a significant way.

Perspectives on the future

It was in this context, during his speech opening their working sessions, that Cardinal Koch highlighted several perspectives for the future: the Catholic Church, he proposed, "should undertake a deepened theological reflection," one of whose most important tasks should be "to throw light theologically on the new relationship with Judaism which has developed after *Nostra Aetate* (#4)."

He also underscored the possibility of conducting dialogue with Jews "alongside Orthodox Christians": "in ecumenism--as in interreligious dialogue--what we are able to do together, we are obliged to do together".

Finally, the cardinal encouraged that, in the future, "a Christian systematic theology of Judaism be developed," which is not adequate as it stands today, "although some people have already put forward their own proposals, which are promising".

He invited those present to continue on the path of dialogue "with passion, patience and perseverance".

The cardinal underscored that *Nostra Aetate* (#4) was "a point of reference which still remains valid for the dialogue between Jews and Catholics," noting that this "founding document," this

"Magna Carta of the dialogue" had already borne rich fruit.

Furthermore, *Nostra Aetate* was not an isolated meteorite among the Council texts, but it is connected, in a cross-disciplinary way, to *Lumen Gentium* #9 and #16, and *Dei Verbum* ##14-16. This, he insisted, is why there is no reason "to call into question, or relativize, the weight and the significance of this declaration, either internally or externally".

The theology of Benedict XVI

In addition, Cardinal Koch spoke of Benedict XVI's commitment to this dialogue, since, "as a theologian, Benedict XVI is convinced that there is a 'concordia testamentorum'."

For the cardinal, one of the central elements of the Pope's theology is "the effort to underscore the profound connections between the themes of the New Testament and the message of the Old Testament, in order to draw out the intrinsic continuity between the Old and New Testaments and, at the same time, the newness of the message of the New Testament".

Furthermore, the cardinal pointed to the development of the Commission's two institutional dialogues--that is to say, "the dialogue with the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC)" and the dialogue "with the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, which has been taking place for 10 years with such great success".

Finally, he spoke of the [Pope's] two trips: to the United States in November 2011, and to Israel in May 2013, in order to "get to know, close up, the situation of the local Jewish-Christian dialogue, and to give a new thrust to it".

This was the third plenary assembly of the Commission, the first having taken place in 1982 and the second in 2005, for the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.

In addition to a discussion of the general situation between Jews and Catholics on a global level, the participants reflected on a number of themes, including "the introduction of a 'Day for Judaism' on the part of other Episcopal conferences," and "preparations for the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, on October 28, 2015".