



A Path for Stronger Christian and Jewish Bonds

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October 23, 2025 - In the 60 years since the publication of *Nostra Aetate*—the first declaration in Catholic history to focus on the relationship between Catholics and Jews—Jewish and Christian scholars have worked together to explore bonds between the two faiths.

On Monday, Oct. 20, [Susannah Heschel](#), Ph.D., made the case that Jews and Christians are less divided than many may assume.

Instead of comparing and debating doctrinal beliefs, she called for a renewed emphasis on “depth theology,” an approach to interfaith reconciliation that focuses on the underlying experience and emotion of faith, rather than just its intellectual content.

How did she come to focus her life’s work on depth theology? Heschel, the Eli M. Black Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College, witnessed its power firsthand.

Her father, the leading Jewish theologian [Abraham Joshua Heschel](#), published the groundbreaking paper *No Religion Is an Island* in 1965, and many of the insights in it found their way into *Nostra Aetate*.

“He believed that in strengthening the faith of another, I fortify my own, and I agree with him, because I experienced that growing up,” she said.

In a lecture delivered at Fordham’s Lincoln Center campus, Heschel connected her experience of growing up in a house visited by Christian thought leaders like Daniel Berrigan, S.J., and Dorothy Day to the familial-like connections between Jews and Christians.

A Bond Unlike Any Other

While depth theology can be applied to other religious traditions, Heschel said it was especially relevant to Christianity and Judaism, given their intertwined histories.

“What greater theological intimacy could exist between two religions than to have the founder of one be a pious member of the other?” she said.

But just like in families, faith traditions that have similar origins experience tensions.

A Roadmap for Healing

Growing up as an only child and observing her father discuss complicated issues and matters steeped in religious ideology and emotion with faith leaders gave her a window into the possibilities of depth theology as a roadmap for discussion.

“The feeling that I received from those moments was a sense of reverence. The reverence that filled the Christians who came to our home for a Shabbat meal,” she said.

"It was the first time, I'm sure, for all of them. There was a special atmosphere in that room, and I could feel it."

In a post-lecture Q&A, Heschel reiterated that the time is right for Jews and Christians to move their conversations to a deeper level.

"If there are tensions between Christians and Jews, let's see what's underlying them. It gives us the possibility of something positive to look toward," she said.

Heschel's talk, the inaugural Paul Wattson Lecture at Fordham, also featured [Heather Miller Rubens](#), Ph.D., executive director of the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies in Baltimore, who served as respondent.

Source: [Fordham Now](#), October 23, 2025.