

PLAYING FAST AND LOOSE WITH THEOLOGY

Recently, an article by E. Michael Jones in the February 2004 edition of his magazine, *Culture Wars*, came to our attention. What begins as a review of Roy Schoeman's book, *Salvation Is From the Jews*, ends up as an anti-Semitic rant playing fast and loose with Catholic theology. It should be unequivocally condemned.

The first important point to note is that there is nothing in Roy Shoeman's book that would lead one to Jones's conclusions; Schoeman is a Jewish convert to Catholicism, and his book, published by the mainstream Ignatius Press, has won praise from reliably level-headed Catholics. The problem lies with Jones, who uses his review of the book to engage in a freewheeling polemic against Jews.

At the outset, Jones's history is skewed: "The overwhelming majority of Jews didn't just ignore Christ, they actively sought his death." While it is undeniable that some Jews did seek Christ's death, declaring that an "overwhelming majority" did is just unwarranted. This, however, is not the worst of what Jones has to say.

According to Revelation 3:9, Jones says, Jews who do not accept Christ are the "synagogue of Satan." "In other words, the group which was called by God to prepare the way for the Messiah, rejected the Messiah and in doing that, became over the course of the ensuing centuries, a group that defined itself as anti-Christian." Not believing Christ was the Messiah does not entail defining oneself as anti-Christian; that assumes that Jews see so little of value in their own religion that they must define themselves against Christians. Furthermore, it paints Jews with a broad brush, ignoring regional differences as well as individual traits. That is the

very definition of prejudice.

Jones goes on: "The Jews who reject Christ now prepare the way for the coming of the anti-Christ every bit as much as the faithful Jews prepared the way for the coming of the real Christ. The Jews, because of their favored position and because of their rejection of Christ, now have a special role to play in the mystery of iniquity and its history on earth." This sounds like dispensationalist theology, an umbrella term for various Protestant systems of biblical interpretation that, among other things, severely separates God's plan for the Jews from His plan for the community of believers. It posits that Jesus failed in His mission to the Jews, and the Church was formed more or less as a "Plan B." It is the basis for the *Left Behind* series of novels, and is anything but Catholic. Unaccountably, Jones faults the Catholic Schoeman for not mentioning any of this.

See Jones's next statement: "If salvation comes from the Jews who prepared the way for Christ and accepted him when he came, what comes from the Jews who rejected Christ? The answer is clear: what comes from this group is the opposite of salvation, namely, the work of Satan culminating in the arrival of the Antichrist." Jones's conclusion just does not follow from his premises. Again, Jones is attempting to pass off dispensationalism as Catholic doctrine. Jones has the gall to add, "The answer is not only clear; there is no other possible answer to this question."

Jones claims that through much of Christian history, "What happened was precisely the Jewish participation in iniquity which their pertinacious and ongoing rejection of Christ made a necessity." He adds that "the logic is inescapable." Clearly, logic is not Jones's strong suit. Is Jones asserting that there can be no righteous non-Christians? No, he is saying something even more ridiculous: that there is something inherent in the Jewish people that makes them unique instruments of evil. If that is not anti-Semitism, then

nothing is. He even outrageously blames the Jews themselves for the Holocaust and pogroms: "Messianic politics has been a recipe for disaster... and the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews was a reaction to Jewish Messianism (in the form of Bolshevism) every bit as much as the Chmielnicki pogroms flowed from the excesses of the Jewish tax farmers in the Ukraine."

Jones takes on the tone of a conspiracy theorist, noting "the Jewish/Bolshevist takeover of Russia and large segments of Eastern Europe, which in turn set up the mechanism of reaction against that reign of terror, namely, National Socialism under Hitler. That in turn led to the creation of the state of Israel, and the rise to power of the Jewish media elites in the United States, which in turn led, after over 50 years of antagonizing Islam to 9/11 and the current spate of never-ending wars in the Middle East." In keeping with the dispensationalist tendency to interpret prophecy in terms of current events, Jones comments, "So it looks more and more like Armageddon every day now. The outline of human history seems to be taking on a more and more biblical configuration with each passing day..." In the context of "Paul Wolfowitz's plan to march through the middle east; George Bush's recent over the top messianic speeches in England, or Ariel Sharon showing up at the Temple Mount and inaugurating the intifada," Jones concludes, "The contemporary Synagogue of Satan, whether in America or Israel, now poses the greatest threat to world peace."

The Catholic League condemns Jones's anti-Semitism and repudiates his efforts to justify it in the name of Catholic theology. One thing is clear: there are many choice terms one can use to describe Jones's view of salvation history; "Catholic" is not one of them.