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"I AM JOSEPH, YOUR BROTHER": A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS SINCE *NOSTRA AETATE* NO. 4

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The article reviews the impact of Nostra aetate *on Christian-Jewish relations and offers a Jewish perspective, including consideration of the Jewishness of Jesus as well as proposing a covenantal theology that grapples with supersessionism. It also explores the implications of the Holy See's assertion in 1974 that "Christians must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience" and suggests that the church did not know then, nor yet knows, the challenges this raises.*

AS MARY BOYS HAS SHOWN in her fine contribution to this volume, it is not too bold to suggest that *Nostra aetate* (*NA*), published October 28, 1965, toward the end of the Second Vatican Council, helped transform Jewish-Christian relations. According to Edward Flannery, it "terminated in a stroke a millennial teaching of contempt of Jews and Judaism and unequivocally asserted the Church's debt to its Jewish heritage."[1] The *aggiornamento* ("a bringing up to date") marked the beginnings of a fresh approach when the Roman Catholic Church "came in from out of the cold" and joined the Protestant churches in reflecting positively on the "mystery of Israel." Looking back 50 years later, it is noticeable that the document was forceful in deploring antisemitism, although it omitted any mention of the Holocaust or the Christian contribution to antisemitism (nor did it mention the existence of the state of Israel). Most of all, *NA* ushered in a new era, fresh attitudes, a new language of discourse never previously heard in the Catholic Church concerning Jews, which can be seen in

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[1] Edward Flannery, "Seminaries, Classrooms, Pulpits, Streets: Where We Have to Go," in *Unanswered Questions: Theological Views of Jewish-Catholic Relations*, ed. Roger Brooks (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame) 128–29.

phrases such as "God holds the Jews most dear" and "mutual understanding and respect." However, the document's possibilities were one thing, its success another, and the latter was dependent upon "things still to be worked out."[2]

Since then the Holy See has issued four major documents on Jews and Judaism:

- 1974, Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra aetate*
- 1985, Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis
- 1998, We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah[3]

These three documents were produced by the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. It is somewhat surprising that, as far as I am aware, no further documents are expected in the near future.

More encouragingly, however, is that in 2001 the Pontifical Biblical Commission produced the fourth major statement, The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible.[4] This is significant because it implies that consideration of the Christian-Jewish encounter extends beyond the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. It is the concern of the Roman Catholic Church as a whole.

Consequently Christians, so long instigators of negative attitudes toward Jews, began to rediscover a respect and admiration for Judaism, and the once-close relationship, which had become a distant memory, has been to a large extent restored. For Jews, the traditional view that Christianity was simply an enemy has been replaced by a realization that collaboration with Christians is possible.

Over the course of the last half-century, the Roman Catholic Church has become aware of the need to learn about developments in post-biblical Judaism, as demonstrated by the 1974 Guidelines, which asserted that "Christians must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define

[2] Austin Flannery, O.P., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican, 1981) 741.

[3] For a review of these three statements, see my "Jewish-Christian Relations in the Global Society: What the Institutional Documents Have and Have Not Been Telling Us," in *Jews and Christians in Conversation: Crossing Cultures and Generations*, ed. Edward Kessler, John Pawlikowski, and Judy Banki (Cambridge, UK: Orchard Academic, 2002) 53–73.

[4] Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (2001), II.A.7.22, par. 4. This and all Vatican documents cited herein can be found on the Vatican website by searching their titles on the Internet. All URLs cited herein were accessed on January 19, 2013.

themselves in the light of their own religious experience"[5] and the 1985 Notes, which called on preachers and catechists to "'assess it [the patrimony common to Judaism and the church] carefully in itself and with due awareness of the faith and religious life of the Jewish people *as they are professed and practiced still today*.'"[6]

Two themes emerge: first, the history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of the Second Temple but developed an ongoing innovative and living religious tradition, and second, Christians need to understand Judaism as a living faith. I do not think the church knew in 1974, nor yet knows, the challenges these two themes present. This ignorance is neatly illustrated by Yossi Klein Halevi's portrait of an encounter with a Sister of the Beatitudes in Israel. The danger of the reassertion of the "old theology," the sister informed Klein Halevi, is illustrated when Christians simply say, "'Thank you, Jewish people, for giving us the Bible. Thank you for being the people of Jesus.' But that's archaeology. Am I ready to encounter Judaism as it is or just for nostalgia?"[7]

For their part, many Jews initially responded with distrust to the changes in Christian teaching; others engaged in the study of Christianity and in dialogue with Christians for defensive reasons, that is, in order to tackle prejudice and antisemitism. There were, of course, individual Jewish figures who called for a positive encounter, such as Martin Buber, who reminded Jews that Jesus was a fellow Jew, their "great brother," but this approach was highly unusual.[8]

[5] Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration "Nostra Aetate" (no. 4) (1974). See also similar Protestant statements such as the World Lutheran Federation's assertion that "Christians also need to learn of the rich and varied history of Judaism since New Testament times, and of the Jewish people as a diverse, living community of faith today. Such an encounter with living and faithful Judaism can be profoundly enriching for Christian self-understanding" (Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Declaration of ELCA to Jewish Community [1994], http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Christian-Jewish-Relations/Declaration-of-ELCA-to-Jewish-Community.aspx).

[6] Notes on the correct way to present Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church I.3, quoting a speech of John Paul II, emphasis original.

[7] Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for Hope with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002) 203.

[8] Buber writes: "From my youth onwards I have found in Jesus my great brother. That Christianity has regarded and does regard him as God and Saviour has always appeared to me a fact of the highest importance which, for his sake and for my own, I must endeavour to understand. . . . I am more than ever certain that a great place

However, in recent years there have been stirrings of a new and more widespread interest in Christianity among Jews, illustrated by the publication in 2000 of *Dabru Emet* ("Speak Truth"), a Jewish statement on Christians and Christianity.[9] A broad range of signatories, from both Orthodox and Progressive Judaism ensured that *Dabru Emet* became the first detailed, widely supported, cross-denominational statement. Until its publication, the changes in Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism had been lacking a Jewish response. No longer. The eight-paragraph statement, similar in length to *NA*, demonstrates awareness among Jews of a common purpose with Christianity:

- Jews and Christians worship the same God.
- Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book (the Bible).
- Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the Land of Israel.
- Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah.
- Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon.
- The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture.
- A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice.
- Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace.

Changes in Jewish attitudes were reinforced by the impact of the papal visit to Israel in the same year, which made an indelible mark on the Jewish psyche.

Of course, there continue to be divisions among and between Christians and Jews over, for example, attitudes toward the state of Israel and its relationship with the Palestinians as well as with its other Arab neighbors and assessment of the actions of the Catholic Church and Christians in general during the Second World War. Evidence of increasing antisemitism today, particularly in Europe and the Middle East, has also led to a corresponding increase in Jewish sensitivity to criticism, particularly Christian criticism.

Nevertheless, my view is that in the mainstream of both Judaism and Christianity, many of the principal divisive issues have been either eliminated

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belongs to [Jesus] in Israel's history of faith" (Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk [London: Routledge & Paul, 1951] 12–13).

[9] Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al. of the National Jewish Scholars Project, *Dabru Emet*: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity (July 15, 2001), http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet__A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html.

or taken to the furthest point at which agreement is possible. The efforts of Catholics and Protestants toward respect for Judaism project attitudes that would have been unthinkable in 1965.

THE STUDY OF RELATIONS AND THE PRACTICE OF DIALOGUE

As a subject of study, Jewish-Christian relations can rightly be said to be a child of the 20th century. From pioneering writers such as James Parkes to the establishment of organizations such as the London Society of Jews and Christians and the National Conference of Christians and Jews (both in 1927), the subject has been a point of discussion.[10] It is true that the previous centuries saw many contributions to the issue, but for the most part the intentions were other than honorable. It might even be said that an early writer such as Justin Martyr, who wrote a fictional dialogue between a Jew and a Christian, was presenting the relationship between Jews and Christians and, given the differences in scholarly attitudes between then and now, was thus engaging in the same activity. There is some truth in this, but Justin Martyr's purposes, and those of many like him, were confessional.[11] It is the aim and the tools that separate a scholarly from an apologetic approach.

The scholarly approach should analyze, using the interpretative tools and data of its time in order to attempt to present a dispassionate and balanced understanding of a subject. This is not to say that students or scholars should not then use the evidence to make moral judgments or to speak out for causes they believe in. There are many well-known cases of leading scholars taking political or moral stances. Rather, the first task is to understand and evaluate the evidence, and from there to make a judgment.

We should therefore distinguish Jewish-Christian *relations* from Jewish–Christian *dialogue*. "Relations" covers the whole history and significance of the contact of Jews and Christians, including the positive contacts and influence upon each other. It might also include the external influences upon each or the question as to how each will fare in the modern world. "Dialogue" is a subset of relations, the most popular subset to be sure, and is predicated on the need for reconciliation between the two faiths, and is generally founded upon theological issues.

The word "dialogue" (and the nature of dialogue activity) is itself ill defined. A casual conversation between Jews and Christians that may add up to no more than a loose restatement of entrenched theological positions is sometimes claimed to be dialogue. Equally, any communication between

[10] James W. Parkes, *Conflict of the Church and Synagogue* (New York: Hermon, 1934).

[11] See, e.g., Timothy J. Horner, *Listening to Trypho: Justin Martyr's Dialogue Reconsidered* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

persons of two differing religious points of view (e.g., by phone, Facebook, or email) may be on occasion described loosely as dialogue. However, dialogue is not simply synonymous with "communication." For dialogue to take place, there must be a genuine hearing of the Other.

In reality, dialogue consists of a direct meeting of two people and involves a reciprocal exposing of the full religious consciousness of the one with the Other. Dialogue speaks to the Other with a full respect of what the Other is and has to say. This is never less than personal but can develop in such a way as to be extended to a group and even to communities. However, it begins with the individual, not with the community.

Such a quest is never easy, because it is not merely about the Other, nor about where the Other differs from us. The thoughts and experience of dialogue are expressed in the writings of the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, whose emphasis is not on "the subject matter that connects the speaker with the listener but the I confronting the Thou. The word is not only an expression of reality but also a means by which to express it."[12] This means that dialogue depends on the presence of another person. Rosenzweig asserted that truth could exist in two forms, in Judaism and in Christianity, which he expounded in *The Star of Redemption* (1921). It is not difficult to see how Rosenzweig became one of the main sources out of which Buber developed his "I and Thou" formula.

Buber, one of the most influential Jewish theologians of the 20th century, is known for his exposition of the I-Thou relationship, which maintained that a personal relationship with God is truly personal only when there is not only awe and respect on the human side, but also when we are not overcome and overwhelmed in our relationship with God. This comportment has implications for human-human dialogue too; it means that two people must meet as two valid centers of interest. Thus, one should approach the Other with respect and restraint so that the validity of the other center is in no sense belittled.[13]

Dialogue therefore involves a respect that takes the Other as seriously as one demands to be taken oneself. Rosenzweig's famous response to "No-one can reach the Father except through me" (John 14:6) is pertinent here. He acknowledges that millions of Christians have been led to God through Jesus Christ. But he continues: "It is different if one does not have

[12] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William Hallo (1971; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1985) 423. See Jeremy F. Worthen, *The Internal Foe: Judaism and Anti-Judaism in the Shaping of Christian Theology* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009).

[13] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd ed., postscript by Buber, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Scribner, 1958).

to come to the Father because he or she is with him already. And that is the case with the people of Israel (not the individual Jew).'"[14]

In these few sentences Rosenzweig introduces us to the crucial question of the Jewish-Christian relationship today: can Christians view Judaism as a valid religion on its own terms (and vice versa)?

Questions to be considered from the Jewish perspective include, what was the purpose behind the creation of Christianity and that two billion Christians read the *Tanakh*? Does Jesus the Jew have implications for Jews? It is well known that Jews are very proud of the Albert Einsteins, the Heinrich Heines, and the Sigmund Freuds; yet, Israel's most famous Jew is generally ignored. Now, in a freer climate as far as Jewish-Christian relations are concerned, is it not time that there was a greater Jewish interest in the Jew Jesus?

For Christians, does John 14:6 deny the legitimacy of Judaism? Directly related to this question is the need for reflection on the survival of the Jewish people and of the vitality of Judaism over 2000 years. Does it indicate a continuation of God's election of the Jewish people? The question of the validity of Judaism challenges some of the proclamations of Christian triumphalism.

The last 50 years have seen a demonstrable shift from a pre-*NA* monologue about Jews to an instructive (and sometimes difficult) dialogue with Jews. A monologue generally fails to understand the reality of the Other, while a dialogue requires a respect for the Other as it understands itself. The challenge of making the transition from monologue to dialogue remains immense, as demonstrated by the controversy following the 2002 publication of Reflections on Covenant and Mission by the National Council of Synagogues and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

CHRISTIANITY, ANTISEMITISM, AND THE HOLOCAUST

While deploring antisemitism, *NA* avoided the topic of the Holocaust, possibly because few leaders of the Christian churches did much to help Jews. Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII from 1939 to 1958, was (and remains) a controversial figure, with some claiming that he knew much and did nothing of importance to help Jews, whereas others retort that he did what he could and encouraged others to do more.[15] In my view, the impression

[14] Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk: Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, *Briefe und Tagbücher: 1900–1918* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976) 132–33 (my translation).

[15] See, e.g., Pierre Blet, *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican*, trans. Lawrence J. Johnson (New York: Paulist, 1999); John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking,

of Vatican policy of the 1930s and 1940s—indeed, of the two popes of that time, Pius XI and Pius XII—is hardly a positive one. Yet, it is essential for Jews and Catholics to remember that in Nazi-occupied countries, the churches themselves were often targeted, and were thus preoccupied with protecting their own flocks rather than with the fate of Jews.

However, individual Catholic (and some other Christian) leaders did extend their support to Jews. One of the most honorable examples was Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli who, as papal Nuncio for Turkey and Greece, made available baptismal certificates to thousands of Hungarian Jews in a bid to persuade Germans to leave them unmolested. He later became Pope John XXIII and initiated Vatican II.[16]

One of the most dramatic transformations arising from Vatican II is the shift from what was, for the most part, an inherent need to condemn Judaism to a need to condemn Christian anti-Judaism. This led not to a separation from all things Jewish but, in fact, to a closer relationship with "the elder brother." As German theologian Johannes Metz observed, "Christian theology after Auschwitz must stress anew the Jewish dimension of Christian beliefs and must overcome the forced blocking-out of the Jewish heritage within Christianity."[17]

This blocking-out included the issue of Christian antisemitism. However, in 1987 in the wake of the controversy over the pope's reception of Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, who had been an active Nazi, the Vatican promised to reflect on the Holocaust; its document We Remember: Reflections on the Shoah was published in 1998. It stresses the evils of antisemitism, concluding: "We wish to turn awareness of past sins into a firm resolve to build a new future in which there will be no more anti-Judaism among Christians or anti-Christian sentiment among Jews but rather a shared mutual respect."[18] It is primarily a sincere call for the renunciation of antisemitism, reaching not only Catholics in Western Europe and North America, where relations have progressed, but also those in regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America where many have never encountered a Jew.

But its treatment of the Holocaust had some disappointing aspects for those who had hoped for a formal apology, on the lines of that issued by the

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1999); Carol Rittner and John K. Roth, ed. and intro, *Pius XII and the Holocaust* (New York: Continuum, 2002); Jose M. Sánchez, *Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2002).

[16] See Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World* (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

[17] Johannes-Baptist Metz, "Facing the Jews: Christian Theology after Auschwitz," in *The Holocaust as Interruption*, Concilium 175, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza and David Tracy (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984) 26–33, at 27.

[18] We Remember: Reflections on the Shoah, V, par. 3.

French bishops who stated: "It is important to admit the primary role played by the consistently repeated anti-Jewish stereotypes wrongly perpetuated by the Christians in the historical process that led to the Holocaust."[19] We Remember speaks both of those Christians who helped Jews and of those who failed to do so, but it also implies a balanced picture. It fails to give a plain statement on the role of Christian teachings and stereotypes in motivating the Nazis and their antisemitic supporters and sympathizers.

In recent years Pope Benedict XVI's statements on the Shoah have caused different concerns, because they seem to depict Nazism simply as a pagan phenomenon, in which the church was not complicit. This ignores the reality that without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold, nor could it have been carried out.

There remains a special European and a special Christian angle to dealing with the Shoah. It happened in the midst of a supposedly liberal, democratic, and well-developed civilization. The vast majority of Europeans looked on while their Jewish neighbors were being taken away and murdered. As far as Christianity is concerned—and most Europeans were of course, at least nominally, Christians—the problem is even more serious: some 1,900 years after the life of Jesus the Jew, his people were murdered by baptized pagans who, by their action and inaction, denied their baptism, while most other Christians, from the highest to the lowest, looked aside.

In my view, the Holocaust remains as much a threat to Christian self-understanding today as it did at the end of World War II. This is perhaps one reason why John Paul II, whose pontificate witnessed more progress between Catholics and Jews than any other pope's, was the first pope to visit a concentration camp (Auschwitz) and to pray there (1979); the first to visit Yad Vashem in his pilgrimage to Israel (2000), and the first to place words of apology for antisemitism in the church in cracks of the Western Wall, when he called on Catholics (and all Christians) to do *teshuva* (repentance) for misdeeds against Jews:

> God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.[20]

[19] Roman Catholic Bishops of France, Declaration of Repentance (September 30, 1997), http://www.jcrelations.net/Declaration_of_Repentance_seeking_forgiveness_for_the_failings_of_the_Church_dur.2407.0.html?L=9&page=1.

[20] See Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy's discussion of this prayer and visit to the Holy Land in his address at the annual meeting of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, March 13, 2001, at http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/cassidy.htm.

Understandably, in the last 50 years the Christian contribution to fostering antisemitism has been a central concern of Jewish-Christian relations. Although this had already been noted by Parkes before the Holocaust, the events of World War II brought into sharp focus the extent to which anti-Jewish teaching had taken root in Christian Europe. It was necessary to undertake a proper appraisal of antisemitism, anti-Judaism, and the significance of the Shoah, and this required an *unlearning* of attitudes and beliefs that had been learned before.[21] In the words of Catholic social ethicist John Pawlikowski, "the Holocaust has made it immoral for Christians to maintain any Christology that is excessively triumphalistic or that finds the significance of the Christ Event in the displacement of the Jewish people from an ongoing covenantal relationship with God."[22]

The need to reflect on the Shoah is self-evident, but there are dangers if reflection is not conducted in perspective. A case in point is Jewish philosopher Emil Fackenheim's proclamation that the Shoah resulted in a new commandment, the 614th, which stressed that it was incumbent upon Jews to survive as Jews. According to Fackenheim one remained a Jew so as not to provide Hitler a posthumous victory.[23] However, as a result, Jewish identity became Shoah-centered as did Jewish-Christian relations. The danger is that by focusing solely on the Shoah, Jews and Christians will gain a distorted view of themselves and of each other. To take a hypothetical example, a young Jew who knows nothing of Judaism and experience apart from the events of the Shoah will inevitably construct a negative Jewish

[21] For example, the Leuenberg Church Fellowship (2001) states, "The churches failed because of indifference and fear, pride and weakness; but they also failed, above all, as a consequence of wrong interpretations of texts from the Bible and the terrible theological errors to which they led. Sometimes in Christianity there has been an idea that the rejection and devaluation of Judaism, even to the extent of overt antisemitism, could be considered an important aspect of how Christians understand themselves" (Church and Israel: A Contribution from the Reformation Churches in Europe to the Relationship between Christians and Jews, I.1.1, http://www.jcrelations.net/Church_and_Israel__A_Contribution_from_the_Reformation_Churches_in_Europe_to_the.2392.0.html?L=6.2011&page=2).

[22] John T. Pawlikowski "Christology after the Holocaust," *Encounter* 59 (1998) 345–68, at 346.

[23] "Fackenheim, himself a survivor, seeks to interpret the significance of the Shoah, where evil went beyond all explanation. God and Israel are still in relationship, and the Jewish people are precluded from despair or abdication of responsibility. Fackenheim's thesis of a 614th commandment gained wide recognition among Jews and Christians, and he called on Christians to support Israel as a guarantor for the future survival of the Jewish people and for Jews and Christians to work together for *tikkun olam* (mending of the world)" (Emil Fackenheim, 1969, "Transcendence in Contemporary Culture: Philosophical Reflections and a Jewish Theology," in *Transcendence*, ed. Herbert W. Richardson and Donald R. Cutler [Boston: Beacon, 1969] 150).

identity, associated with suffering and victimhood. A young Christian will come away with an exclusive picture of the Jew as victim without an awareness of the positive aspects of Jewish culture.

While reaction to the Shoah is an important driving force, positive relations cannot be built solely on responses to antisemitism and Christian feelings of guilt. If recent Christian soul-searching in the aftermath of the destruction of European Jewry leads to a new approach and a repudiation of the *Adversus Iudaeos* tradition, so much the better. However, the future relationship cannot be built on the foundations of guilt. The sense of guilt is transient and does not pass to the next generation; moreover, it is unstable, inherently prone to sudden and drastic reversal. Thus, the relevant statement in *Dabru Emet*:

> Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. . . . But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. . . . We encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people. We applaud those Christians who reject this teaching of contempt, and we do not blame them for the sins committed by their ancestors.[24]

I would suggest that, as far as the Christian contribution to antisemitism is concerned, the Roman Catholic Church (and the Protestant churches) instead of being part of the problem have now become part of the solution, and it is therefore timely to move on to more positive bases for relations.

THE JEWISH ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

One consequence of *NA* was a reawakening among Catholics to the Jewish origins of Christianity. Catholics were reminded that Jesus was a faithful Jew and "that from the Jewish people sprang the apostles," the foundation stones and pillars of the Church who "draw sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles" (no. 4).[25]

Pope John Paul II, followed by Pope Benedict XVI, spelled out what this statement means: God's covenant with the Jewish people had never been

[24] *Dabru Emet*.

[25] Documents earlier than *NA* emphasized the Jewishness of Jesus, such as the 1947 Seelisburg document that commended Christians to "2. Remember that Jesus was born of a Jewish mother of the seed of David and the people of Israel, and that His everlasting love and forgiveness embraces His own people and the whole world. 3. Remember that the first disciples, the apostles and the first martyrs were Jews" (International Council of Christians and Jews, The Ten Points of Seelisberg [1947], http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/Seelisberg.htm).

broken and retains eternal validity; God does not renege on his promises. If the Jews were not rejected, then Judaism is not a fossilized faith, as had been taught previously, but a living, authentic religion.

Thus, Christians reawoke to the Jewish origins of Christianity: that Jesus was born, lived, and died a Jew; that the first Christians were Jews; indeed, is it too bold to suggest that the New Testament is primarily a collection of Jewish writings?

Jesus and his family would have been observant of Torah, paid tithes, kept the Sabbath, circumcised their males, attended synagogue, observed purity laws in relation to childbirth and menstruation, kept the dietary code, etc. While the Gospels record disputes about Jesus' interpretation of a few of these laws, the notion of a Christian Jesus, who did not live by Torah or only by its ethical values, does not fit historical reality. Jesus was a Jew, not an alien intruder in first-century Palestine; a reformer of Jewish beliefs, not an indiscriminate faultfinder of them.

Although Jesus lived his life not as a Christian but as a Jew, within a few decades of his death, his Jewish followers espoused a rather different kind of religion from that followed by most Jews. Judaism, like Islam after it, is strongly rooted in religious law; Christianity ceased to be so. Judaism, also like Islam, has a strong belief in the unity of God; Christianity came to place such great store in Jesus and, centuries later, in the doctrine of the Trinity that it has seemed to many other monotheists to be, in essence, a refined form of polytheism. Gradually, the Christian religion came to look less like an authentic, even if eccentric, form of Judaism, and more like a completely different religion.

Nevertheless, the rediscovery of the Jewishness of Jesus among Christians has had an impact on Jews, although, of course, for Jews his significance is in his life rather than his death. Some have begun to view the New Testament in a more positive light, although there is, of course, no reason intrinsic to their faith why they should take much interest in it, since it is not their sacred Scripture. Indeed, there is every reason why they should ignore it, since it has been used to justify antisemitic actions by Christians. Yet an increasing number of Jewish scholars have turned their attention to studying Jesus. The pioneers lived in the first half of the 20th century,[26] but since *NA* Jewish academic interest has increased and significant studies have been penned by Pinchas Lapide, Géza Vermès, David Flusser, and Amy-Jill Levine.

Lapide argued that the resurrection actually happened, though he is unconvinced by the "strange paraphrases" of many modern Christian theologians about the resurrection. He believes these paraphrases to be "all too abstract and scholarly to explain the fact that the solid hillbillies

[26] E.g., Abraham Geiger, Joseph Klausner, Claude Montefiore, and Martin Buber.

from Galilee who, for the very real reason of the crucifixion of their master, were saddened to death, [but] were changed within a short period of time into a jubilant community of believers."[27] Only resurrection could have accomplished that.

Building on the thought of Rosenzweig, Lapide suggested that Christianity is the "judaising" of the pagans. He refers approvingly to Catholic theologian Clemens Thoma, who argued that through the resurrection of Jesus, an access to faith in the one, until then unknown, God of Israel was opened to the Gentiles.[28] In other words, Jesus is the way for the Gentiles, but Jews, who already know God, do not need Jesus. This conviction has not gained wide acceptance among either Jews or Christians, though it is an intriguing one.

Vermès depicted Jesus as a Galilean Hasid, a holy man. In his examination of Jesus' titles he concluded that none link him with the Messiah, that no titular use of "Son of Man" is attested in Jewish literature, and that "prophet," "lord," or even, figuratively, "son of God" could be easily applied to holy men in the Judaism of Jesus' day. For Vermès, Jesus was a charismatic teacher, healer, and prophet:

> Whereas none of the claims and aspirations of Jesus can be said definitely to associate him with the role of the Messiah, . . . everything combines . . . to place him in the venerable company of the Devout, the ancient Hasidim. . . . [This] means that any new enquiry may accept as its point of departure the safe assumption that Jesus did not belong among the Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots or Gnostics, but among the holy miracle-workers of Galilee.[29]

Jesus died, said Vermès, because he was perceived as a potential threat to the authorities, and the real Jesus, Jesus the Jew, challenges Christianity as well as Judaism. The significance of Vermès's work can be illustrated by the fact that the title of his book published in 1973, *Jesus the Jew*, seemed revolutionary. Now it is almost taken for granted in New Testament scholarship.[30]

David Flusser, Israeli scholar of first-century Judaism, accepts Jesus as a charismatic figure with an extraordinary sense of mission. He invites his readers to listen to Jesus himself and wonders out loud whether the responses that Jesus gave in connection with human conflict may be the

[27] Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (London: SPCK, 1984) 125.

[28] Clemens Thoma, *A Christian Theology of Judaism*, trans. and ed. Helga Croner (New York: Paulist, 1980).

[29] Géza Vermès, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973) 223.

[30] A synthesis of Vermès's writings on Jesus can be found in his *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).

best that anyone has proposed. Flusser commends Jesus for remaining aloof from the zealotism that would eventually destroy the Temple and Jerusalem.[31]

Amy-Jill Levine's thesis is that Jesus was a good Jew who taught Jews in a Jewish land. She is particularly concerned with anti-Jewish New Testament interpretations that occur when, in the attempt to depict Jesus as unique, the Jewish people and/or leaders of his time are depicted as monolithic, obsessively rule-following, unconcerned with the poor and outcast, and particularly oppressive to women. She encourages Jews to appreciate Jesus in continuity with other leaders and prophets of Israel. She describes how Jesus dressed, ate, taught, and prayed like a Jew, argued like a Jew with other Jews, and amassed Jewish followers.[32]

THE BIBLE

Reflection on the New Testament brings us to the question of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, a question as old as Christianity itself. In the second century CE Marcion had argued, albeit unsuccessfully, that Christianity should reject the Jewish Scriptures (as well as most of the Gospels). In response, the church has since then insisted simultaneously on the continuity and the discontinuity of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. *Continuity* centered on the claim that the God of the Old Testament was the same as the God of Christ. *Discontinuity* derived from the belief that the Old Testament pointed to a future saving event—to Christ. While Marcion's teaching became regarded as heresy, residual Marcionism survived in a selective, comparative reading of Scripture, a tendency still in existence today in some Christian writings that depict the Old Testament as presenting a wrathful God of law in contradistinction to the New Testament portrait of a loving God of grace.

According to 2 Timothy 3:16, "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching." Inevitably the Hebrew Bible, to which Jesus and his earliest followers appealed as a divine sanction for their message, was viewed not only as divinely inspired but also as the continuing normative authority for the faith and life of the people of God—a view consistent with the contemporary Jewish environment. The New Testament's use of

[31] David Flusser, *Jesus* (1969; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001).

[32] See Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006). The book she coedited with Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (New York: Oxford University, 2012), is another important work consisting of the Christian holy book edited entirely by Jews.

the Old Testament and the claims made about Jesus demonstrate a deep reluctance to posit any breach between Christianity and Israel.[33]

Since the first Christians were Jews, and since Christianity is rooted in early Judaism, it is to be expected that the New Testament would exhibit many aspects of traditional Jewish interpretation. Both as an authority for the authors and as a hermeneutical key for readers, the Old Testament is indispensable for understanding the earliest New Testament interpretations about Jesus. However, unlike classical rabbinic interpretation, which seeks to discover some hidden element in the biblical text itself, the New Testament, with its eschatological orientation, generally applies the biblical text to some aspect of Jesus' life. This is because, for the rabbis, the biblical text is primary; for New Testament writers, however, Jesus is primary, and it is he whom the Old Testament serves to illuminate.

The early church distinguished between those elements of the Old Testament that continued to carry force after the coming of Christ and those that were no more than a shadow: one approach emphasizes a break with Scripture involving a new covenant with God (Lk 22:20; Heb 8:8–13), depicting Judaism as old and superseded; a second describes Jesus as a fulfillment of what was prophesied in the Bible, which remains in a typological relationship to it (1 Cor 10:1–11; Mt 5:17).

Neither *NA* nor the 1974 Guidelines commented on issues associated with typology. *NA*, for example, simply stated: "Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this Sacred Synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues" (no. 4).

The 1985 Notes, however, highlighted that the church still had matters to resolve, warning that "we should be careful to avoid any transition from the Old to the New Testament which might seem merely a rupture" (40.4), and that "typological reading only manifests the unfathomable riches of the Old Testament, its inexhaustible content and the mystery of which it is full, and should not lead us to forget that it retains its own value as Revelation that the New Testament often does no more than [recapitulate]" (2.7). The 2001 document, The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible, also acknowledges that links between the Old with the New were abused, and that Scripture could be "severed" from their context. As a result "interpretation . . . became arbitrary" (no. 3), and it "would be wrong to consider the prophecies of the Old Testament as some kind of

[33] This is exemplified by Matthew, which uses explicit fulfillment citations throughout the birth narrative (with variations on the formula, "this took place in order to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet") and the prominent place given to quotations from the Pentateuch, Isaiah, and Psalms.

photographic anticipation of future events" (no. 21), particularly messianic prophecies. One way to overcome an unhealthy dependence upon typological interpretation, it suggested, is by familiarity with the rabbinic literature and Jewish biblical interpretation:

> Christians can and ought to admit that the Jewish reading of the Bible is a possible one, in continuity with the Jewish Sacred Scriptures from the Second Temple Period, a reading analogous to the Christian reading which developed in parallel fashion. Both readings are bound up with the vision of their respective faiths, of which the readings are the result and expression. Consequently, both are irreducible. On the practical level of exegesis, Christians can, nonetheless, learn much from Jewish exegesis practised for more than two thousand years, and, in fact, they have learned much in the course of history. For their part, it is to be hoped that Jews themselves can derive profit from Christian exegetical research (no. 22).

These words are both bold and significant because they call on Catholics to take into consideration rabbinic and contemporary Jewish interpretations of Scripture. Catholics are also told that the Old Testament contains a divine revelation unrelated to the coming of Christ. This was not only valid at the time of its writing, it is also still valid for contemporary Judaism. By stating that Jewish interpretation of Scripture is possible, the Pontifical Biblical Commission is applying John Paul II and Benedict XVI's oft-repeated comment about the "covenant remaining with the Jews" to the interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures. If the covenant remains with the Jewish people, their interpretation of Scripture, alongside that of Christians, must at the very least remain "possible." The document's radical call for the use of Jewish commentaries responds to the emerging theme identified above, calling for Christians to learn about Judaism as it developed.

There is, however, another question posed by then-Cardinal Ratzinger in his preface to the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document The Jewish People and the Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (2001): "Has not the New Testament itself contributed to creating a hostility towards the Jewish people that provided a support for the ideology of those who wished to destroy Israel?"

In 1965, *NA* no. 4 stated that nothing was to be taught or preached that was "out of harmony with the truth of the Gospel," but it was too soon to consider why texts in Matthew and John tended to excuse the disciples, but accuse more and more Jews by excluding more and more Romans. Indeed, why have the Christian Scriptures been used to justify persecution of Jews? Why have the consequences of the New Testament polemic toward Jews proved so destructive?

One of the problems in answering this question is the fact that Jesus was a Jew who taught his fellow Jews, some of whom followed his teaching and some others who did not. Most of his contemporaries, of course, had never

heard of Jesus. After his death, his Jewish followers, encouraged by their experience of the resurrection, argued for the validity of his teaching and their own, against their fellow Jews who had not been persuaded. To complicate the position further, Jesus' Jewish followers argued among themselves about the conditions under which Gentiles might be admitted to this new Jewish movement. In addition, some of the Jewish communities within the Jesus movement—with or without Gentile members—found themselves further at odds with other Jews over issues such as Torah observance and claims about Jesus.

The New Testament bears witness to all this, and many of its texts illustrate the debates and arguments that were taking place. These disputes were serious, vigorous, and often bitter. Nevertheless, what must not be forgotten—but which over time has been almost completely neglected—is the fact that the arguments were between Jews, about a Jew, or about Jewish issues (even when they concerned Gentile converts). The problem of polemic is magnified greatly when we read the passages as if they were "Christian" arguments against "Jews." To read them this way is to misread them and this misreading contributed to the Christian teaching of contempt.

Since the ministry of Jesus can only be understood in the context of first-century Palestinian Judaism, it is essential to emphasize that the concerns of Jesus and his followers are Jewish concerns; that despite the disagreements, much of the polemic reflects the situation in which the Gospels were written when Jews and Jewish followers of Jesus had come to view each other in terms of hostility and disagreement.

The criticism of the Pharisees is especially pronounced because it was rabbinic Judaism, based on Pharisaic Judaism, that survived the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion from the Land of Israel. This is the background to the bitter inter-Jewish feud portrayed by the Gospels. The conflict is over interpretation and over who should lead in light of the destruction of the Temple.

The final text of the Gospels was edited long after the events described, and the authors were sometimes concerned with denigrating those Jews who did not follow Jesus. At the same time they were equally concerned with vindicating the Romans, whose goodwill they were seeking. This was courageously admitted by the Vatican's 1985 Notes, which stated forthrightly:

> It cannot be ruled out that some references hostile or less than favorable to the Jews have their historical context in conflicts between the nascent Church and the Jewish community.
>
> Certain controversies reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus.
>
> To establish this is of capital importance if we wish to bring out the meaning of certain Gospel texts for the Christians of today (IV.1.A).

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Although there have not been any pertinent statements from the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Israel stands out as a prominent issue in Christian-Jewish relations. Zionism and the establishment of the state of Israel are central in today's Jewish-Christian encounter, demonstrating numerous tensions and conversations often brimming with emotion and passion. Motions tabled at synods or in rabbinical assemblies are controversial, as speakers tend to be advocates of one side or another. Why is it so rare to find Christian organizations, let alone Jewish, that are both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli? Blinkered views prevail.

While for Jews it is more obvious: the centrality of the land of the Bible, as well as the survival of over one-third of world Jewry, is at stake. Christians, for their part, not only disagree as to the place of Israel in Christian theology, but feel particular concern for Christians who live in the Holy Land as well as for Palestinians in general. There are, of course, also many Christians and Jews who are deeply concerned about the Other, making this a picture complicated to understand.

Israel is controversial because it cannot be viewed simply as a geographical and political entity whose emergence is like the establishment of any new state. Political, social, cultural, and religious concerns all affect its place in the Jewish-Christian relationship. Indeed, the complexity and sensitivity surrounding Israel meant that when Paul VI briefly visited in 1964, he did not use the word "Israel" during any of his public addresses, did not visit any Israeli monuments, and declined to meet with Israel's chief rabbi—largely because of differences over Israel's political statehood and a desire that the visit be seen as a purely religious act, avoiding any kind of political considerations.[34] Even today, it is not easy to choose the appropriate words in discussions. Are we to use the term "Holy Land," perhaps with a qualifier such as "Christian," or, alternatively, "the Promised Land"? Or must we seek ostensibly more neutral terms such as "Israel" and "Palestine"?

As I have noted earlier, there have been great changes in Christian teaching on Judaism and especially a tackling of the traditional teaching of contempt. Nevertheless, attitudes toward the land and state of Israel continue to be difficult, making a Christian reorientation to Israel problematic. Simply put, it has been easier for Christians to condemn antisemitism as a misunderstanding of Christian teaching than to come to terms with the reestablishment of the Jewish state.[35]

[34] The visit also took place before the publication of *NA*, making the visit a very sensitive topic. In its desire to avoid controversy, it was deliberately brief.

[35] Alice Eckardt points out the contrast between Christian willingness to tackle antisemitism and reflect on the Shoah with Christian reticence on the subject of Zionism and the state of Israel. Christians are more likely to think about the Shoah

Thus, although Christians acknowledge that Jews feel a spiritual attachment to the Land of Israel, they have found it harder to accommodate the consequences of the Jewish desire for and creation of a Jewish state. The Notes declare that "the existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law" (VI.1).

The attitude of Roman Catholicism toward Zionism changed greatly in the course of the 20th century. In 1904, Pope Pius X famously gave an audience to Theodor Herzl, who asked for support in his endeavor to bring Jews back to the Land of Israel. The pope told him unequivocally that because "the Jews have not recognised our Lord, therefore we cannot recognise the Jewish people."[36]

Since then, however, attitudes have changed significantly. Although *NA* did not explicitly mention Israel, it began the process that eventually led to the Vatican's recognition of the state in 1994. A more general awareness among Roman Catholics of the significance of Israel became noticeable during John Paul II's papacy. In his 1984 Good Friday apostolic letter he wrote: "The Jewish people who live in the State of Israel, and who preserve in that land such precious testimonies to their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquillity that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society."[37]

Ten years later the state of Israel and the Holy See exchanged ambassadors and reached another significant landmark with the pontiff's pilgrimage to Israel in 2000 and the iconic image of his visit to the Western Wall. His visit and Benedict XVI's in 2009 helped mark the final repudiation of a "theology of perpetual wandering" for the Jewish community on the part of Christianity, which argued against the very possibility of a restored, sovereign Jewish state as part of the punishment Jews incurred for rejecting Jesus and supposedly putting him to death.[38]

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than the state of Israel, she suggests, because the former accords with the traditional stereotype of Jews as a suffering and persecuted minority. Israel, however, challenges this assumption and transforms the victim into a victor. See Eckardt, "The Place of the Jewish State in Christian-Jewish Relations," *European Judaism* 25.1 (Spring 1992) 3–14, esp. 3.

[36] Theodore Herzl, *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. Marvin Lowenthal (New York: Dial, 1956) 429–30.

[37] John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage: Texts on Jews and Judaism, 1979–95*, ed. Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki (New York: Crossroad, 1995) 34.

[38] See John T. Pawlikowski, "The Vatican-Israeli Accords: Their Implications for Catholic Faith and Teaching," in *A Challenge Long Delayed: The Diplomatic Exchange between the Holy* See *and the State of Israel*, ed. Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1996) 10–19.

In the first decade of the 21st century, relations between the Holy See and the state of Israel have become strained, epitomized by the lack of agreement over juridical and tax issues. Occasional bilateral talks have failed to produce agreement over "the fundamental accord" that has been sought since 1993. The majority of the Holy See's religious communities own properties that were purchased in the 19th century, when they were often deserted; today, they are generally surrounded by modern neighborhoods. By virtue of a privilege granted by the Ottoman Empire, and then upheld throughout the British Mandate, these communities were exempted from taxes. Today, there is disagreement about whether these communities should continue to benefit from this exemption or pay taxes in Israel.

In 2007, the papal nuncio, Archbishop Antonio Franco, threatened not to attend the annual Holocaust Memorial day event at Yad Vashem, Israel's main Holocaust museum, unless the museum agreed to remove or rewrite a caption of Pope Pius XII that he found offensive. Although he changed his mind after the controversy became public, Franco's action was a sign of a chill in the relationship. Benedict XVI's 2007 *motu proprio*, *Summorum pontificum*, on the expanded use of the 1962 Latin Missal (containing phraseology offensive to Jews), also raised concerns in Israel, and the controversy over Holocaust-denier Bishop Richard Williamson, in 2009 resulted in the Israeli chief rabbis temporarily breaking off formal ties with the Vatican.

Further tensions were raised in the pursuit of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel among some churches, primarily Protestant but with support from Roman Catholics. When churches adopt initiatives directed against Israel, a country whose policies they sometimes liken to the former apartheid regime in South Africa, many see these as attempts to delegitimize Israel's very existence. They recall the long-standing Arab boycott that was designed to undermine Israel's economy and existence, and that still prevails to no small extent. The fact that the churches rarely act similarly regarding human rights abuses and state violence in many other places in the world adds to the strain.

In Israel itself, there have been signs of a positive shift in Israeli Jewish attitudes to Christianity. To see the pope at Yad Vashem demonstrating solidarity, weeping at the suffering of the Jewish people; to learn that he had helped save Jews during the Holocaust and that subsequently, as a priest, he had returned Jewish children adopted by Christians to their Jewish families; and to see the head of the Catholic Church placing a prayer of atonement for the sins of Christians against Jews between the stones of the Western Wall—all these scenes had a profound effect on many Israelis.

A survey of attitudes in 2009 showed that 75% of Israeli Jews do not see Christians as missionaries and are not bothered by encountering a Christian

wearing a cross. Furthermore, 41% stated that Christianity is the religion closest to Judaism, with 32% according Islam second place.[39]

In 1999, The Center for the Study of Christianity was founded at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and the work of interreligious institutes such as the Hartman Institute and the Elijah School have also been influential. Even some in the religious Settler Movement have been motivated to engage with Christians as potential mediators in the struggle between the spiritual children of Isaac and those of Ishmael. One example is Shlomo Riskin's Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation in Efrat, which is primarily aimed at Evangelical Christians.

Nevertheless, the situation of Christians in the Holy Land is awkward and a five-year Synod that started in 1995 involving the Catholic churches of the Holy Land, comprising not only the Roman Catholic Church but also the Oriental churches makes clear that the local church does not have the same starting point as its European counterparts, for it sees itself as free of antisemitic practice, policy, and the responsibility for the fate of European Jewry. David Neuhaus, a Jesuit living in Jerusalem, explains further:

> Christians live as a minority face to face with a Jewish majority (those in Israel), under Israeli military occupation (those in the West Bank) or confronting a regional economic and military power (those in Jordan and Gaza). This is an absolutely unique historical situation. Nowhere else in the world do Christians experience directly the sovereignty and power of a Jewish polity and never in history have Christians experienced Jewish sovereignty and power (these only having been reestablished in 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel). This unique situation must inform dialogue that takes place in this land between local Christians and Jews, predominantly in Israel. For many of the Holy Land faithful, unfortunately, the Jew is often first and foremost a policeman, a soldier or a settler.[40]

Thus, a key factor to reckon with is Christian status as a minority in the Middle East. Not only are Christians a minority within the state of Israel—approximately 2% of the Israeli population are Christian—they are also a minority within the Arab minority. Purely on the psychological level, their church representatives feel under pressure. Although integrated in Palestine, Christian Palestinians are clearly concerned at the prospect of the gradual Islamization of the nascent state and of a time when Hamas and other Islamist parties might take over completely. Yet, the Christian Arab and the Muslim Arab, whatever their religious differences might be, live in one society, speak one language, and share one culture. Dialogue with Muslims is sometimes a priority for Christians and in some dioceses it is only the

[39] The survey was carried out by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies and the Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations.

[40] David Neuhaus, S.J., and Jamel Khader, "A Holy Land Context for *Nostra Aetate*," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 1.1 (2005–2006), http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr/article/view/1360.

dialogue with Muslims that is real—in Jordan and Gaza, for example, where there are no Jews.

In addition, there have been occasional violent attacks on Christians and Christian properties by ultra-Orthodox Jews. In the 1970s the attacks were linked to the extremist right-wing party of Meir Kahane, "Kach," which was banned by the government for its overt racism. In 2004, a controversy erupted when some yeshiva students spat at Nourhan Manougian, the Armenian Archbishop of Jerusalem to protest idol worship. Antagonism toward Christians by some ultra-Orthodox Jews and West Bank Settlers has grown, especially since 2010.

Elsewhere in the Middle East the significant reduction in the Christian population (especially from Iraq, but also witness the concerns of Copts today in Egypt) add to feelings of insecurity. Nablus, a city that once had a sizeable Christian population, now has almost none, and in Bethlehem Christians are under pressure. Evangelical Christian Arabs have encountered special problems, against which they are to some extent shielded in Israel.

Divisions between Christians sometimes spill over into acts of violence. For example, fights between Catholic and Greek Orthodox priests in Easter 2005 and Greeks and Armenians in Easter 2008 at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, illustrate an intra-Christian conflict that has marked the history of Christianity in the region since its earliest days. The intervention of the state may formally be decried, but the reluctance of Christian representatives to dialogue among themselves on the difficulties, means that Israeli intervention is also quietly welcomed.

There remains one overarching factor to remember: the danger for Christians and Jews of focusing solely on Israel by, for example, arguing that what was once an interpretation about the nature of the biblical word and promise is now, in the situation of Israel, concretized in a contemporary event. The challenge to Jewish-Christian relations as a result of an emphasis on fulfillment of biblical prophecy can be seen in the writings of some Evangelical Christians as well as fundamentalist Jews. What happened 100 years ago to the Jews outside Israel is considered historically remote compared to biblical events, which are viewed as almost contemporary. The present becomes transfused with biblical language and geography, which leads to the danger of giving metaphysical meaning to geographical places. The fundamentalist may interpret the ownership of the Land of Israel in terms of a divine gift. This creates a great danger of bestowing divine importance on the state of Israel and the vocation of the Jew becomes a dedication to the existence and the restoration of the cosmic state. Thus, the return to the Land is a fulfillment of the divine promise and reflects a return to the original fullness. However, the biblical promises did not define the same borders, and by choosing the widest ones, the fundamentalist abuses the idea of the promise, which is related to the Land.

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

Few biblical concepts are as troubling to theologians as the Christian claim to be the successor covenant people elected by God to replace Israel because of the latter's faithlessness. Known as "substitution theory" or "replacement theology," this is the teaching that, since the time of Jesus, Jews have been replaced by Christians in God's favor, and that all God's promises to the Jewish people have been inherited by the Christians.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews from 2000–2011, has suggested that the term "unabrogated covenant," taken from Paul, should become the starting point for a renewed theology of Judaism. It is not by chance that *NA* bases its reflections on Paul's Letter to the Romans, not on the Letter to the Hebrews. Romans reminds Christians that the Jewish people remain part of the people of God. Paul's attempt to explain the "mystery of Israel" is based on the impossibility for him that the Jewish people as a whole could first have been elected by God and then later displaced. For Paul, God would not simply elect and then reject. As *NA* states:

> Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues [Rom 11:28–29 referenced here]—such is the witness of the Apostle. In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Zeph. 3:9).

The church's election derives from that of Israel, but this does not imply that God's covenant with Israel is broken. Rather, it remains unbroken—irrevocably (Rom 11:29). For Paul, the mystery of Israel is that her rejection and her stumbling do not mean that she ceases to be accepted by God. Rather, Israel allows the Gentiles to participate in the peoplehood of Israel.

Indeed, so strongly does Paul make this point that he offers a severe warning that Gentile Christians should not be haughty or boastful toward unbelieving Jews, much less cultivate evil intent and engage in persecution. His words remained a warning almost totally forgotten by Christians over the centuries, for Jews have been remembered as "enemies," not as "beloved," of God (Rom 11:28), and Christians took to heart Paul's criticisms, forgetting his love for Jews (Rom 9:1-5).

Of course, one could argue that if Jews have not kept faith with God, then God has a perfect right to cast them off. It is interesting that Christians who argue this way have not often drawn the same deduction about Christian faithfulness, which has not been a notable characteristic of the last two millennia. Actually, God seems to have had a remarkable ability to keep faith with both Christians and Jews, when they have not kept faith with God, a point of which Paul is profoundly aware in Romans 9–11. He goes out of

his way to deny claims that God has rejected the chosen people, and asserts that their stumbling does not lead to their fall.

It seems to me that today the Jewish-Christian encounter needs to turn a negative term ("unabrogated [or unrevoked] covenant") into a positive formulation. If God is faithful to the covenant with Israel, then what? This question remains open. To assert that the "old covenant" has not been revoked carries little import, if there is no theological reason for the existence of Judaism after the coming of Jesus Christ.

For their part, Jews might begin with reflecting on the covenant with Noah,[41] the laws of which are an attempt to formulate moral standards without a concomitant demand for conversion to Judaism. As such, they acknowledge the right of peoples to their own formulation of faith provided only that a minimum standard is met.[42] The rejection of idolatry, rather than any doctrinal definition of God, is the foundation of Noahide laws and may provide a basis on which to affirm the theological and existential validity of Christianity.

There are other Jewish resources such as the concept of "Righteous Gentiles," referring to Rabbi Joshua ben Hananya, who propounded the view, later generally accepted, that "the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come."[43] Jews might also turn to the rabbinic principles of *tiqqun 'olam* ("establishing the world aright"), *darkhe shalom* ("the ways of peace"), and *qiddush Hashem* ("sanctifying God's name," that is, behaving in such a manner as to bring credit to God). Each can be brought to govern the Jewish relationship to Christianity and seeks to create the "theological space" for Christians while remaining faithful to Torah, similar perhaps to Paul's reflection in Romans 9–11, which also seeks to create "theological space" for Jews while remaining faithful to Christ.

From a Christian perspective, it is generally acknowledged that supersessionism needs to be challenged to repudiate the belief that Christ's coming entails the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with Israel. Alternatives to supersessionism concur in affirming the ongoing validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people, but beyond that alternatives vary widely among themselves. Some emphasize the relative independence of Christianity and Judaism as different, but equally valid, appropriations of a

[41] Tosefta *Avoda Zara* 9.4: "The children of Noah (that is, people other than Israel) were given seven commandments: Laws (i.e. to establish courts of justice), (the prohibitions of) Idolatry, Blasphemy, Sexual Immorality, Bloodshed, Theft, and the Limb from a Living Animal."

[42] See Rabbi Johanan of Tiberias (third century CE): "Whoever denies idolatry is called a Jew" (BT *Megilla* 13a).

[43] Tosefta, *Sanhedrin* 13: Judaism does not have an equivalent to Cyprian of Carthage's "*extra ecclesiam non est salus*" (256 CE: Epistola 73.21, s. Cypriani ad Jubaianum, *De haereticis baptizandis*, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 3, cols. 1123A–B).

common religious inheritance rooted in biblical Israel ("two covenant" approaches). Others interpret the church and the Jewish people as interdependent players in a common history of salvation ("one covenant" approaches).[44] Clearly, the rejection of replacement theology entails some affirmation of the continuing validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people. But Christians differ on the implications for other central Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the universality of the church's mission.

In their search for a replacement of replacement theology, Christian theologians may do well to reflect on a speech by John Paul II in 1997:

> This people has been called and led by God, creator of heaven and earth. Their existence is not a mere natural or cultural happening. . . . It is a supernatural one. This people continues in spite of everything to be the people of the covenant, and, despite human infidelity, the Lord is faithful to his covenant.[45]

Giant strides may have been made, but we are talking of a dynamic and relentless process. We will never be able to sit back and say, "The work is done. The agenda is completed." So, despite great advances, Jewish-Christian relations still face major challenges as well as opportunities. Rising to meet these challenges requires a concerted and collaborative effort: it is a joint covenantal endeavor.

[44] See Philip Cunningham et al., eds., *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). I would like to thank Professor Cunningham for his comments on a draft of this article.

[45] The quotation is from *Documentation Catholique* 94 (1997) 1003.