

One Text, Two Declarations: Theological Trajectories from *Nostra Aetate*

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Reid Locklin

University of Toronto, Canada

Abstract

Nostra Aetate inaugurated a new era of interreligious dialogue in the Catholic Church, but the theological foundation it provided for such dialogue is complex. This article traces two different heuristic trajectories: a universalist trajectory revealed in *Nostra Aetate* 1–2 and reflected in the work of Bernard Lonergan, and a particularist trajectory in *Nostra Aetate* 4 and the work of Gregory Baum. Once distinguished, these two trajectories reveal a fruitful tension at the heart of the church’s new engagement with other religious paths.

Keywords

Gregory Baum, comparative theology, interreligious dialogue, Bernard Lonergan, *Nostra Aetate*, theology of religions

In his magisterial study *From Enemy to Brother*, historian John Connelly traces the assiduous work of such converts as Karl Thieme and John Österreicher to transform Catholic attitudes towards Jews and Judaism from 1933 to the 1965 promulgation of the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*, “The Declaration on the Church’s Relation to Non-Christian Religions.”¹ Towards the end of this volume, he offers a short, insightful observation about this document’s final shape and, in particular, its universalist view:

1. John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2012). *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 1965) (hereafter cited in text as *NA*), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

Corresponding author:

Reid Locklin, University of Toronto, 81 St. Mary St., Toronto, ON M5S1J4, Canada.
Email: reid.locklin@utoronto.ca

In recognizing that special blessings rested upon the Jews, the universal church spoke in terms of one people's particular identity, but five decades later we see that recognizing the particular also led to a new appreciation for the universal. Without its need to speak about the Jews after the Holocaust, the church might not have spoken about other non-Christian faiths. But having spoken about the Jews, it could not remain silent on the others . . . By answering the question "Who are the Jews?" the Catholic Church had found its way across previously insurmountable boundaries to tolerance, to recognizing that God extends grace to all humans.²

This elegant expression of the opening presented by *Nostra Aetate* to all persons and diverse religious traditions of the world is, interestingly, somewhat belied by the treatment of the document in Connelly's own book. In his chapter on the Second Vatican Council, Connelly nearly always refers to the document under its draft title *Decretum de Iudaeis* and makes only passing reference to its final, "reasonable" inclusion of other traditions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.³ For Connelly—for good reason, considering the focus of his historical study—*Nostra Aetate* was and remains a document addressed primarily to the Jewish people and the question of Jewish–Christian relations.

More interestingly for my purposes in this essay, Connelly is far from alone on this score. In fact, as I will argue below, one can discern at least two different heuristic trajectories in this document and its subsequent reception. One of these trajectories—which I label "universalist"—can be discerned in *Nostra Aetate* 1–2 and also in the post-conciliar work of philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904–84). A second, "particularist" trajectory emerges, in turn, in the text of *Nostra Aetate* 4 and in the post-conciliar writings of Lonergan's younger contemporary Gregory Baum (1923–). When *Nostra Aetate* is read as two distinct declarations, and two contrary trajectories of interpretation, I suggest, this one conciliar teaching manifests a creative tension at the heart of the church's new attitude and new relations with religious others.

The argument proceeds in four movements. In a first, brief section, I establish the state of the question by noting two rival interpretations of *Nostra Aetate* in the contemporary period, one of which locates the hermeneutical key of the document in the particular account of Jewish–Christian relations in *Nostra Aetate* 4 and a second that finds such a key instead in the more universalist vision of *Nostra Aetate* 1–2. In the two subsequent sections, which form the heart of the argument, I contend that this apparent difference of emphasis reflects a deeper division between two contrary theological approaches to interreligious dialogue and engagement. These two approaches are developed first with reference to the historical development of *Nostra Aetate* itself and then with reference to selected post-conciliar writings by Lonergan and Baum. Though it would be too strong to claim a definitive causal connection, particularly in the case of Lonergan, one can nevertheless discern a close correspondence between distinct patterns in the conciliar text and the distinct proposals of Lonergan and Baum—as well as the further theological development or these patterns. In a final, concluding section I explore some implications of these two theological trajectories, once distinguished, to

2. Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother* 299.

3. *Ibid.* 239–72 at 163.

understanding the relationship between the contemporary disciplines of theology of religions and comparative theology, as well as the Catholic Church's broader theological engagement with the teachings and practices of other religious paths.

Intra-textual Tension and a Conflict of Interpretations

There is no disputing the fact that *Nostra Aetate* originated as a document on Jews and Judaism. In 1967 one of its drafters—none other than Gregory Baum himself—could declare that *Nostra Aetate* 4 represents “the core of the Declaration” in its final form.⁴ A relatively recent collected volume takes this insight a step further, tracing, in an appendix entitled “Drafts Leading to the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*,” the development from the 1961 *Decretum* to *Nostra Aetate* 4, without even passing reference to the rest of the document in its final form.⁵ In his 2012 essay “‘The Old Unrevoked Covenant’ and ‘Salvation for All Nations in Christ,’” Christian Rutishauser transposes such a textual focus into a theological key, setting *Nostra Aetate* 4 somewhat against the inclusive, more universalist vision articulated in *Nostra Aetate* 2 and elsewhere in the conciliar teachings.⁶ God’s gift of Torah and the Sinai covenant, he argues, is categorically different from mere “natural religion” and “human striving for transcendence” in other religions; with the Christ event, this covenantal relationship is reconfigured, transformed, and extended to the Gentiles—and only to them.⁷ The transformation in Catholic teaching on other religious paths at the Second Vatican Council consisted primarily if not exclusively in the recognition of the continuing validity of the Sinai covenant for the Jewish people. Though other conciliar teachings may offer a modestly more generous assessment of traditions such as Buddhism or Islam, their adherents’ status has not been fundamentally revised: they are all equally

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4. Gregory Baum, “The Conciliar Statement on the Jews,” in *Ecumenical Theology*, No. 2, ed. Gregory Baum (New York: Paulist, 1967) 262–72 at 262.
 5. Philip A. Cunningham, Norbert J. Hofmann, and Joseph Sievers, eds., *The Catholic Church and the Jewish People: Recent Reflections from Rome* (New York: Fordham University, 2007) 191–200. This narrow, focused approach has a long and distinguished history. See, e.g., Augustin Cardinal Bea, *The Church and the Jewish People: A Commentary on the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, trans. Philip Loretz (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966); John M. Österreicher, *The New Encounter between Christians and Jews* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986); Johannes Cardinal Willbrands, *Church and Jewish People: New Considerations* (New York: Paulist, 1992); Michael Attridge, ed., *Jews and Catholics Together: Celebrating the Legacy of Nostra Aetate* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2007); Neville Lamdan and Alberto Melloni, eds., *Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish–Christian Relations* (Münster: Lit, 2007); and especially Miikka Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions: According to the Second Vatican Council* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).
 6. Christian Rutishauser, “‘The Old Unrevoked Covenant’ and ‘Salvation for All Nations in Christ,’” in *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships*, ed. Philip A. Cunningham et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) 229–50 at 230.
 7. *Ibid.* 233–39.

members of “the nations,” Gentiles to whom Christ has newly extended the covenant of Israel and God’s unique gift of grace.

At the same time, one can also find treatments of *Nostra Aetate* that seem to take precisely the opposite approach, privileging the treatments of *Nostra Aetate* 1 and 2, particularly the programmatic statement that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing of those things which are true and holy in these religions” (*NA* 2). If there is a “core” to the document, these other interpreters imply, it is precisely those statements that signal the church’s broader shift toward an “inclusivist” theology of religions and its revised evaluation of all other religions, of which Judaism is merely the most intimate example.⁸ In his popular survey text *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, for example, Paul Knitter locates the primary significance of *Nostra Aetate* in its universalism: “For the first time in church history, the Declaration on Religions offers specific descriptions of just how each of the major historical religions seeks to respond to ‘those profound mysteries of the human condition.’”⁹ The document’s special focus on Judaism appears only briefly in Knitter’s account, as a preface and pretext for its final, more properly inclusive scope.¹⁰

This too seems a plausible interpretation. Certainly, if one reads the declaration as one would read most other texts, one would look for its interpretative key closer to the beginning of the text than to its middle. If the history of interpretation of *Nostra Aetate* privileges *Nostra Aetate* 4, we might say, its literary structure tends to privilege *Nostra Aetate* 1–2.

In this essay, I propose to address this point of interpretive tension by suggesting that we can plausibly read *Nostra Aetate* as offering not one, but two theological trajectories, each with its own distinctive approach, emphases, and subsequent reception. These trajectories I label with the broad terms “universalist” and “particularist,” understood here as heuristic structures rather than as fixed ontological or epistemological positions.¹¹ I attempt to locate the two trajectories, first, in the document itself and, only thereafter, in selected post-conciliar writings of Bernard Lonergan and Gregory Baum. In doing so, I enter the murky but still animated debates around the “interpretation of the council,”

8. Examples of this approach abound. For simplicity, we can adduce three: Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002) 59–64; Paul F. Knitter, “Bridge or Boundary? Vatican II and Other Religions,” in *Vatican II: Forty Years Later* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006) 261–82; and Jeannine Hill Fletcher, “Responding to Religious Difference: Conciliar Perspectives,” in *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations*, ed. Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parella (New York: Oxford University, 2006) 267–81. A similar approach is taken by Gerald O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), albeit with a wider focus on the teaching of the Council as a whole and with the specific purpose of correcting the too-narrow approach of Ruokanen in *Catholic Doctrine*.

9. Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003) 76.

10. *Ibid.* 75–76.

11. Readers familiar with debates around the theology of religions will recognize “particularist” as a term employed by a number of interpreters to classify one major approach to religious pluralism, including comparative theologians and some postliberal interpreters. See the discussions in Knitter, *Introducing* 173–237; Terrence W. Tilley, ed., *Religious*

albeit focusing not so much on the hermeneutics of continuity or discontinuity with previous tradition as on an intra-textual tension within just one document.¹²

The Two Trajectories of *Nostra Aetate*

The story of *Nostra Aetate*, from the initial discussions of the newly created Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in 1960 to the document's final promulgation on October 28, 1965, is a vivid tale, full of drama and political intrigue.¹³

Diversity and the American Experience: A Theological Approach (New York: Continuum, 2007) 110–24; and Paul Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions* (London: SCM, 2010) 146–96. Though, as will become clear, there are strong affinities between these “particularists” and the second trajectory I discern in Vatican II, I intend in my use of these two terms to designate broader patterns of interpretation. Though these patterns have significant implications for the theology of religions project, neither corresponds directly with one or another position in the debate.

12. On the question of intertextual interpretation of the Council, see the very helpful discussion in Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist, 2004) esp. 40–48. The literature on the hermeneutics of the Council is legion. Massimo Faggioli surveys major trends in “Vatican II: The History and the Narratives,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012) 749–67, doi:10.1177/004056391207300401; and Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist, 2012). Other useful recent appraisals include John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2008); Kristen Colberg, “The Hermeneutics of Vatican II: Reception, Authority and Debate over the Council’s Interpretation,” *Horizons* 38 (2011) 230–52, doi:10.1017/S0360966900008148; Grant Kaplan, “Vatican II as a Constitutional Text of Faith,” *Horizons* 41 (2014) 1–21, doi:10.1017/hor.2014.2; and the essays gathered in David G. Schultenover, ed., *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2007).
13. For convenience, this brief account of the history of the text follows the broad outlines established in Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate, Rediscovering Vatican II* (New York: Paulist, 2005) 125–28; and Elena Procario-Foley, “Heir or Orphan? Theological Evolution and Devolution before and after *Nostra Aetate*,” in Madges, *Vatican II* 310–15. More comprehensive accounts of this development are available in John M. Österreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 3:1–136; Österreicher, *New Encounter*, 103–298; Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak, eds., *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995–2006) esp. 3:257–490; 4:135–93, 546–59; 5:211–21; Roman A. Siebenrock, “Theologischer Kommentar über die Haltung der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen,” in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, ed. Peter Hünermann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Freiburg: Herder, 2005) 3:633–43; and Thomas Stransky, “The Genesis of *Nostra Aetate*: An Insider’s Story,” in Lamdan and Melloni, *Nostra Aetate* 29–53. Earlier versions of the argument in this section have been previously published in Reid B. Locklin, “Parsing *Nostra Aetate*: Vatican II and the Multiple Foundations of Interreligious Dialogue,” *Newman Rambler* 10, no. 1 (October 2013) 15–19; and Reid B. Locklin, “The Two *Nostra Aetates*: Origins, Receptions, Possibilities,” *Eastern Journal of Dialogue and Culture* 6, no. 2 (December 2013) 58–73.

The first draft of a document on Jews and Judaism was created during the preparatory period and submitted to the Central Preparatory Commission of the Second Vatican Council in early 1962, but it was withdrawn from consideration in June of the same year, due largely to the objections of some Arab governments and perceived political implications in Western Asia.¹⁴ It was presented to the Council Fathers for the first time in November 1963 as the fourth chapter of the draft schema on Christian ecumenism. Not having been accepted for discussion as part of this schema, it went through at least three further drafts: (1) an appendix to the Decree on Ecumenism, somewhat broadened to include a condemnation of religious discrimination and brief mention of Islam and other religious teachings; (2) a separate draft declaration, presented and debated in September 1964; and (3) a revised declaration with five major sections, debated and accepted in principle by the Council Fathers in November 1964, adopted by the Council on October 14–15, 1965, and promulgated some two weeks later.

This final declaration, as already noted, includes five major sections. Of these, only section 4, on Jews and Judaism, can be traced to a definite point of origin in the preparatory period: namely, Pope John XXIII's request to Cardinal Augustin Bea on September 18, 1960 and its subsequent inclusion in the agenda of the Secretariat on Unity.¹⁵ Various motives have been suggested for this papal initiative, from Pope John's personal experience as apostolic delegate to Turkey during World War II to the various interventions of the Biblical Institute of Rome, the US Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies and the Apeldoorn working group.¹⁶ No doubt Pope John's historic June 3, 1960 meeting with the French historian Jules Isaac (1877–1963), author of *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism*, played a pivotal role.¹⁷ Whatever the cause, one thing can be said for certain: Jewish–Catholic relations, the

14. On the political dimensions of these developments, see especially Albero Melloni, "Nostra Aetate, 1965–2005," in Lamdan and Melloni, eds., *Nostra Aetate* 9–20 at 14–15; and Michael Attridge, "The Struggle for *Nostra Aetate*: The 'Quaestione Ebraica' from 1960–62: Issues and Influences," in *La Théologie Catholique entre Intransigeance et Renouveau: La Réception des Mouvements Préconciliaires à Vatican II*, ed. Gilles Routhier, Philippe J. Roy, and Karim Schelkens (Louvain-La-Neuve: Collège Érasme, 2011) 213–30. An English translation of the full text of the initial *Quaestiones de Iudaeis*, dated November 1961, is available as an appendix in Attridge, *Jews and Catholics Together* 166–76.

15. Bea, *Church and the Jewish People* 22; Siebenrock, "Theologischer Kommentar" 634–35.

16. See Procario-Foley, "Heir or Orphan?" 309–10, and especially the discussion in Österreicher, "Declaration" 1–17.

17. Thomas Stransky quotes a confidential memo from the pope's private secretary to the effect that "it never entered Pope John XXIII's mind that the Council ought to be occupied also with the Jewish question," until his meeting with Isaac. Stransky, "Nostra Aetate" 32. See also Attridge, "Struggle for *Nostra Aetate*" 215–16; Österreicher, *New Encounter* 104–8; Mary C. Boys, "What *Nostra Aetate* Inaugurated: A Conversion to the 'Providential Mystery of Otherness,'" *Theological Studies* 74 (2013) 73–104 at 80–81, doi:10.1177/004056391307400104; and Marco Morselli, "Jules Isaac and the Origins of *Nostra Aetate*," in Lamdan and Melloni, eds., *Nostra Aetate* 21–28.

specific subject of *Nostra Aetate* 4, were indisputably part of the agenda of the Second Vatican Council before the bishops gathered for their first meeting in 1962.

By contrast, the church's relations with other religions, the subject of *Nostra Aetate* 1–3, emerged only slowly from the Council floor. Perhaps the most well-known aspect of this narrative was the opposition to the declaration by many Eastern Patriarchs, led by the Melkite Maximus IV Saigh, ostensibly reflecting concerns that a document on the Jews without reference to Islam would render the Christians of Western Asia vulnerable to persecution.¹⁸ But this was not the only argument behind the enlargement of the declaration. Paul Pulikkan in particular has brought out the decisive role of a number of Indian bishops who raised questions of interreligious dialogue in the preparatory period and in the earlier discussion of the schema on the church,¹⁹ and who resisted a special focus not only on Judaism, but also on Islam.²⁰ It was perhaps Bishop Fortunato Da Veiga Coutinho who argued most forcefully for a Catholic engagement with what he called the “wider ecumenism,” which would bring to light the truths of Hinduism and other great traditions of the world.²¹ In 1963, yet another voice, the Italian Cardinal Ruffino, added an explicitly evangelical agenda to the mix, asking whether “if a special chapter is added on the Jews, why not speak in it of the very numerous adherents of the other religions? The latter are sometimes not further removed from Catholics than Jews and Protestants and, according to missionaries, quite often they open their hearts more readily to the faith.”²² One could plausibly challenge the motives behind every one of these various interventions. Regardless of one's position on such issues, however, one thing is certain: the question of the church and non-Christian religions, treated as a whole, emerged very differently than did the question of the church's relation to Jews and Judaism.²³

Further evidence of the relative autonomy of these two major units of *Nostra Aetate* can also be found in the debates that led up to their eventual adoption by the Council. On November 20, 1964, the draft declaration was accepted in principle through three successive votes: one on sections 1–3 as a block, a second on sections 4–5 and a third on the document as a whole.²⁴ At the final vote in 1965, moreover, the issues of greatest controversy were specifically different for each of these two major units. A document of the conservative coalition *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*, distributed on October 11, 1965, accepted most elements of *Nostra Aetate* 4 with minor amendments, while severely criticizing the “comparativist ideology” of 1–3.²⁵ The strongest opposition to

18. See Baum, “Conciliar Statement” 268–71; Paul Pulikkan, *Indian Church at Vatican II: A Historico-Theological Study of the Indian Participation in the Second Vatican Council* (Trichur: Marymatha Major Seminary, 2001) 363–64; and Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* 4:137–52, 175–77, 546–54.

19. See Pulikkan, *Indian Church* 109, 236–37.

20. *Ibid.* 364–68.

21. *Ibid.* 314–15.

22. Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* 3:269.

23. See especially the discussion in Österreicher, *New Encounter* 219–26.

24. See Österreicher, “Declaration” 100.

25. Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* 5:213–14.

NA 4, on the other hand, related to the historic curse of “deicide” on the Jewish people, and came both from conservatives who objected to the apparent change in church teaching and from progressives who wished for a more explicit disavowal.²⁶

Arising as they did from different origins, proceeding from different principles, and thus generating different controversies, it may perhaps come as no surprise that these two major units were implemented in distinct ways.²⁷ The declaration calls for “dialogues” (*colloquia*) not once but twice: once at the conclusion of *Nostra Aetate* 2 and a second time in the middle of *Nostra Aetate* 4. That these two dialogues have their own distinctive goals and character is revealed by the fact that they were entrusted to two entirely different Vatican bodies. The Secretariat for Non-Christians, first suggested by Bishop Coutinho in 1963,²⁸ was instituted by Paul VI in 1964 and eventually renamed as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1988. The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, on the other hand, was instituted separately, initially founded in 1966 as a special office within the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and subsequently elevated to the status of a commission in 1974.

At one level, of course, it is no great surprise to discover that the church’s relation to Judaism is different from the church’s relationship with other religious traditions. Once one recognizes the clear distinction between *Nostra Aetate* 1–3 and *Nostra Aetate* 4–5, however, each major unit can then be read as a coherent whole, with its own interpretative trajectory. The latter, historically earlier trajectory builds its argument from the particular to the universal, from the scriptural narrative of salvation to its consequences in the contemporary life of the church. The Council Fathers begin by reflecting on the spiritual link that unites the “people of the new covenant” with the “descendants of Abraham” (NA 4.1), recognizing the Jewish roots of Christian faith and election in the Jewish patriarchs and prophets, the earliest apostles and above all Christ himself (NA 4.2–3). In the core of the section, the bishops call for “biblical and theological studies” and “friendly dialogues” (NA 4.5), motivated above all by the conviction, drawn from the apostle Paul, that

the Jews still remain very dear to God, whose gift and call are without regret. Together with the prophets and the same apostle, the church awaits the day known only to God on which all peoples will call upon the Lord with one voice and “will serve him with one arm” (Zeph 3:9). (NA 4.4)

Though this programmatic statement begins with the election of historic Israel, it concludes with a vision of all humankind. So also, after rejecting collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus and deploring anti-Semitism in all its forms (NA 4.6–7), the bishops conclude with a proclamation of “the cross of Christ as the sign of God’s universal love and the source of all grace” (NA 4.8) and, in the declaration’s final section,

26. See *ibid.* 5:216–21.

27. This reception and implementation is outlined by Cassidy in two distinct sections, entitled “Relations with Non-Christian Religions, Other than Judaism” and “Catholic–Jewish Relations,” respectively. Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue* 132–224.

28. See Pulikkan, *Indian Church* 316.

a condemnation of all forms of discrimination as “foreign to the mind of Christ” and a stark contradiction of the universal fatherhood of God (NA 5).

Read on its own, as a separate work, the theological trajectory of *Nostra Aetate* 1–3 largely inverts that of *Nostra Aetate* 4–5, starting with the universal and moving to the particular. Whereas *Nostra Aetate* 4 begins with the specific, historic emergence of Christianity from early Judaism, *Nostra Aetate* 1 begins with an appeal to modern globalization, as well as the desire for the church to promote “unity and charity,” as motivations for the Council to seek what “human beings have in common” (NA 1.1). The bishops go on to describe what they will call the “deep religious sense” of humankind (NA 2.1), supported by theological convictions about the shared origin and destiny of all persons in God (NA 1.2), by widely shared existential questions (NA 1.2), and by a very brief phenomenology of Hinduism, Buddhism, and “other religions” (NA 2.1). From this broad foundation, they articulate yet another programmatic statement:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of those things which are true and holy in these religions. It regards with respect those ways of acting and living and those precepts and teachings which, though often at variance with what it holds and expounds, frequently reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens everyone . . . (NA 2.2)

In some contrast to the affirmation of God’s irrevocable “gift and call” to the Jewish people in *Nostra Aetate* 4, this important statement does not draw directly from the Christian Scriptures, but from a philosophical trope culled from the early apologists. Only after this broad, inclusive proclamation, moreover, does the document move toward the particular, encouraging Christians to enter into “dialogues and cooperation” with particular religious others and actively to preserve and promote “those spiritual and moral good things as well as the socio-cultural values” found among them (NA 2.3). In *Nostra Aetate* 3, finally, such a process of constructive engagement is fleshed out and further illustrated with reference to a single, particular tradition with its own particular, complex and controverted history with Christianity: Islam. It seems only natural to continue on to the treatment of Judaism in *Nostra Aetate* 4 as a further, albeit still more difficult and profound, example of the engagement already defended on broadly universalist terms in *Nostra Aetate* 1–2.

Importantly, these two theological trajectories overlap with one another on many points—not least, the bishops’ all-important preference for dialogue rather than censure or condemnation as the appropriate mode of engagement with religious others.²⁹ Yet, the grounds for such dialogue, and its concrete, constructive way of proceeding, would seem to be different in each case. One, aptly symbolized by Paul VI’s pilgrimage to the Holy Land in January 1964,³⁰ plunges deep into the heart of Christian faith

29. John W. O’Malley has argued forcefully that the key transformation at Vatican II concerned a change in genre from a more legislative idiom to a more invitational and dialogical style. See especially his “Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?” in Schultenover, *Vatican II* 52–91, and *What Happened at Vatican II*.

30. See Österreicher, “Declaration” 56–59, and Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II* 3:339–45.

to rediscover its own proclamation anew, and only subsequently draws conclusions from this reexamination, first for the Jews and then for all human beings. In the other, perhaps similarly symbolized by Paul VI's travel to Bombay in December of the same year,³¹ dialogue proceeds from broader, more phenomenological convictions about the unity of all humankind, convictions which are only subsequently applied in practice and in diverse relationships with particular religious others. Depending upon how one interprets the history, this latter, universalist approach represents either the full blossoming of what began as a mere "mustard seed" in the decree on the Jews, as Cardinal Bea suggested in an address to the Council on November 20, 1964,³² or something more like a prophylactic or NFL linebacker, protecting the "gem" of the declaration's "Jewish theme intact."³³

Even if one refuses to choose between these interpretations—between a unique focus on Judaism and a genuine interest in what may unite Christians with all religious persons and paths—the specific order of each inquiry still merits attention. Gilles Routhier has helpfully recommended a problematic reading of the conciliar documents, taking note of Council Fathers' "posing of problems and the method used in their treatment."³⁴ The problem posed in *Nostra Aetate* 1 and indeed the document as a whole in its final, "canonical" form³⁵ is about what persons hold in common, and the particulars of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and even Judaism emerge as ever-clearer specifications of these universals. The problem posed by *Nostra Aetate* 4 and the document as a whole in the history of its composition, on the other hand, asks questions of the church's particular relationship with Judaism and, in and from this unique relationship, discovers what one scholar calls a "sacrament of each and every otherness."³⁶ Or, as John M. Österreicher puts the matter, "The whole Declaration makes it clear that all singularity exists for the sake of

31. See especially Österreicher, "Declaration" 88–89 and Pulikkan, *Indian Church* 448–58. Österreicher suggests that the visit served more than a symbolic role, writing that the "idea of giving the Declaration on the Jews a catholic framework, encompassing the earth, was tremendously advanced by the Pope's plan to attend the Eucharistic Congress at Bombay after the Third Session." Österreicher, *New Encounter* 222.

32. Bea, *Church and the Jewish People* 166.

33. Stransky, "*Nostra Aetate*" 52. Such a protective role is also suggested by a handwritten letter by Cardinal Bea written ten days after his address to the Council, where he argues that, "As the texts on Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims have nothing to do with politics, so the passage on the Jews is far from any political interpretation." The letter is presented by Anarita Caponara, "Papers of the Secretariat for Christian Unity on *Nostra Aetate*," in Lamdan and Melloni, eds., *Nostra Aetate* 55–62 at 59.

34. Gilles Routhier, "Vatican II: Relevance and Future" 549.

35. Here I am drawing on the distinction between "canonical criticism" and "source criticism" as two complementary approaches to interpreting conciliar texts. See Kaplan, "Vatican II" 18.

36. Melloni, "*Nostra Aetate*" 20. See also the further development of this theme in Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002) esp. 35–45.

universality, all separation for the sake of communality. Israel's election, too, is directed toward the all-embracing kingdom of grace."³⁷

As should be obvious by now, both of these trajectories—universalist and particularist—are concerned to bring together universal and particular, but they do so differently, by posing different questions and following a different heuristic method. These two approaches may not be contradictory, but they are clearly different. Here as in so many places, it may be important to distinguish, so as to unite. To see this clearly, I suggest, we can extend our view beyond the conciliar teachings to their subsequent reception.

After the Council: The Two Trajectories in Lonergan and Baum

The history of the reception of *Nostra Aetate* and any of the Council texts is by necessity more complex and varied than the history of their composition. For the purposes of my argument here, I restrict myself to a comparison of just two post-conciliar thinkers, both of them familiar to readers of this journal: the Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan and his younger contemporary Gregory Baum. Both were intimately aware of the workings of the Council. Baum was a *peritus* assigned to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the drafting commission for *Nostra Aetate* towards the beginning of his career, whereas Lonergan was teaching at Gregorian University during this time, closer to the end of his teaching career—but at the cusp of his most important insights. Both also took up the task of implementing the council's teaching, emerging as two of Canada's premier theologians in the post-conciliar period. It would be stretching the evidence to claim that their work stems exclusively or, in Lonergan's case, even primarily from the text of *Nostra Aetate*. Taken together, they nevertheless serve to illustrate the continuing relevance of the particularist and universalist trajectories and the creative tension that they represent in the church's ongoing response to the declaration's call for interreligious dialogue and collaboration.

We can begin our comparison with Lonergan and Baum's respective visions of the Second Vatican Council as a whole. Both interpret the Council as the Catholic Church's response to its new, distinctively modern historical context, and both offer this interpretation from within the broadly transcendentalist tradition of Maurice Blondel, Henri De Lubac, and Karl Rahner.³⁸ Yet, as we might expect, these themes are unfolded

37. Österreicher, *New Encounter* 227.

38. On Lonergan's deep affinities with Rahner, see especially Matthew Petillo, "The Universalist Philosophy of Religious Experience and the Challenges of Post-Modernism," *Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010) 946–61, doi:10.1111/j.1468–2265.2010.00603.x. Though he identifies himself more with Augustine than Thomas, Baum nevertheless also adopts the idiom of self-transcendence and invokes the legacy of Blondel, De Lubac, and Rahner as importance influences on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and his own intellectual development. See, e.g., Gregory Baum, "The Self-Understanding of the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II," in *The Church in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of James Sutherland Thomson*, ed. James Sutherland Thomson, George Johnston, and

differently in each case. In his 1968 essay “Theology in Its New Context,” for example, Lonergan argues that the church’s “new context” consists primarily in “new cultural ideals and norms,” particularly the rise of modern science, the shift from deductive to empirical methods of study, and the gradual erosion of a “classicist model” of “universality and permanence.”³⁹ All of these developments require an acceptance of change, cultural pluralism, and personal autonomy. Thus, according to Lonergan, the church’s response at Vatican II—its *aggiornamento*—consists in more than merely the project of “investigating, ordering, expounding, communicating divine revelation”; it must open into a mediation “of God’s meaning to the whole of human affairs.”⁴⁰ And this requires a universal call, issued to all persons, to cultivate ever-greater personal authenticity: fidelity, that is, of diverse individuals to their dynamic, unrestricted desire to experience and understand the world, to exercise judgment and to pursue a good that is, at its furthest extent, none other than God the divine self.⁴¹ It is this innate orientation of every human person—albeit an orientation initiated and animated by God’s gift of love—on which rests the church’s best hope for renewal.

For Baum, the idiom of this engagement with modernity is cast in a less scientific and more Christocentric idiom. At Vatican II, he suggests, the church moved into a new “ethical horizon” of democracy, human rights, and universal solidarity with suffering humanity.⁴² From this new vantage, to be sure, the church gained insight into the universality of grace and salvation. Nevertheless, this new sensitivity does not flow primarily from the church’s analysis of the cultural context itself; rather, the context functions as a kind of catalyst for a renewed apprehension of its own foundation in Christ. He writes, “It is not in virtue of the unity of human nature, nor in virtue of the incarnation understood as the personal union of two distinct natures, human and divine, but rather in virtue of the once-for-allness of God’s act in the death and resurrection of Jesus that the universality of salvation offered to men [*sic*] is affirmed.”⁴³ For Lonergan, we might say, the bishops of the Council addressed all humanity to recover a shared, universal foundation of human authenticity that manifests itself differently in diverse historical and cultural contexts. Although Baum certainly grants the universality of the council’s vision, he locates this universality less

Wolfgang Roth (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967) 98–101; and, more recently, Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2005) esp. 35–45.

39. Bernard Lonergan, “Theology in Its New Context,” in *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ*, ed. William J.F. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1974) esp. 58–59.

40. *Ibid.* 62.

41. Bernard Lonergan, “*Existenz and Aggiornamento*,” in *Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, CW 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988) 222–31; Bernard Lonergan, “Pope John’s Intention,” in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist, 1985) esp. 233–38.

42. See Baum, *Amazing Church* esp. 26–29.

43. Baum, “Self-Understanding of the Catholic Church” 97.

in the innate constitution of all humankind than in the very particular life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

In these essays, Lonergan and Baum are offering interpretations of the full scope of the Second Vatican Council's teaching, rather than of *Nostra Aetate* in particular. Nevertheless, Lonergan's universalism and Baum's particularist focus on Christ can be read to echo and to exemplify the two patterns of interpretation that emerge from the declaration, as adduced in the previous section of this essay. The distinction between these two trajectories, moreover, gains greater clarity when we turn from these visions of the whole to their respective positions on the relation between Christianity and other religious paths and the theological basis for dialogue.

We can begin with what Lonergan scholar Frederick Crowe called his teacher's "universalist view of religion,"⁴⁴ particularly as this is unfolded in two papers first delivered in the immediate wake of the Council: "Theology in Its New Context," already mentioned, and "The Future of Christianity," from 1969. These two short papers occupy an important position in relation not only to the Council, but also to Lonergan's development of what he termed a "generalized empirical method," beginning with his groundbreaking 1957 work *Insight* and further consolidated in *Method in Theology* in 1972. This method, famously defined in the latter work as "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results,"⁴⁵ attempts to establish theology on a new footing by focusing on the distinctive structure and operations of the inquiring subject. As Lonergan puts the matter in "Theology in Its New Context," a generalized empirical method offers "a foundation that lies not in a set of verbal propositions named first principles, but in a particular, concrete, dynamic reality *generating* knowledge of particular, concrete, dynamic realities."⁴⁶

Central to this method is the experience of intellectual and moral "conversion."⁴⁷ By this term Lonergan refers less to a transfer of religious allegiance than to the personal transformation that occurs as one comes to apprehend the world ever more fully, to judge the truth of things with ever greater clarity and to act in the world ever more responsibly. Since we are social beings, such an ongoing process of personal transformation can and should resonate beyond the merely personal to the wider community and, ideally, from one generation to the next. And this process of transformation is, finally, the deepest meaning of "religion" in all its diverse manifestations:

When conversion is viewed as an ongoing process, at once personal, communal, and historical, it coincides with living religion. For religion is conversion in its preparation, in its occurrence, in its development, in its consequents, and also, alas, in its incompleteness, its failures, its breakdowns, its disintegration. (Ibid. 66–67)

44. Frederick E. Crowe, "Lonergan's Universalist View of Religion," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994) 147–79, <http://bclonergan.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Lonergans-Universalist-View-of-Religion-1.pdf>.

45. Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1971) 8.

46. Lonergan, "Theology in Its New Context" 65, emphasis added.

47. For the discussion that follows, see *ibid.* 65–67.

There is no question that Lonergan was convinced of the truth of Christianity and of the need for reflection on what he terms its “objective statements” concerning God, Christ, divine revelation, and the church (ibid. 67). Yet, its proper starting point—for Lonergan no less than for the drafters of *Nostra Aetate* 1–2—must be what all “human beings have in common” (*NA* 1.1), thematized here as the unrestricted desire to know, to understand, and to love.

This point of comparison between the first major unit of *Nostra Aetate* and Lonergan’s approach to religion and interreligious relations resonates even more strongly when we turn from “Theology in its New Context” to “The Future of Christianity.” In this essay, Lonergan explicitly seeks out that “very profound” and “very dynamic” common ground that “constitutes a basis for dialogue not only among Christians but among the representatives of all the world religions.”⁴⁸ Two primary sources inform his exposition here. On the one hand, drawing on the work of the historian of religions Friedrich Heiler, Lonergan draws out essential features shared by all of the “high” religions, including especially the love of God (ibid. 149–51, 155–56). On the other hand, he gives a thumbnail sketch of the very process of personal conversion outlined above, albeit specified more clearly here in terms of self-transcendence and its final, “crowning point” in unrestricted love (ibid. 151–55). The human person “exists authentically in the measure that [one] succeeds in self-transcendence, and I have found that self-transcendence has both its fulfilment and its enduring ground in holiness, in God’s gift of his love to us” (ibid. 155). This means, of course, that the highest goal of all human life coheres so closely with the highest goal described in all the great religions that their teachings “may be described from a Christian viewpoint as seven effects of God’s gift of his love” (ibid. 156). This heuristic understanding of “religion” in terms of self-transcendence thus represents a firm “bridge over which Christians may walk towards an understanding of non-Christian religions” (ibid. 158). “What distinguishes the Christian,” he concludes, “is not God’s grace, which [one] shares with others, but the mediation of God’s grace through Jesus Christ our Lord” (ibid. 156).

Lonergan nowhere cites *Nostra Aetate* in “The Future of Christianity.” Nevertheless, his approach clearly echoes the heuristic trajectory of the declaration, particularly sections 1–2. Most importantly, his starting point is broadly phenomenological and anthropological. Though scriptural teachings about God, God’s gift of love, and God’s universal salvific will appear at critical junctures and no doubt motivate the entire discussion,⁴⁹ the argument builds on a purportedly universal foundation, available in the teachings of many religions and, more importantly, in the immanent experience of each and every human person. If Lonergan’s conclusions may be more specific and optimistic than *Nostra Aetate* 1–2, the specific structure of his approach would nevertheless seem to be fundamentally similar: to specify those fundamental values

48. Bernard Lonergan, “The Future of Christianity,” in Ryan and Tyrrell, *Second Collection* 149.

49. See ibid. 154–55, and the further discussion in Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View” 159–60, 164.

common to Christianity and other religions as a bridge to dialogue, while also holding fast to what is distinctive. For Lonergan, though its mediation may vary considerably in diverse religious, cultures, and historical periods, the inner core of “religion” as such remains in principle the same.

Several years later, in *Method*, Lonergan specifies the relationship between different religions somewhat more narrowly, albeit in a way that does not substantively depart from the trajectory already established in these essays. In his chapter on “Religion,” after offering an account of religious experience as a “dynamic state of being in love with God,” Lonergan notes that this “inner word” is historically mediated through the “outer word” of religious belief in various cultures and religions of the world.⁵⁰ To this he adds: “But there is a far deeper sense in which a religion may be named historical . . . It is not just God’s gift of his love. There is a personal entrance of God to his people, the advent of God’s word into the world of religious expression. Such was the religion of Israel. Such has been Christianity.”⁵¹ Later, however, he appears to de-privilege Judaism in this scheme:

The ideal basis of society is community, and the community may take its stand on a moral, a religious, or a Christian principle. The moral principle is that [people] individually are responsible for what they make of themselves, but collectively they are responsible for the world in which they live. Such is the basis of universal dialogue. The religious principle is God’s gift of his love, and it forms the basis of dialogue between all representatives of religion. The Christian principle conjoins the inner gift of God’s love with its outer manifestation in Christ Jesus and in those who follow him. Such is the basis of Christian ecumenism.⁵²

This passage moves very explicitly from the universal to the particular, beginning with what is shared by all humankind, continuing to what is shared by diverse religions of the world and continuing to what is particular to Christianity. In so doing, it mirrors the pedagogical movement of *Nostra Aetate* 1–2 and, in so doing, renders the status of Jews and Judaism rather ambiguous, suspended somewhere between the “religious” and “Christian” principles.⁵³

Turning back to the account in “The Future of Christianity,” we can discern other potential pitfalls of the universalist approach—or, at least, pitfalls of taking it as a sole or comprehensive explanatory framework. First of all, we can note in passing that the

50. Lonergan, *Method* 105–19.

51. *Ibid.* 118–19.

52. *Ibid.* 360.

53. Frederick Crowe resolves this point of tension by extending Lonergan’s privileging of Christianity and “the religion of Israel” to many if not all other religions: “Now to say that ‘such was the religion of A and B’ is to speak of a type of religion that may be exemplified not only in A and B but also in C and D and so on . . . As far as these statements go we might conclude either to one word of God spoken to everyone, or to various words of God spoken, one for Judaism, another for Islam, another for Hinduism, and so on.” Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View” 168. This shifts Lonergan’s universalist idiom in a more particularist direction, as we shall see below in the work of Gregory Baum.

mid-century comparativism of Friedrich Heiler and colleagues such as Joseph Kitagawa and Mircea Eliade, and indeed the modern concept of “religion” itself, has in recent years been subjected to a blistering critique, precisely due to its transcendentalism, its universalist presuppositions, and its deep implications in the colonialist project.⁵⁴ What Lonergan drew into his project as a settled conclusion of empirical study has emerged in contemporary scholarship as something more like a short-lived, distinctively modern ideological formation. Perhaps more seriously, one can ask about the fruitfulness of dialogue itself when the enduring, foundational core of all traditions has been specified prior to any conversation or collaboration.⁵⁵ There is little evidence to suggest that Lonergan himself engaged in substantial dialogue or study beyond the boundaries of Christian faith;⁵⁶ and one can ask, in Lonergan’s own formulation, whether it may be “a mistaken method to seek generalization before one has tried to understand the particular.”⁵⁷ In part for these reasons, Matthew Petillo and Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer have recently re-specified “religious experience” as a heuristic category, intended to motivate and foster inquiry, rather than as a settled doctrine—that is, as an orientation toward the problematic engagement of particulars, rather than an impediment to such engagement.⁵⁸

I will return to the more modest universalism we encounter in the work of contemporary Lonerganians like Petillo and Jacobs-Vandegeer. For the moment, however, I propose to shift our attention to Gregory Baum and, with him, to what I term a “particularist” approach to dialogue and collaboration. For Lonergan, as already noted, the question of interreligious dialogue arises from more general reflections on method, self-transcendence, and the structure of human consciousness. For Baum, by contrast, it arose from his reading of Jules Isaac’s famous 1948 study *Jésus et Israël*, which coined the term “teaching of contempt” to characterize the history of Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. Baum responded with a 1959 counter-study of the key New Testament texts entitled *The Jews and the Gospel*, republished in 1961 and then

54. See, for example, Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and “The Mystic East”* (London: Routledge, 1999) esp. 35–52; Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005); Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University, 2013); and the summary of recent scholarship in Daniel Dubuisson, “Exporting the Local: Recent Perspectives on ‘Religion’ as a Cultural Category,” *Religion Compass* 1 (2007) 787–800, doi:10.1111/j.1749–8171.2007.00049.x.

55. This critique is developed at greater length in Petillo, “Universalist Philosophy” 949–51, and Reid B. Locklin, “Toward an Interreligious Theology of Church: Revisiting Bernard Lonergan’s Contribution to the ‘Dialogue of Religions,’” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 43 (2008) 383–410.

56. See Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View” 160–63.

57. Bernard Lonergan, “First Lecture: Religious Experience,” in Crowe, *Third Collection*, 125.

58. Petillo, “Universalist Philosophy” 954–59; Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Navigating the Circle of Interreligious Dialogue and Theologies of Religion,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 19 (2012) 209–19, http://aejt.com.au/2012/vol_19/vol_19_no_3_2012/?article=486595; Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation: Divine Missions, the Church, and World Religions,” *Theological Studies* 75 (2014) 260–81 at 271–77, doi:10.1177/0040563914529896.

again in 1965 under the title *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?*⁵⁹ In tandem with his work as a *peritus* at Vatican II, he also published a series of studies arguing the incompatibility of anti-Semitism and Christianity, the importance of Jewish–Christian relations, and the new teaching of the Catholic Church on non-Christian religions. Years later, in his preface to Rosemary Radford Ruether’s *Faith and Fratricide*, he modified his earlier, more optimistic view of the church’s history and began to imagine more radical consequences of *Nostra Aetate* and other conciliar texts:

This contradiction between the Church’s central teaching and the new approach of Vatican II was brought up by conservative Christians who, for various reasons, religious and political, opposed the Church’s new openness to Judaism. They recognized—correctly, I now feel—that the acknowledgment of the Jews as *populus secundum electionem carissimus* and hence as spiritually alive was against the teaching of Christian scripture and tradition . . . If the Church wants to clear itself of the anti-Jewish trends built into its teaching, a few marginal corrections will not do. It must examine the very center of its proclamation and reinterpret the meaning of the gospel for our times.⁶⁰

For Baum, from at least the mid-1960s on, this reexamination would lead of necessity to a reevaluation not only of Judaism, but of other religions as well. But, importantly, this conviction emerged primarily out of the specific relationship of Christianity and Judaism.

To investigate the fundamental structure of Baum’s argument in this regard, we turn again to two articles published shortly after the closing of the Second Vatican Council: “Christianity and Other Religions: A Catholic Problem,” in 1966, and “‘The Religions’ in Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology,” in 1969. In many respects, the arguments of these articles closely resemble those of Lonergan, particularly when Baum draws on the work of Blondel, Rahner, and others to speak of the “supernatural” as a “constitutive element of human life,” as God leads all people, through an “inner word,” towards a life of radical openness and self-gift.⁶¹ Baum is more explicit than Lonergan, however, in his insistence that this conviction follows less from general, phenomenological reflections on human life than from distinctively Christian claims about the “absolute character” and universal significance of God’s self-revelation in Christ.⁶² “It is, therefore,” he concludes from an analysis, “possible to speak of Jesus Christ as the

59. For a helpful overview of Baum’s early career, see Harold Wells, “A Listening Theologian: Ecumenical and Jewish–Christian Dialogue in the Early Theology of Gregory Baum,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 32 (2003) 449–460, doi:10.1177/000842980303200404; as well as Baum’s own account in “Personal Experience and Styles of Thought,” in *Journeys: The Impact of Personal Experience in Religious Thought*, ed. Gregory Baum (New York: Paulist, 1975) 5–33.

60. Gregory Baum, introduction to *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Seabury, 1974) 1–22 at 6–7.

61. Gregory Baum, “‘The Religions’ in Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 26 (1969) 41–56 at 44–46; see also Gregory Baum, “Christianity and Other Religions: A Catholic Problem,” *CrossCurrents* 16 (1966) 447–462 at 452–53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24457214>.

62. See especially Baum, “Christianity and Other Religions” 448–50.

sole mediator between God and [humankind] and . . . to acknowledge that the divine self-communication which takes place in Jesus in an exhaustive and definitive way, and to which Christians have access by faith, is in a hidden, tentative, and provisional way present in the lives of all [human beings].”⁶³ Whatever *prima facie* arguments about self-transcendence and the universal gift of God’s love Baum may offer are, in other words, firmly rooted in his Christology.

This is not, by itself, a very significant distinction. Indeed, Baum’s more particularist, christological approach may seem to be little different than Lonergan’s generalized empirical method, and potentially more divisive. Its distinctiveness emerges more clearly, however, if we shift from Baum’s discussion of the universality of grace, as such, to the role that particular religions may be said to play in mediating this grace in God’s divine plan. In the 1966 essay, for example, he engages this task by first distinguishing sharply between Judaism and other religions, reviewing the history of Christian anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, and concluding on the basis of Romans 11 and other New Testament texts that “Christians must regard Jewish religion as an authentic, God-inspired, ‘supernatural’ worship of the one true God.”⁶⁴ He thus gives clear priority to the issues raised in *Nostra Aetate* 4, rather than those raised in earlier sections of the declaration. But he does not stop there. After reviewing the biblical ideas of “holy pagans” and the “Noahide covenant,” he goes on to advance the claim that other religions may also be viewed by Christians as gifts of God to humankind, albeit *only by analogy to Israel*. Israel represents what Baum calls the “‘prime analogate’ for the understanding of the other religions,” contending that “the only valid category the Christian theologian has for reflecting on a legitimate religion which is part of God’s plan and yet does not invalidate the absolute claim of Christianity is the faith of Israel.”⁶⁵ So also in the essay from 1969, though Baum actually quotes at some length from *Nostra Aetate* 1–2, he does so only *after* treating the question of Israel and sets the positive statements about other religions contained therein on a covenantal basis, rooted in the call of Israel.⁶⁶ “In a certain way, hidden and unprotected,” he writes, “they too are Israel’s.” Elsewhere, he will assert that “the nations are now part of the covenant with Israel.”⁶⁷

63. Baum, “The Religions” 45–46.

64. Baum, “Christianity and Other Religions” 457.

65. *Ibid.* 460.

66. Baum, “The Religions” 46–50, quotation at 47. The basic structure of Baum’s argument here remains quite consistent. In later works, he also begins his accounts of *Nostra Aetate* by first emphasizing, as its central import, its statements in *NA* 4 on Jews and Judaism and, from this, only subsequently moves on to discuss the issues raised in *NA* 1–3. See, for example, Baum, introduction to *Faith and Fratricide* 4–5; and especially Baum, *Amazing Church* 108–24. In this respect, his approach is markedly different from other interpreters such as Cassidy, who, in *Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism*, also recognizes the distinction between Judaism and other religions, but follows the order of the Declaration’s final text in dealing with more general questions and developments under “religions other than Judaism” and then, subsequently, tracing developments in Jewish–Christian dialogue.

67. Gregory Baum, “The Doctrinal Basis for Jewish–Christian Dialogue,” *Dialog* 6 (1967) 200–209 at 207.

From this particularist foundation, rooted in core Christian convictions about covenant and Christology, Baum goes on to echo the calls of Lonergan and of *Nostra Aetate* for interreligious dialogue and collaboration, arguing for such dialogue as the most fruitful approach to mission in the contemporary era.⁶⁸ But Baum's call has a distinctive character, precisely because it locates the universal in the particular, rather than treating particulars as mediations or exemplifications of the universal. In a later essay on Emil Fackenheim, for example, in the course of commending Jewish thinkers who articulate visions of universal solidarity, Baum writes that "this conclusion is not an expression of liberal universalism favouring justice for people-in-general; it reveals, instead, the universality implicit in Jewish particularity, namely, the identification with particular peoples who suffer historically specific domination."⁶⁹ So also, in his 1974 introduction to *Faith and Fratricide*, he decisively rejects any "liberal" reduction of the Gospel to "one truth among many," as well as distancing himself from the "theology of universal grace" espoused by Blondel, Rahner, and, as we have seen, Baum himself at an earlier moment in his development.⁷⁰ So also, in his 1966 essay on "Christianity and Other Religions," he may be read to resist rendering the universality of the Noahide covenant in terms of "people-in-general" or a reduction of all traditions to a generic "religion" or "religious sense." Instead, he articulates this universality as an extension of the particularity of Israel's covenant to describe God's no less particular gifts of grace to particular religious others. The task, then, is to engage these particular traditions and to learn from these gifts, as Baum himself has attempted not only with modern Judaism, but also with many other "others," including a more recent volume engaging the Muslim theology of the contemporary Swiss scholar Tariq Ramadan.⁷¹

Crowe observed that, for many Christians in the contemporary world, "their universalist view of religion . . . seems to be in conflict with counterclaims from the side of their own particular religion."⁷² From the perspective of Lonergan's own contribution, Crowe went on to suggest, this apparent conflict can be addressed by appeal to "God's direction of universal history," a history that includes the universal gift of God's Spirit, recurrent cycles of progress, decline, and redemptive recovery, and the distinctive roles of different religious traditions on the way to a shared, final fulfilment.⁷³ Baum,

68. Baum, "Christianity and Other Religions" 460–61, and Baum, "Religions" 48–49.

69. Gregory Baum, "Fackenheim and Christianity," in *Fackenheim: German Philosophy and Jewish Thought*, ed. Louis Greenspan and Graeme Nicholson (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992) 176–202 at 196–97. Cf. also Baum's critique of "techno-scientific rationality" in "Relativism No, Pluralism Yes," in *Love and Freedom: Systematic and Liberation Theology in the Canadian Context: Essays in Honour of Harold G. Wells*, ed. David John C. Zub, Robert C. Fennell, and Harold Wells (Toronto: Toronto School of Theology, 2008) 51–61.

70. Baum, "Introduction" 15–16.

71. Gregory Baum, *The Theology of Tariq Ramadan: A Catholic Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2009).

72. Crowe, "Lonergan's Universalist View" 164.

73. Ibid. 171–79. See also the fuller development of this argument in Frederick E. Crowe, "Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions," in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1989) 324–43.

too, discusses a dialectic between “universal” and “special” histories of salvation, and ultimately appeals to an eschatological fulfilment “beyond history” to resolve not only the diversity of religions, but also the true, universal significance of Christ himself.⁷⁴ For Baum, however, this appeal arises not out of a general theory of religion, but out of the demands of the Christian gospel, reinterpreted and reevaluated in the light of the no less profound demands of authentic dialogue with contemporary Jews, Muslims, and followers of other religious paths. Both patterns of interpretation echo and more fully develop trajectories from *Nostra Aetate*, and both clearly strive to balance the demands of a Christian universalism with the teachings of particular religious paths. But they proceed very differently, with Lonergan moving from universal to particular and Baum, conversely, from particular to universal. The result? Contrary visions of the significance of Christ, the character of religious difference, and the path of dialogue and collaboration marked out by the Second Vatican Council.

A Fruitful Tension

At several points in the previous section, I noted significant overlap between Lonergan and Baum’s respective theologies of religious pluralism, interreligious dialogue, and collaboration, not least in the high value they both place on such dialogue. Not every contrary is contradictory. Indeed, from a Lonerganian perspective, most of the differences between the universalist and particularist trajectories traced here might be assigned to a distinction between “general” and “special” theological categories, with Lonergan adopting categories more susceptible of being shared with other disciplines and Baum speaking in a more specifically Christian idiom.⁷⁵ Perhaps more germane to the argument of this article, Lonergan sometimes drew on Aristotle to distinguish two orders of presentation: the *ordo inventionis*, which moves from the data of sense or revelation to an explanatory framework, and the *ordo doctrinae*, which moves from the “theoretical elements” of this framework to give an intelligible account of all relevant data.⁷⁶ Baum’s theology, according to this heuristic, follows the *ordo inventionis*, recapturing the dynamic movement of *Nostra Aetate* itself as the council’s vision gradually enlarged from its initial focus on Jews and Judaism to comprehend what Bishop Coutinho called a “wider ecumenism” with the myriad, diverse religious traditions of the world. This historical drama is continually reenacted, deepened, and extended to include further dialogue partners, one at a time. For Lonergan, as for the document in its final form, the movement is rather from general principles to their specific application: the *ordo doctrinae*. Even if Lonergan’s theories of human cognition, self-transcendence, and religious experience may actually depend at least as much on the data of the Christian Scriptures as on any phenomenological analysis, they are nevertheless prior in their generality and explanatory value and thus come first in exposition.

74. Baum, “Christianity and Other Religions” 461; see also Baum, “Introduction” 17–20 and Wells, “A Listening Theologian” 456–59.

75. Lonergan, *Method* 288–91.

76. Lonergan, “Theology and Understanding,” in Crowe and Doran, *Collection* 119–22.

More broadly, the two trajectories discerned in this article roughly correspond to two theological disciplines that have emerged and flourished in the wake of *Nostra Aetate*: the theology of religions and comparative theology. The theology of religions—or, in a more recent idiom, the theology of religious pluralism—tends to reflect on other religious paths, as a whole, on Christian theological principles, very often rooted in a universal philosophical or theological anthropology. Comparative theology, particularly as articulated by Francis X. Clooney and James Fredericks, strongly resists such a move to generalization.⁷⁷ This has led Fredericks to call for a “moratorium” on the theology of religions project itself, in favor of those particular comparative engagements with particular religious others that provide a more authentic basis for fruitful dialogue. “Although abandoning attempts to erect a systematic theology of religions may be difficult for Christian theologians to accept,” he writes, “honesty to our current situation requires this of us.”⁷⁸ The path to fulfill the mandate of *Nostra Aetate*, these comparativists suggest, is not through the general and universal; it is through the particular.

More recent scholarship has argued, however, that the theology of religious pluralism and comparative theology do not stand as contradictory projects, but as contrary complements—notwithstanding the views of Fredericks and other comparativists.⁷⁹ Stephen J. Duffy in particular notes that all “Christian comparativists, consciously or unconsciously, bring to their work a specific pre-understanding, a prior set of postulates drawn from their own faith and from their tradition and its theologies.”⁸⁰ As we are ever more aware in the context of late modernity, every such a priori universalism will itself be particular, contingent on the interpreter’s historical, cultural, and confessional location. Similarly, every a posteriori engagement with religious particulars will presume or implicitly intend a further step of generalization. Hence, the need for a fruitful dialectic between theologies of pluralism and comparative theologies, between

77. E.g., Francis X. Clooney, *Theology After Vedānta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York, 1993); Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); James L. Fredericks, *Faith among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions* (New York: Paulist, 1999); James L. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

78. James L. Fredericks, “A Universal Religious Experience? Comparative Theology as an Alternative to a Theology of Religions,” *Horizons* 22 (1995) 67–87 at 83–84, doi:10.1017/S0360966900028942.

79. See especially Stephen Duffy, “A Theology of the Religions and/or a Comparative Theology,” *Horizons* 26 (1999) 105–15, doi:10.1017/S0360966900031558; Peter Feldmeier, “Is the Theology of Religions an Exhausted Project?” *Horizons* 35 (2008) 253–70, doi:10.1017/s0360966900005478; and Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Navigating the Circle,” 209–13. Hugh Nicholson nicely brings out the ideological and polemic function of the critique of theology of religions in his “Comparative Theology after Liberalism,” *Modern Theology* 23 (2007) 229–51, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0025.2007.00371.x; and *Comparative Theology and the Problem of Religious Rivalry* (New York: Oxford University, 2011).

80. Duffy, “Theology of Religions” 112.

particularist and universalist patterns of interpretation, between the *ordo inventionis* and *ordo doctrinae*.⁸¹ Perhaps for some of these reasons, Francis Clooney has himself proposed the notion of a plurality of local, “grounded” theologies of religions, which may aspire to a universal vision, but remain rooted in particular comparative projects and dialogical interactions. “This durable theology of religions,” he writes, “will therefore be constructed from the ground up, in reflection on specific points in their dialectical relationship to Christian faith, theology and commentary.”⁸² In making such a proposal, Clooney resonates with the distinctive particularism of Gregory Baum and *Nostra Aetate* 4, while also extending the starting point for interreligious inquiry well beyond the church’s primary relation with Jews and Judaism. Like Baum, Clooney does not shrink from advancing a certain kind of universalism, so long as it continually returns to start again from the particulars of Christian faith in conversation with a—indeed, potentially any—particular religious other.

And what of the distinctive universalism of Lonergan and *Nostra Aetate* 1–2? Here it may be important to recall that, prior to any phenomenological account of religious experience, the declaration founds its universalist vision in its Christian theological convictions about the source and end of all persons in God—that is, in the mysteries of creation and eschatology. Similarly, Jacobs-Vandegeer draws on Crowe to propose Lonergan’s universalist view less as a fixed “position” than as a “performance of discernment,” oriented toward final, eschatological fulfillment of God’s saving design.⁸³ Jacobs-Vandegeer writes,

Neither Crowe nor Lonergan harbour any desire to make other religious believers into crypto-Christians, for they caution a slow-learning people against hasty judgements and facile pretensions to unity or uniformity. Their affirmations of the divinity of Christ displace them from the mutuality or pluralist model, but their patient refusal to leap to an answer on the final relationship of Christianity to other religions also does not seem to fit perfectly alongside many versions of the inclusivist or fulfillment model.⁸⁴

Here Lonergan’s universalism is deployed not as a final theory of religion, but as a corrective to any perspective on religious others that forces them into the particular mold of Christianity, or presumably of Israel, as well. Insofar as Israel emerges as a “prime analogate” for other religious paths, such that they too are “Israels,” as in Baum’s formulation, such an analogy ideally reaches only as far as the fact of their otherness and the concrete possibility of a distinctive role in the history of salvation. Paradoxically, in this way, the articulation of an a priori, universalist view may function, performatively, to foster genuine encounters across boundaries of religious difference, rather than to stifle them. But, again, to serve such a corrective role effectively

81. Ibid. 112–14.

82. Francis X. Clooney, *The Truth, the Way, the Life: Christian Commentary on the Three Holy Mantras of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Hindus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008) 184.

83. Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Navigating the Circle” 217.

84. Ibid.

requires continual testing against the particularisms of those engaged in the focused, necessarily local work of comparison and dialogue.

Conclusion

Elena Procario-Foley, reflecting on the complex history of *Nostra Aetate*, sees evidence of “the Holy Spirit writing straight with crooked lines.”⁸⁵ In light of the analysis I have attempted above, one might well go further and conclude that the crooked lines themselves embody a deeper work of the Spirit. From *Nostra Aetate* through the contemporary work of comparativists like Fredericks and Clooney, authentic interreligious engagement requires attention both to the particulars of a religious tradition or dialogue partner and to the need to generalize, and to imagine ourselves and our traditions as part of a common humanity, in and with God the divine self. As interpretative trajectories, universalism and particularism each offer significant potential not only for deeper understanding, but also for misunderstanding and distortion. Perhaps, then, the deep wisdom of the Vatican II declaration is precisely not its coherence, but its dissonance, as different approaches to such engagement, forced together by the contingency of history, stand now in a permanent, fruitful, and mutual tension. The point may not be to choose one or the other approach, but to nourish the tension itself as the Church advances toward ever-deeper dialogue and engagement.⁸⁶

Author Biography

Reid B. Locklin is Associate Professor of Christianity and the Intellectual Tradition at St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto. His research focuses on a range of issues in comparative theology and Hindu–Christian Studies, particularly the engagement between Christian thought and the Hindu tradition of Advaita Vedanta. He is author or editor of five books, including *Liturgy of Liberation* (Peeters, 2011) and *Vernacular Catholicism, Vernacular Saints* (SUNY, 2017).

85. Procario-Foley, “Heir or Orphan?” 310–11.

86. This paper was presented, in successive drafts, to research colloquia at the University of St. Michael’s College, the University of Calicut, and the Lonergan Research Institute at Regis College. The author would like to thank participants at all three colloquia, as well as Darren Dias, Ella Johnson, Grant Kaplan, Michael O’Connor, Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, Michael Vertin, Jeremy Wilkins, Terezia Zoric, and three anonymous reviewers, for their valuable comments and suggestions on the manuscript.