

## WHAT *NOSTRA AETATE* INAUGURATED: A CONVERSION TO THE “PROVIDENTIAL MYSTERY OF OTHERNESS”

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*The Second Vatican Council’s declaration Nostra aetate (NA) is regarded as a “watershed” document. NA no. 4, on relations with the Jewish people, is frequently cited as evidence of a turning point in the Catholic Church’s attitudes toward the religious Other. Yet the full significance of NA no. 4 becomes manifest only when it is situated in the complex history of the church’s understanding of Judaism, including the contentious debates at the council and current theological disputes.*

VATICAN II’S *NOSTRA AETATE*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, might best be understood as a conversion to the “providential mystery of otherness” for the life of the church, and as a call to extend and deepen that conversion.<sup>1</sup> For the first time in history, an ecumenical council spoke positively of other religions to which people look for an “answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence.” While the Catholic tradition differs in many particularities, these religions “nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men [and women].” Thus, the council encouraged “discussion and collaboration with followers of other religions.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Barnes, S.J., *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (New York: Cambridge University, 2002) 239. For an argument that Vatican II represents a development of doctrine with regard to the salvation of the religious Other, see Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., “Vatican II on the Salvation of the Adherents of Other Religions,” in *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, ed. James L. Heft (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) 68–95.

<sup>2</sup> NA nos. 1 and 2, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, rev. ed., ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1984).

At the vantage point of nearly 50 years, *NA*'s brevity and relative blandness may obscure not only its groundbreaking character but also the complex history that preceded its drafting. This is particularly true of *NA* no. 4 the point of departure of my article—which must be interpreted against the backdrop of centuries of church teachings that distorted Judaism, disparaged Jews, and contributed to the rise of antisemitism. Only when *NA*'s revolutionary character is revealed will relations between Catholics and Jews today be situated in their proper context.

Thus, to understand contemporary issues and tensions in the Jewish-Catholic relationship, it is first necessary to trace the evolution of theological thought about Judaism prior to Vatican II, and then to sketch the contentious debates over its five drafts that resulted in the most radical change in the ordinary magisterium of the church that emerged from the council.<sup>3</sup> Further, it is necessary to review the biblical and theological developments in the wake of the council that provide the context for the most salient issues confronting Catholic-Jewish relations today.

### JUDAISM AND THE EVOLUTION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY I: TRADITIONAL TROPES

Few people anticipated the immense impact of the 15 Latin sentences of *NA* no. 4 that began the process of reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people—certainly not the bishops of Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom: they made no mention of relations with Jews in the more than 800 pages of recommendations they submitted to the Vatican as part of the preparatory process after Pope John XXIII's announcement of the council in 1959.<sup>4</sup> Nor is any mention of relations with Jews found among the 250 pages of recommendations the US bishops submitted.<sup>5</sup> The Vatican officials who earlier in the 20th century had looked with suspicion, if not overt hostility, at the advocates for rethinking the church's stance on Judaism would not have envisioned an ecumenical council addressing this topic. Nor would the vast majority of Catholics, who were generally oblivious to the church's long and bitter history vis-à-vis the Jewish people. Like most Christians in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Catholics typically saw their church as having superseded Judaism.

<sup>3</sup> See Gregory Baum, "The Social Context of American Catholic Theology," in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 41 (1986) 83–100, esp. 87.

<sup>4</sup> See John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2012) 182.

<sup>5</sup> See Joseph A. Komonchak, "U.S. Bishops' Suggestions for Vatican II," <http://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/us-bishops-suggestions-for-vatican-ii.pdf>; Komonchak, "What They Said before the Council: How the U.S. Bishops Envisioned Vatican II," *Commonweal* 117 (1990) 714–17.

Still other Catholics opposed consideration of the church's relationship with the Jewish people. Many Eastern bishops, particularly in Arab and Muslim lands, feared that their minority status could be further endangered. The scurrilous antisemitic texts distributed by anonymous or pseudonymous parties at all four sessions of the council testified to an undercurrent of opposition that persisted throughout the deliberations. The arguments of these texts, however, "were so vile, their allusions so repulsive, their origin apparently so uncertain and even suspect" that this hate literature exercised little or no influence on the conciliar participants.<sup>6</sup>

If few envisioned the need for the council to address relations with Jews, others had been rethinking traditional understandings of Judaism and advocating for a new stance on the part of the church. Prominent among these advocates was the association *Amici Israel*, founded in 1926. Inspired by a convert to Judaism, Sophie Franziska van Leer, it promoted reconciliation between Jews and Catholics by seeking to deepen understanding of Judaism and eliminating negative references to Jews in preaching and liturgy. In its early years, the association encouraged prayer for the conversion of Jews. Eventually, however, *Amici Israel* turned away from seeking conversions, a turning that became a pattern among many promoters of a renewed relationship with the Jewish people.

The efforts of *Amici Israel* to promote reconciliation exemplify divergent views of Judaism at high levels in the Vatican. In early January 1928, the association appealed to Pope Pius XI to reform the Good Friday prayer for the Jews, calling for removal of the terms *perfidis* and *perfidiam*, and recommending that the practice of not genuflecting during the prayer for the Jews on Good Friday, first specified in the 1570 Roman Missal, be abolished.<sup>7</sup> The *Amici Israel* offered a sample prayer as an alternative to the traditional one. The pope forwarded their request to the Congregation of Rites.<sup>8</sup> This office in turn sent it to a liturgical expert, Benedictine Abbot Alfred Ildefons Schuster, who indicated his approval of the arguments of *Amici Israel* as "fully justified by the classical tradition of the Roman liturgy."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cited in John M. Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969) 3:31–136, at 122.

<sup>7</sup> The Roman Missal of 1570 was the prescribed text for celebrations of the Eucharist. See *The Roman Missal in Latin and English, Arranged for the Use of the Laity to Which Is Added a Collection of Usual Public Prayers* (Tournay, Belgium: Society of St. John the Evangelist and Desclée, 1911) 490–91. In 1960 John XXIII had the word *perfidis* removed.

<sup>8</sup> See Hubert Wolf, *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich*, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University, 2010) 81–125.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in *ibid.* 96.

Yet, reform of a prayer involving matters of faith also required the approval of the Holy Office (now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [CDF]). Here the recommendation met opposition. Its expert, papal court theologian and Dominican priest Marco Sales, citing texts such as Acts 7:51 (“You stiff-necked people”) and Matthew 27:25 (“His blood be upon us and our children”), concluded that the Bible bore witness to Jewish faithlessness. Only the Jews, Sales said, had a “pact with God and a covenant with him, and only the Jews constantly violated this pact, and only they would continue constantly to violate it. It should come as no surprise, then, that they are called perfidious, and that we use the expression *perfidia Judaica* to distinguish them from the pagans.”<sup>10</sup> Nothing should be changed, he mandated.

The secretary of the Holy Office, Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val, a zealous anti-Modernist, concurred with Sales.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in identifying a list of “erroneous or offensive-sounding statements” that had appeared from advocates for reform of the Good Friday liturgy, an expert commissioned by Merry del Val asked “how it was possible that the Jews, who had made common cause with those who nailed Jesus to the cross, thereby killing the son of God, could even have belonged to the Kingdom of the Eternal Father in the first place.”<sup>12</sup> As had Sales, Merry del Val found ample evidence in the biblical texts. The Good Friday prayers, he maintained, were about “stiff-necked Jewish people burdened with the curse that they as a people with their principles undertook the responsibility for having spilled the blood of the holiest of the holy.”<sup>13</sup> The Good Friday liturgy, according to Merry del Val, had been “inspired and sanctified” over the centuries, and it aptly expressed the “abhorrence for the rebellion and treachery of the chosen, disloyal, and deicidal people.”<sup>14</sup> He warned against the possibility that *Amici Israel* could fall into the “trap devised by the self-same Jews who everywhere insinuate themselves into modern society and attempt by all means to dispel the memory of their history, and to exploit the good faith of Christians.”<sup>15</sup> Merry del Val’s

<sup>10</sup> Cited in *ibid.* 99

<sup>11</sup> The 1864 *Syllabus errorum* of Pope Pius IX listed 80 propositions that the church held to be false. Among them was the notion that “everyone is free to embrace and profess the religion which by the light of reason one judges to be true” (no. 15). Also held to be erroneous was that “we should at least have good hopes for the eternal salvation of all those who are in no way in the true Church of Christ” (no. 17). Similar in message and tone were the 1907 encyclical of Pope Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, and the decree of the Holy Office that same year, *Lamentabile sane exitu*; the latter listed 65 errors of those alleged to be Modernists. Among the propositions condemned was that “Christian Doctrine was originally Judaic” (no. 60).

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Wolf, *Pope and Devil* 103.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in *ibid.* 106.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in *ibid.* 105.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in *ibid.* 107.

antagonism reflects the way traditional anti-Jewish tropes intertwined with antisemitism.<sup>16</sup>

On March 25, 1928, Pope Pius XI settled the argument in favor of the opponents of the reform of the Good Friday prayer with the following statement:

The Catholic Church has always been accustomed to pray for the Jewish people, the recipients of divine promises up to the coming of Jesus Christ, in spite of this people's blindness. More than that, it has done so on account of that very blindness. Ruled by the same charity, the Apostolic See has protected this people against unjust vexations, and just as it reproves all hatred between peoples, so it condemns hatred against the people formerly chosen by God, the hatred that today customarily goes by the name of anti-Semitism.<sup>17</sup>

The papal statement also praised *Amici Israel's* desire for the conversion of Jews (although the association's founders had in fact rethought the desirability of fostering such conversions). Nevertheless, Pius XI censured the association for "a manner of acting and thinking that is contrary to the sense and spirit of the Church, to the thought of the Holy Fathers and the liturgy."<sup>18</sup> Because of the association's "erroneous initiatives," it was suppressed. Only after Vatican II would the Good Friday prayer be reworded—and then, in 2008, revised by Pope Benedict XVI for the Tridentine Rite.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Mary C. Boys, "Beyond 'Removing' Anti-Judaism: The Theological and Educational Task of Reframing Christian Identity," in *Removing the Anti-Judaism from the New Testament*, ed. Howard Clark Kee and Irvin J. Borowsky (Philadelphia: American Interfaith Institute, 1998) 88–102.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Wolf, *Pope and Devil* 82. The author of the petition from *Amici Israel*, Abbot Benedict Gariador, and the liturgical experts who had recommended that the petition be granted were summoned before the Holy Office and admonished. Abbot Schuster demonstrated his "abject submission" and recanted his recommendation; see *ibid.* 114.

<sup>18</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 20 (1928) 103–4. See also Jean Levie, S.J., "Décret de suppression de l'Association des 'Amis d'Israel,'" *Nouvelle revue théologique* (1928) 532–37; and Lieven Sarans, "The Attitude of the Belgian Roman Catholic Clergy toward the Jews Prior to Occupation," in *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans*, ed. Dan Mikhman (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998) 117–58.

<sup>19</sup> In the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum* of July 7, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI gave greater latitude for the celebration of the Tridentine Rite. On February 6, 2008, the pope released his version of the prayer for this rite only: *Oremus et pro Iudaeis: Ut Deus et Dominus noster illuminet corda eorum, ut agnoscant Iesum Christum salvatorem omnium hominum. (Oremus. Flectamus genua. Levate.) Omnipotens sempiternus Deus, qui vis ut omnes homines salvi fiant et ad agnitionem veritatis veniant, concede propitius, ut plenitudine gentium in Ecclesiam Tuam intrante omnis Israel salvus fiat. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.* The prayer is headed: "*Pro Conversione Iudaeorum.*" One translation reads: "Let us pray also for the Jews. That our Lord and God may enlighten their hearts, that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ as the savior of all men [and women]. Almighty, ever living God, who wills that all men [and women] would be saved and come to the knowledge of

Ironically, the *Monitum* that suppressed *Amici Israel* also expressed the official magisterium's first formal condemnation of antisemitism. The decree, although condemning hatred of Jews, nonetheless retained the idea of a sinful Jewish people whose rejection of Jesus led to their suffering.<sup>20</sup> It also suggested that God had rejected the Jews, "the people formerly chosen by God." Nevertheless, it manifested an awareness of the dangers of racial antisemitism—a peril about which the official magisterium would be largely silent until Vatican II.

The representation of Judaism expressed in the response to *Amici Israel*—Jews as perfidious, treacherous, disloyal, deicidal, and blind—typified longstanding church teaching.<sup>21</sup> From the *Adversus Judaeos* literature of the early centuries through the late medieval accusations of blood libel and ritual crucifixion, Christians portrayed Jews as the quintessential Other. Early in the 20th century, German theologians spoke of a "permissible antisemitism" that "combats, by moral and legal means, a truly harmful influence of the Jewish segment of the population in the areas of economy, politics, theater, cinema, the press, science, and art [liberal-libertine tendencies]."<sup>22</sup>

Jesuits Gustav Gundlach, Gustav Desbuquois, and John LaFarge developed this distinction at greater length in a draft encyclical for Pius XI in 1938. Although never published, perhaps because of the pope's failing health, the logic of the draft provides a glimpse of the kind of thinking at the highest levels of the church in the late 1930s.<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, the

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the truth, graciously grant that all Israel may be saved when the fullness of the nations enter into Your Church. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen." For an eschatological interpretation of Benedict XVI's prayer, see Cardinal Walter Kasper, "Striving for Mutual Respect in Modes of Prayer," *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition (April 16, 2008) 8–9. See also Rita Ferrone, "Anti-Jewish Elements in the Extraordinary Form," *Worship* 84 (2010) 498–513.

<sup>20</sup> Anna Łysiak, "Rabbinic Judaism in the Writings of Polish Catholic Theologians," in *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence and the Holocaust*, ed. Kevin P. Spicer (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2007) 26–49, at 29.

<sup>21</sup> See Mary C. Boys, *Redeeming our Sacred Story: The Death of Jesus and Relations between Jews and Christians* (New York: Paulist, forthcoming, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Gustav Gundlach, S.J., "Antisemitismus," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 10 vols., 2nd rev. ed. (Freiberg: Herder, 1930–1938) 1:504; cited by Georges Passelecq and Bernard Suchecky, *The Hidden Encyclical of Pius XI*, trans. Steven Rendall (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1977) 47–48. The concept of dual antisemitism had appeared in earlier sources. See Olaf Blaschke, *Offenders or Victims? German Jews and the Causes of Modern Catholic Antisemitism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2009) 32–33.

<sup>23</sup> Pius XI died February 10, 1939; his successor, Pope Pius XII, typically avoided the more confrontational policies of his predecessor. As it became more apparent that Europe would go to war, Pius XII took a more neutral stance in the hopes of mediating the conflict. See Michael Marrus, "The Vatican on Racism and Antisemitism, 1938–39," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4 (1997) 378–95, esp. 385–87.

authors criticized the “struggle for racial purity [that] ends by being uniquely the struggle against the Jews”; as a consequence, millions of people were denied their rights as citizens and “many thousands of helpless persons” were left without resources. “Wandering from frontier to frontier, they [Jews] are a burden to humanity and to themselves.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, while “unjust and pitiless,” awareness of the plight of Jews underscored the “authentic basis of the social separation of the Jews from the rest of humanity. This basis is directly religious in character.” Thus, the authors concluded: “The so-called Jewish question is not one of race, or nation, or territorial nationality, or citizenship in the state. It is a question of religion and, since the coming of Christ, a question of Christianity.”<sup>25</sup> From the Jewish people, the only people in history to have a call from God, came Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of Israel’s prophecies and types. Yet:

The Savior, whom God had sent to His chosen people after they had prayed and longed for Him for thousands of years, was rejected by that people, violently repudiated, and condemned as a criminal by the highest tribunals of the Jewish nation, in collusion with the pagan authorities who held the Jewish people bondage. Ultimately, the Savior was put to death.<sup>26</sup>

Although the redemption gained by the suffering and death of Jesus was for all humanity, the consequences for Jews were dire:

Blinded by a vision of material domination and gain, the Israelites lost what they themselves had sought. . . . This unhappy people, destroyers of their own nation, whose misguided leaders had called down upon their own heads a Divine malediction, doomed, as it were to perpetually wander over the face of the earth, were nonetheless never allowed to perish, but have been preserved through the ages into our own time.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, Jewish rejection of Jesus allowed the Gentiles to enjoy the fruit of the promises rejected by the Jews. Israel may have incurred God’s wrath, but thereby it “hastened the evangelization and . . . conversion of the Gentiles.” Thanks to God’s mercy, Israel may eventually share in redemption, but this possibility exists in the realm of the supernatural. In the realities of historical time, however, “we find a historic enmity of the Jewish people to Christianity, creating a perpetual tension between Jew and Gentile which the passage of time has never diminished, even though from time to time its manifestations have been mitigated.”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Citations from *Humani generis unitas* nos. 131–32, in *Hidden Encyclical* 246–47 (all further references to this draft encyclical are taken from this source).

<sup>25</sup> *Humani generis unitas* no. 133.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* no. 135.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* no. 136.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* nos. 140–41. Marrus concludes: “The ‘lost encyclical’ turns out not to have been a tragically spurned instrument that might have restrained Nazism, but part of a wider cultural distaste for Jews, despite its rejection of Fascist antisemitism”

## JUDAISM AND THE EVOLUTION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY II: NEW DIRECTIONS

Despite such negative judgments of Judaism, efforts to advance reconciliation continued on various fronts. The evolving theological arguments of Johannes Oesterreicher (1904–1993) and Karl Thieme (1902–1963) proved particularly significant. Also influential were the work of the Freiburg Circle and its journal the *Freiburger Rundbrief*, the Dutch Catholic Council, and the 1947 meeting of the International Emergency Conference on Antisemitism.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the decision of the Sisters of Zion in the late 1950s to rethink their original mission of converting Jews gave further indication of changing perspectives.<sup>30</sup> Cooperation between Jewish organizations and Catholic groups also advanced new possibilities. The meeting in June 1960 of the 83-year-old French Jewish historian Jules Isaac with the 79-year-old John XXIII may have been the direct cause of the church's relationship with Judaism being placed on the agenda of Vatican II. Isaac presented his research on what Christians had taught about Judaism over the centuries: a "teaching of contempt."<sup>31</sup> Deeply moved, Pope John XXIII

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("The Vatican on Racism and Antisemitism" 392). Connelly also argues that the encyclical's suppression is fortunate: "Had it been issued, the pope would have reinforced traditional anti-Judaism, and in the pervasive racism of that day, that meant bolstering antisemitism. One could not shun Jews 'religiously' without marginalizing actual Jewish human beings" (*From Enemy to Brother* 98).

<sup>29</sup> Gertrud Luckner, whose courageous work on behalf of German Jews resulted in her imprisonment in the concentration camp at Ravensbrück, founded the *Freiburger Rundbrief* in 1948 as a way of countering antisemitism and keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust. She recruited Karl Thieme as theological adviser to the journal. Miriam Rookmaaker van Leer founded The Dutch Catholic Council for Israel in 1951, and Antonius Ramselaar served as its theological adviser; he later served on the drafting committee for *NA*. The 1947 International Emergency Conference on Antisemitism met in Seelisberg, Switzerland, from July 30 to August 5, and is regarded as one of the events in which Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, confronted the Christian roots of antisemitism. See Christian M. Rutishauser, "The 1947 Seelisberg Conference: The Foundation of Jewish-Christian Dialogue," *Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations* 2.2 (2007) 34–53; and Victoria Barnett, "Seelisberg: An Appreciation," *Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations* 2.2 (2007) 54–57.

<sup>30</sup> See Charlotte Klein, "From Conversion to Dialogue—The Sisters of Zion and the Jews: A Paradigm of Catholic-Jewish Relations?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 18 (1981) 388–400; and Mary C. Boys, "The Sisters of Zion: From a Conversionist Stance to a Dialogical Way of Life," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 31 (1994) 27–48. The Fathers and Brothers of Zion, technically the Congregation of Religious of Our Lady of Zion, also engaged in countering antisemitism and published a journal, *Cahiers Sioniens*.

<sup>31</sup> Jules Isaac, *Enseignement du mépris vérité historique et mythes théologiques* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1962); ET, *Teaching of Contempt*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1964).



summoned Cardinal Augustin Bea to lead the process of rethinking traditional teaching. Fortunately, Bea could call upon the advocates for a transformed relationship with Jews to help establish the foundational arguments of *NA* no. 4.

Connelly identifies Thieme and Oesterreicher as preeminent among a group of “border crossers,” men and women who were not only converts to Catholicism but also polyglots who moved fluidly across European borders and were thus able to transcend the limitations of a single culture.<sup>32</sup> Thieme was a German who became a Catholic in part as protest against the acquiescence of his Lutheran colleagues to the Aryan Paragraph.<sup>33</sup> Oesterreicher, who became one of the drafters of *NA* no. 4, was brought up in a Jewish home in Moravia and had been active in a Zionist youth group. A religious experience led him to seek baptism and then the priesthood; he was ordained in 1927. Although in the early years of his priesthood he founded an organization, *Pauluswerk*, to missionize Jews, he was among the first to condemn the racist attitudes many Catholics held toward Jews. Countering claims by prominent Catholics that Nazi racial laws were in accord with God’s will and that even baptism could not cure the moral defects of Jews because of their “bad genetic material,” he spoke out passionately against racism, founding a journal, *Erfüllung*. In 1937 Oesterreicher published a 40-page memorandum by Thieme and Waldemar Gurian that criticized antisemitism.<sup>34</sup>

A number of Catholic intellectuals, including Jacques Maritain and Dietrich von Hildebrand, supported the memorandum, but none of the European bishops would sign it. Despite the lack of support from the hierarchy, Oesterreicher and Thieme persevered. They sought, unsuccessfully, to meet with Pope Pius XI in December 1938 in hopes of encouraging him to speak out against antisemitism in his Christmas address. When

<sup>32</sup> Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother*. See Peter E. Gordon’s review of this book: “The Border Crossers,” *New Republic* 243.9 (June 7, 2012) 26–30, <http://www.tnr.com/print/article/books-and-arts/magazine/103331/catholic-jewish-anti-semitism-pope-vatican-nazis>.

<sup>33</sup> The 1933 Civil Service Law of the Third Reich stipulated that only Aryans could serve as civil employees. Because pastors were included in the structure of the civil service, this “Aryan Paragraph” became church law. Pastors were thus required to prove their racial purity, that is, that neither their parents nor grandparents were Jewish. Protest against this law became one of the founding rationales of the Confessing Church, although even within its ranks, there was dispute about whether Jews who had converted to Christianity could continue to function as pastors. See Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University, 1992) 128–29.

<sup>34</sup> In addition to *Erfüllung*, three other Catholic journals in Vienna in the late 1930s were critical of Nazism: Irene Harand’s *Gerechtigkeit* (Justice), Dietrich von Hildebrand’s *Der Christliche Ständestaat* (The Christian Corporatist State), and Ernst Karl Winter’s *Wiener politische Blättern* (Viennese Political News).

that tactic failed, Oesterreicher began broadcasting Sunday sermons into the Reich, calling Hitler an anti-Christ and the Nazis enemies of the cross. In 1940, writing from Paris, Oesterreicher published *Racisme, antisémitisme, antichristianisme: Documents et critique*.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, even as both Oesterreicher and Thieme condemned racism among Catholics, at this juncture they remained convinced of the necessity of Jewish conversion. They believed that Jews would continue to suffer until they recognized Jesus Christ as their messiah; once Jews turned toward Jesus, their mass conversion would inaugurate the messianic age. Both men, however, had experiences that led them to rethink this position and move to a radically different judgment. Oesterreicher, whose mother had been murdered in Auschwitz and whose father had died in Theresienstadt, became increasingly opposed to theological formulations that spoke of Jews as, for example, “enemies of the Christian name,” a wording Thieme used in his 1945 book, *Kirche und Synagoge*. Thieme initially resisted such criticism, but by the late 1940s he underwent, by his own admission, a “conversion.”

The postwar years afforded Thieme opportunity to engage Jews in conversation; Martin Buber was his most important interlocutor. Significantly, Thieme began to hear what his conversionary language sounded like to Jewish ears, and to realize how problematic a Christian mission to Jews was after Auschwitz. He questioned the ethics of his earlier eschatological perspective: Did not the command to love neighbors imply loving them as Jews? In addition, the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 upended the Augustinian notion that Jews were forever consigned to wander the earth as a punishment for the death of Jesus.

In a public letter in August 1950, he announced his “conviction that a Jewish person, not only as an individual person, but also in a certain sense precisely as ‘Jew’ can be pleasing to God.”<sup>36</sup> Thieme continued: “Precisely for the Jews according to the entirety of divine revelation certain promises continue to be in force so that one can assume that even in distance from Christ the Jewish people enjoys special guidance and special grace.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, he reasoned, “I am certain that if God’s grace permits ‘Israel according to the flesh’ to continue to exist to the end of time, and then makes them recipients of very great compassion, then their character as chosen people has not been abolished, but only suspended in some of its effects.”<sup>38</sup>

Thieme, as Connelly notes, was the first major Catholic thinker to grasp Paul’s claim in Romans that Jews remained God’s “beloved” people

<sup>35</sup> John Oesterreicher, *Racisme, antisémitisme, antichristianisme: Documents et critique*, preface Jacques Maritain, translated from the German (New York: Maison française, 1943).

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother* 204–5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 205.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

(Rom 11:28).<sup>39</sup> The transformation in his thinking represents, with the exception of Anglican James Parkes, the “most sudden and radical shift in a Christian theologian’s view of the Jews in modern history.”<sup>40</sup>

Thieme continued his theological journey as the adviser to the *Freiburger Rundbrief* and in extensive correspondence with various church officials.<sup>41</sup> He challenged the deicide charge and collaborated in issuing theses for Catholic teaching about Judaism. Speaking at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, Illinois, 1954, Thieme repeatedly spoke of Jews as “elder brothers.” Laying out what he saw as common ground and differences between Christians and Jews, he spoke of God’s revelation to the patriarchs and in the Sinai covenant as leading to eternal life; “God’s mercy to His people was unbreakable,” and by God’s love they were bound “indissolubly” to Christians.<sup>42</sup> While Christians believed in Jesus Christ and in the authority of the church, Thieme acknowledged an indebtedness “to our brothers” for not concealing existing differences; he expressed desire that they might discuss “with us in brotherly cooperation, wherever this can tactfully be done until the day comes when there will be ‘one flock, one Shepherd’ (John 10:16), when ‘all people will serve God in united worship’ (Zeph 3:9).”<sup>43</sup>

Oesterreicher initially took such umbrage at Thieme’s use of “older brothers” in reference to Jews that in 1960 he ended his correspondence with him.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Oesterreicher also reversed himself, albeit without explaining his rationale. By the early 1960s he no longer referred to a “mission” to Jews, but rather of a “ministry of reconciliation.” By 1970 he

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 205. Parkes was a prolific author; see especially his *Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (London: Soncino, 1934); *Antisemitism* (London: Valentine, Mitchell, 1963); and *Emergence of the Jewish Problem, 1878–1939* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1970). See also, Robert Everett, *Christianity without Antisemitism: James Parkes and the Jewish-Christian Encounter* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1993).

<sup>41</sup> The Freiburg Circle’s advocacy of dialogue with Jews and demands for restitution for survivors aroused suspicion from members of the hierarchy, particularly Cardinal Joseph Frings, who regarded their efforts as manifesting religious indifferentism. The Vatican investigated the members of the Freiburg Circle, but Cardinal Bea acted as their protector. See Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2000) 186–202.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Thieme, “The Hope of the World: God’s Redemption in Union with His Anointed,” in *Christ, the Church, and Grace in the Economy of Christian Hope: Roman Catholic Views on the Evanston Theme* (Boulogne-sur-Seine: Istina, 1954) 30–32, published as an offprint of the journal *Istina* 2 (1954).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Gregory Baum also registered his disagreement with Thieme’s formulation. See Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother* 227.

spoke of Christianity and Judaism as “two ways of righteousness that have complementary functions.”<sup>45</sup> Having emigrated to New York in 1940 and founded the Institute for Judeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University in 1953, Oesterreicher (now John rather than Johannes) was increasingly in conversation with Jews, including his close friends Rabbi Jacob Petuchowski and Dr. Joseph Lichten, pioneers of Jewish-Catholic dialogue.

Catholics like Thieme and Oesterreicher who were interested in relations with Jews in the 1950s were, as Michael Phayer writes, like “sixteenth-century scientists who suspected the sun did not revolve around the earth but could not explain heliocentrism.”<sup>46</sup> Yet they and others with whom they collaborated had begun articulating the basic elements of an ecclesiastical heliocentrism, that is, the theological groundwork for *NA* no. 4.

### A Perilous Journey at the Council: A Declaration Debated

After his meeting with Jules Isaac, John XXIII entrusted the formulation of a new understanding of the church’s relationship with Jews to Cardinal Augustin Bea. Bea, then 79, served as president of the newly established Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity and thus supervised the drafting of a statement. Bea appointed Oesterreicher, Gregory Baum, A.A. (also a convert from Judaism), and Leo Rudloff, O.S.B., to a subcommission.<sup>47</sup> Over the course of three meetings in 1961, they developed six principal elements of a draft. Among them was the claim that Jews were beloved of God; although separated from Christ, Jews were not accursed, and the church condemns wrongs done to them.<sup>48</sup> Yet political complications meant that the draft they presented to the Central Coordinating Commission never made it to the council floor. Thus, Cardinal Bea wrote to Pope John XXIII in December 1962, seeking his intervention in reinstating the schema on the Jews as a manifestation of a “purification of spirit and conscience” necessitated by the “appalling crimes of National Socialism against six million Jews.”<sup>49</sup>

The conciliar draft of a statement on Jews, *De Iudaeis*, had a difficult time finding a home. In November 1963, a draft decree reappeared as

<sup>45</sup> Cited in *ibid.* 236.

<sup>46</sup> Phayer, *Catholic Church and the Holocaust* 186.

<sup>47</sup> Bea also solicited the assistance of the American Jewish Committee. In response, the AJC submitted three memoranda to the council regarding Jews in Catholic teaching, anti-Jewish elements in Catholic liturgy, and ways of improving relations with Jews. See Gary Spruch, *Wide Horizons: Abraham Joshua Heschel, the AJC, and the Spirit of Vatican II* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> Later in 1961 Bea appointed George Tavard to the subcommission. In 1964 the drafting committee expanded to include Barnabas Ahearn, C.P., Pierre Benoit, O.P., Bruno Hussar, O.P., Nicholas Persich, C.M., Thomas Stransky, C.S.P., and Antonius Ramselaar.

<sup>49</sup> Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother* 249.

chapter 4 of the schema on ecumenism, *De oecumenismo*, but the draft itself was not formally discussed in the second session of the council.<sup>50</sup> Yet, in the discussion of other chapters of *De oecumenismo*, widely varying views were expressed about the appropriateness of a statement on Jews. Bishops of the Middle East reiterated their reluctance to have the question on the conciliar agenda. Others, especially bishops in Asia, insisted that any statement on Jews should be part of the wider framework of other world religions. Still others argued for a text on the Jews that would stand as an independent document.

Controversy broke out over the Roman Curia's hand in formulating a third draft. In this iteration, not only had the condemnation of deicide disappeared but also language was inserted that insinuated the conversion of Jews:

It is also worth remembering that the union of the Jewish people with the Church is part of Christian hope. Therefore, following the teaching of the Apostle (cf. Romans 2:5), the Church waits with unshaken faith and deep longing for the entry of that people into the fullness of the people of God established by Christ.<sup>51</sup>

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who had developed a close relationship with Bea, was especially distraught with this draft of *NA*. In a mimeographed memorandum of September 3, 1964, he addressed all the Council Fathers; it included the following dramatic declaration:

A message that regards the Jews as a candidate for conversion and proclaims that the destiny of Judaism is to disappear will be abhorred by the Jews all over the world and is bound to foster reciprocal distrust as well as bitterness and resentment. . . . I am ready to go to Auschwitz any time, if faced with the alternative of conversion or death.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> At this juncture, chapter 5 of the schema *De oecumenismo* was on religious freedom. By spring 1964, *De Iudaeis* was placed as an appendix to the schema on ecumenism.

<sup>51</sup> Cited in Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother* 253.

<sup>52</sup> Text in Merton and *Judaism: Holiness in Words*, ed. Beatrice Bruteau (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2003) 223–24. Heschel also sent a copy of his memorandum to Thomas Merton, whom he had met at Gethsemane Abbey in July 1964. Merton responded to Heschel: "It is simply incredible. I don't know what to say about it." He then wrote in his journal: "Abraham Heschel sent a memo on the new Jewish chapter. It is incredibly bad. All the sense has been taken out of it, all the light, and it has become a stuffy and pointless piece of formalism, with the incredibly stupid addition that the Church is looking forward with hope to the union of the Jews with herself. As a humble theological and eschatological desire, yes, maybe; but that was not what was meant. It is this lack of spiritual and eschatological sense, this unawareness of the real need for profound change that makes such statements pitiable. Total lack of prophetic insight and even of elementary compunction. It is precisely in prophetic and therefore deeply humiliated and humanly impoverished thirst for light that Christians and Jews can begin to find a kind of unity in seeking God's will together. For Rome simply to declare itself, as she now is, the mouthpiece of God and perfect interpreter of His will

Oesterreicher, too, was deeply disturbed. In May 1964 he sought intervention from Cardinal Franz König of Vienna and the support of Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston. When the conciliar participants returned to Rome in September 1964, they joined in the “Great Debate” of September 28–29 in which Bea introduced a new draft for discussion. Responding to Oesterreicher’s prompting, Cushing addressed the council, proposing three amendments: (1) that the statement be more positive, illustrating what Jews and Christians shared in common; (2) that Jews should not be regarded as culpable for the death of Jesus; and (3) that Christians have too often remained indifferent to the fate of Jews.<sup>53</sup>

At the conclusion of the Great Debate, Archbishop John Heenan of Westminster announced that the text implying Jews should ultimately join the church would be replaced with the following formulation, suggested by Oesterreicher: “In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits the day, known to God alone, when all people will call on the Lord with a single voice and ‘serve him with one accord.’”<sup>54</sup> This was precisely the language Thieme had used in the theses he had drafted for the Evanston meeting in 1954.

During the third session of the council in November 1964, the tract *De Iudaeis* was placed in a new context: as the core of *Declaratio De Ecclesiae habitudine ad religiones non-Christianas*. This had required adding advisers competent to draft wording on Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. The drafters also endeavored to find language expressive of Judaism as both a people and a religion. In the end, they chose “stock of Abraham” (*stirps Abrahae*); in German, this was *Stamm Abrahams* (“tribe of Abraham”), the phrase used by Thieme in his Evanston theses.<sup>55</sup> They also made clear that the promises made to the “stock of Abraham” remained in force by using the present tense: “theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenant

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for Jews (with the implication that He in no way speaks to them directly) is simply monstrous!” (quoted in *Merton and Judaism* 225). For an assessment of Heschel’s role as a consultant to the American Jewish Committee during the council, and of his tense meeting with Pope Paul VI, see Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940–1972* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2007) 238–76.

<sup>53</sup> Text in A. James Rudin, *Cushing, Spellman, O’Connor: The Surprising Story of How Three American Cardinals Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012) 108–9.

<sup>54</sup> The various drafts of *NA* are available in Latin and English in *Merton and Judaism*; citation, 352. The Sisters of Zion wrote to Archbishop Heenan in 1964 to record their disappointment with the draft calling for Jewish conversion; see Emma Green, “Sisters of Zion: The Nuns Who Opened Their Doors for Europe’s Jews,” *Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/sisters-of-sion-the-nuns-who-opened-their-doors-for-europes-jews/263525>.

<sup>55</sup> Connolly, *From Enemy to Brother* 259–60.

and the law and the worship and the promises.” Moreover, their wording echoed that of *Lumen gentium* (*LG*), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church no. 16, which had been approved that same month:

Finally, those who have not yet received the gospel are related to the People of God in various ways. There is, first, that people to which the covenants and promises were made, and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh (cf. Rom. 9:4–5): in view of the divine choice, they are a people most dear for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts of God are without repentance (cf. Rom. 11:28–29).

On October 28, 1965, the council took up the final version. It maintained the eschatological perspective of the November 1964 draft: “Together with the prophets and the same apostle [Paul], the Church awaits the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and ‘serve him shoulder to shoulder.’”<sup>56</sup> Yet in other respects, the text had been weakened. The term *deicide* had been removed. Whereas the November 1964 draft stated that the “Jewish People is never to be represented as a reprobate race or accursed or guilty of deicide,” the final version read: “It is true that the Church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed, as if this followed from holy Scripture.” Similarly, in previous versions antisemitism was “deplored and condemned,” but in the final text it was “deplored.”<sup>57</sup> The pastoral concern, more evident in the first draft, had lost its vigor by the time of the final text. Nevertheless, the final declaration “created a space both in breadth and depth within the Roman Catholic Church for genuine inter-religious dialogue.”<sup>58</sup>

And yet:

In October 1965, many bishops raised their hand in ethical assent while unthinkingly keeping to their anti-Judaic views. Even Cardinal Bea . . . wrote that Jerusalem had once been destroyed because of the “guilt” of its inhabitants, “since they directly witnessed the preaching, the miracles, the solemn entrance of Jesus.” . . . During Lent 1965 Pope Paul preached on the crucifixion: “It is a grave and sad page. It describes in fact the clash between Jesus and the Jewish people. That people predestined to receive the Messiah, who awaited him for thousands of years and [were] completely absorbed in the hope . . . at the right moment when Christ came, spoke, and presented himself, not only did not recognize him, but fought him, slandered him, and injured him; and in the end they killed him.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Here the text cites Zephaniah 3:9: “At that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord” (NRSV). The November 1964 draft cited Wisdom 3:9, but this seems a mistaken reference; see Isa 66:23; Ps 65:4; Rom 11:11–32.

<sup>57</sup> References to the November 1964 draft are from *Merton and Judaism* 353.

<sup>58</sup> Mathijs Lamberigts and Leo Declerck, “Vatican II on the Jews: A Historical Survey,” in *Never Revoked: Nostra Aetate as Ongoing Challenge for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. Marianne Moyaert and Didier Pollefeyt (Leuven: Peeters, 2010) 13–56, at 55.

<sup>59</sup> Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother* 268–69.

It is hardly surprising that the formulations of *NA* did not immediately change the thinking even of those who voted in its favor. The traditional tropes of the teaching of contempt were firmly entrenched, and most of the bishops knew very little about Judaism other than through the lens of Catholic views.

It has now been nearly 50 years since the promulgation of *NA*. Yet, in the phrase of Cardinal Walter Kasper, “We stand only at the beginning of a new beginning.”<sup>60</sup>

### Postconciliar Developments

Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, writing shortly after the council, observed that many of its texts, including *NA*, encompassed a “bipolarity of tendencies.”<sup>61</sup> For example, *NA* no. 4, citing Paul, speaks of the Jews as remaining “very dear to God” yet asserts that the “Church is the new people of God.” Does the claim that the church is the “new” people of God imply that the church has replaced the Jews as God’s people, even if they remain “very dear to God”?<sup>62</sup> A similar bipolarity is even more pronounced in the postconciliar period. For example, the Vatican’s *Dialogue and Proclamation* speaks of interreligious dialogue as “truly part of the dialogue of salvation initiated by God” (no. 80); dialogue “implies reciprocity and aims at banishing fear and aggressiveness” (no. 83). *Dominus Iesus*, by contrast, asserts: “If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation” (no. 22).<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Cardinal Walter Kasper, foreword to Philip A. Cunningham et al., *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) x–xviii, at xiv.

<sup>61</sup> Arthur Gilbert, *The Vatican Council and the Jews* (Cleveland: World, 1968) 215. In his judgment, such a bipolarity could not be maintained: “As the Church moves inevitably toward a fuller ecumenicity, a more profound dialogue with non-Christians, and a more active involvement in the world, laggards will fall in the breach or change their direction” (215).

<sup>62</sup> See Carol Ann Martinelli, “‘People of God’ in Selected Vatican II and post-Vatican II Documents” (PhD diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> CDF, Declaration “*Dominus Iesus*,” [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominus-iesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html), emphasis original. Vatican II spoke of elements in the religious tradition of non-Christians that encompass “elements which are true and good” (*LG* no.16). *Ad gentes*, the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, exhorts missionaries to take cognizance of the “traditions of asceticism and contemplation” that are “sown by God” (no. 18); they will find “elements of truth and grace” manifesting a “secret presence of God” (no. 9), “seeds of the Word” (nos. 11 and 15). On May 19, 1991, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue issued *Dialogue and Proclamation*; on August 6, 2000, the CDF issued *Dominus Iesus*. *Dialogue and Proclamation* has its own “bipolarity of tendencies”; see *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and*



While not resolving all the tensions, Vatican commissions and numerous episcopal conferences have promulgated significant documents that expand and refine *NA*. These include three instructions from the Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ), established in October 1974: *Guidelines* (1974); *Notes* (1985); and *We Remember* (1988).<sup>64</sup> In the United States various committees and secretariats of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops issued teaching documents on how to preach or dramatize potentially anti-Jewish texts (*God's Mercy Endures Forever* and *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion*, both in 1988).<sup>65</sup>

Complementing this documentary trajectory has been the establishment of numerous institutions and organizations committed to enhancing relations between Catholics and Jews. Many Catholic universities now have positions in Jewish studies. Further, some 20 Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada house a Jewish-Christian center of learning or holocaust study center.<sup>66</sup> These centers provide, in addition to public programs, opportunities for scholarly exchange, and contribute to the burgeoning scholarly literature on relations between Christians and Jews, including the online, peer-reviewed journal, *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, published under the auspices of Boston College's Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. Moreover, religious textbooks have been revised to make *NA*'s teachings widely accessible.<sup>67</sup>

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*Dialogue and Proclamation*, ed. William Burrows (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993); and Mark Plaiss, "Dialogue and Proclamation a Decade Later: A Retreat?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38 (2001) 191–95. See Stephen J. Pope and Charles C. Hefling, eds., *Sic et Non: Encountering Dominus Iesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002); and Terrence Tilley, "Christian Orthodoxy and Religious Pluralism," *Modern Theology* 22 (2006) 51–63; he and Gavin D'Costa exchanged views in *Modern Theology* 23 (2007) 435–68.

<sup>64</sup> The full titles: *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration "Nostra Aetate"* (n. 4); *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*; *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*. These documents are all available on the Vatican website and easily found by inserting the titles into an Internet search engine.

<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic>. A recent anthology collects Protestant, Roman Catholic, ecumenical, and joint Christian-Jewish statements and provides commentary; see Franklin Sherman, ed., *Bridges: Documents of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, vol. 1, *The Road to Reconciliation, 1945–1985* (New York: Paulist, 2011); vol. 2 is forthcoming.

<sup>66</sup> See the website of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations, <http://www.ccrj.us>.

<sup>67</sup> See John T. Pawlikowski, *Catechetics and Prejudice: How Catholic Teaching Materials View Jews, Protestants, and Racial Minorities* (New York: Paulist, 1973), which summarizes the findings of Rose Thering's 1961 doctoral dissertation; Claire Hutchet Bishop, *How Catholics Look at Jews: Inquiries into Italian, Spanish, and French Teaching Materials* (New York: Paulist, 1974); Eugene J. Fisher, *Faith without Prejudice: Rebuilding Christian Attitudes toward Judaism* (New York: Paulist, 1977);

What, then, are the “bipolarities” regarding the interpretation of *NA* and the ecclesial documents intended to facilitate its implementation? Debate around the following four questions highlights key tensions and exposes significant differences between the USCCB and theologians of the Catholic-Jewish relationship: (1) Is God still covenanted with the people Israel, and with what implications? (2) Does the language of promise-fulfillment imply that the promises to Israel are fulfilled only in Christ? (3) What is the mission of the Catholic Church with regard to the Jewish people? (4) What role should the largely “tormented history” vis-à-vis Jews play in a Catholic theology of relationship with Jews?<sup>68</sup> The first three questions are closely intertwined, as will be evident in the brief analyses that follow. Moreover, the extent to which one is affected by the church’s historical relationship with Jews in part shapes one’s response to the other three questions.

### *Covenant*

The issue of covenant is multifaceted. In some theological quarters, whether or not Jews remain in a covenantal relationship since the coming of Christ is disputed. Further, differing biblical texts and hermeneutical principles are employed in the course of substantiating theological judgments. Review of the conciliar and postconciliar documents illustrates these differences.

Although *NA* does not directly address the question of Jewish covenantal status, its claim that the Jews remain “most dear to God” may be read as an implicit affirmation that God’s covenant remains in effect. The 1974 *Guidelines* recommends that efforts be made to “acquire a better understanding of whatever in the Old Testament retains its own perpetual value (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 14–15), since that has not been canceled by the later interpretation of the New Testament.” Presumably, that “perpetual value” exists for Jews as well as for Catholics. *Guidelines* also speaks of the “continuity of our faith with that of the earlier Covenant. . . . We believe that those promises were fulfilled with the first coming of Christ. But it is nonetheless true that we still await their perfect fulfillment in his glorious return at the end of time” (part II). Thus, *Guidelines* suggests that fulfillment be regarded eschatologically.

Pope John Paul II added significant commentary on the phrase “perpetual value of the Old Testament” in his assertion in 1980 that Jews are the

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Peter Fiedler, “Categories for a Correct Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Current Roman Catholic Religious Teaching,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 21 (1984) 470–88; and Philip A. Cunningham, *Education for Shalom: Religion Textbooks and the Enhancement of the Catholic and Jewish Relationship* (Philadelphia: American Interfaith Institute, 1995).

<sup>68</sup> The third section of *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* begins: “The history of relations between Jews and Christians is a tormented one” (<http://www.cccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/vatican-curial/278-we-remember>).

“people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God.” In that same speech, he referred to Judaism as “a living heritage, which must be understood and *preserved in its depth and richness* by us Catholic Christians” (emphasis added).<sup>69</sup> Over the years, the pope’s wording has assumed greater importance, as is evident by its inclusion in the 1985 *Notes*. In addition, the iconic moments associated with his papacy—embracing Rabbi Elio Toaff in the Rome Synagogue, inserting a prayer for forgiveness into the Western Wall, and meeting with Holocaust survivors at Yad Vashem—signal a high regard for Judaism as irrevocably covenanted with God.

Although the 1985 *Notes* does not speak explicitly about covenant, it does claim (sec. VI) that “the permanence of Israel is . . . a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God’s design. . . . It remains a chosen people, ‘the pure olive on which were grafted the branches of the wild olive which are the gentiles’ (John Paul II, 6 March 1982, alluding to *Rom* 11:17–24).”

Seeking to build on these notions, a group of theologians and persons involved in Catholic ecumenical and interreligious work composed a brief study document in 2002, “Reflections on Covenant and Mission.”<sup>70</sup> The authors took issue with what they viewed as a narrow construal of evangelization: inviting persons with whom one is engaged in interreligious dialogue to faith in Christ, and thus to baptism and the church. Rather, they argued, inviting the other to baptism is but one aspect of evangelization—and not appropriate in interreligious dialogue. Catholics engaged in such dialogue are involved in “a mutually enriching sharing of gifts devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism.” This witness to their faith is indeed a dimension of evangelization because it is a “way of engaging in the Church’s mission.”<sup>71</sup>

Citing Cardinal Walter Kasper, then president of the CRRJ, “Covenant and Mission” continued: “God’s grace, which is the grace of Jesus Christ

<sup>69</sup> The text of the pope’s 1980 address in Mainz, Germany, is published in *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, ed. Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki (New York: Crossroad, 1995) 13–15, at 15. See also *Notes* I.3.

<sup>70</sup> This statement grew out of consultations among delegates of the USCCB’s Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and of the National Council of Synagogues. “Reflections on Covenant and Mission” has two sections, one authored by the Jewish working group, the other authored by a Catholic group. The latter included staff persons from the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and other USCCB offices, members of the Advisory Committee for the Secretariat, and Cardinal William Keeler. In the interests of full disclosure, I was a member of that working group. It is inaccurate, however, to assign authorship simply to John Pawlikowski, Philip Cunningham, and me (see John Connelly, “The Catholic Church and Mission to the Jews,” in *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics* 96–133, at 117. See also John Borelli, “Troubled Waters,” *America* 202.5 [February 22, 2010] 20–23).

<sup>71</sup> Text available at [http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research\\_sites/cj/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/ncs\\_usccb120802.htm](http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cj/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/ncs_usccb120802.htm).

according to our faith, is available to all. Therefore, the Church believes that Judaism, i.e., the faithful response of the Jewish people to God's irrevocable covenant, is salvific for them, because God is faithful to his promises."<sup>72</sup> It thus follows that "Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God." Even if Jewish witness to God's reign did not originate with the church's experience of "Christ crucified and raised," it should not be "curtailed" by seeking to convert Jews to Christianity. "The distinctive Jewish witness must be sustained if Catholics and Jews are truly to be, as Pope John Paul II has envisioned, 'a blessing to one another.'"<sup>73</sup>

This document elicited a sharp critique from the late Jesuit theologian and cardinal Avery Dulles, who became the most prominent critic of the notion that Jews remained covenanted with God. Dulles believed the council had left open the question of whether the Old Covenant remained valid. Taking issue with *NA*'s use of Romans 9–11 as its scriptural grounding, Dulles countered that the Letter to the Hebrews should instead be regarded as "the most formal statement on the status of the Sinai covenant under Christianity." Hebrews, he argued, "points out that in view of the new covenant promised by God through the prophet Jeremiah, the first covenant is 'obsolete' and 'ready to vanish away' (Heb. 8:13). The priesthood and the law have changed (Heb 7:12). Christ, we are told, 'abolishes the first [covenant] in order to establish the second (Heb 10:9).'"<sup>74</sup>

Dulles was not alone in his critique, as is evident in my next section on promise and fulfillment.

### *Promise and Fulfillment*

Questions about the status of the covenant are related to how one understands fulfillment. Although *Notes* says that promise and fulfillment "throw light on each other" (sec. I), the document moves only in the direction of a

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. See also Eugene B. Korn and John T. Pawlikowski, eds., *Two Faiths, One Covenant? Jewish and Christian Identity in the Presence of the Other* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); and Peter A. Pettit, "Covenants Old and New," in *Covenantal Conversations: Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008) 26–41.

<sup>74</sup> Avery Dulles, "Covenant and Mission," *America* 187.12 (October 21, 2002) 8–11, [http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=2550&comments=1#readcomments](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2550&comments=1#readcomments). Philip A. Cunningham deals at length with what he terms the "minimalist reading" of Dulles's interpretation of *NA*; see "Official Ecclesial Documents to Implement Vatican II on Relations with Jews: Study Them, Become Immersed in Them, and Put Them into Practice," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4 (2009) 1–36, <http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr/issue/view/130>. Biblical scholars see Hebrews through a lens quite different from Dulles's; see especially Jesper Svartvik, "Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews without Presupposing Supersessionism," in *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today* 77–91.

one-way road: how the Old Testament prepares for the New. Its emphasis lies on the unity of biblical revelation and of the divine plan, particularly through typology as the traditional method through which the church has held the Testaments together. The Exodus, for example, should be interpreted as an “experience of salvation and liberation that is not complete in itself, but . . . has the capacity to be developed further.” Indeed, “salvation and liberation are already accomplished in Christ and gradually realized by the sacraments in the Church. This makes way for the fulfillment of God’s design” (sec. II).

*Notes*, however, does hint at problems with the conventional presentation of promise-fulfillment, asserting: “Typology, however, makes many people uneasy and is perhaps the sign of a problem unresolved.” Strangely, it provides no explicit indication of what might stir this unease, although it does distinguish between Christian and Jewish readings of the Old Testament (sec. II) and reiterates that the Old Testament retains its own revelatory value (sec. II). Overall, however, *Notes* works along the traditional lines of salvation history in which the promises to the people Israel are fulfilled in Christ and the church.<sup>75</sup> Even as it speaks of Jews as remaining a chosen people, and of Judaism’s “continuous spiritual fecundity,” the document undercuts its own claims: God has chosen the Jews “to prepare for the coming of Christ”; they have “preserved everything that was progressively revealed and given in the course of that preparation, notwithstanding their difficulty in recognizing in Him their Messiah” (sec. I). By continuing to define Jews according to a hermeneutic of promise and fulfillment, *Notes* ties “Judaism to a procrustean bed of theological suppositions. By implication Judaism is presented as a failed religion. Judaism fails to save its adherents, fails to understand its Scriptures, fails to accept its Messiah.”<sup>76</sup> Ironically, *Notes* ignores an important principle expressed in the earlier *Guidelines*: Christians must “strive to acquire a better knowledge of the basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism; *they must strive to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience*” (Preamble, emphasis added).<sup>77</sup> Even this important principle reveals

<sup>75</sup> See Bradford E. Hinze, “The End of Salvation History,” *Horizons* 18 (1991) 227–45; and Mary C. Boys, *Biblical Interpretation in Religious Education: A Study of the Kerygmatic Era* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education, 1980).

<sup>76</sup> Judith Banki and Alan L. Mittelman, “Why the ‘Notes’ Were Disappointing—Jews and Catholics: Taking Stock,” *Commonweal* 112.15 (September 6, 1985) 463–68, at 467.

<sup>77</sup> *Notes* speaks of the “urgency and importance of precise, objective and rigorously accurate teaching on Judaism for our faithful” (I.8), and confesses that “there is evident in particular a painful ignorance of the history and traditions of Judaism, of which only negative aspects and often caricature seem to form part of the stock ideas of many Christians” (Conclusion).

a problem, since Jews do not define themselves solely in terms of religion. This difference between Jewish and Christian self-definition compounds the complex nexus of issues concerning the Land and State of Israel.<sup>78</sup>

Progress in transcending the linear understanding of fulfillment and in manifesting a sensitivity to Jewish self-definition is apparent in the PBC's 2001 monograph, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*.<sup>79</sup> The PBC argues that fulfillment is an "extremely complex" notion that can be distorted when one overemphasizes either continuity or discontinuity. Christianity recognizes Christ as the fulfillment of the Scriptures and of Israel's hopes, but it does not "understand this fulfillment as a literal one," because "Jesus is not confined to playing an already fixed role—that of Messiah—but he confers, on the notions of Messiah and salvation, a fullness which could not have been imagined in advance" (II.A.5).

Reading the Old Testament as Christians, the PBC instructs, involves "retrospective re-readings" (II.A.6). One finds there neither direct reference to Christ nor to Christian realities. Rather, the Christian reading is a *theological interpretation* that must be complemented by historical-critical exegesis:

Although the Christian reader is aware that the internal dynamism of the Old Testament finds its goal in Jesus, this is a retrospective perception whose point of departure is not in the text as such, but in the events of the New Testament proclaimed by the apostolic preaching. It cannot be said, therefore, that Jews do not see what has been proclaimed in the text, but that the Christian, in the light of Christ and in the Spirit, discovers in the text a surplus of meaning that was hidden there (II.A.6).

The PBC draws an important conclusion from its argument about fulfillment as involving a "retrospective re-reading":

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. Each of these two readings is part of the vision of each respective faith of which it is a product and an expression. Consequently, they cannot be reduced one into the other (II.A.7).

Yet, recent editorial decisions at the USCCB fail to incorporate even the insights of *Guidelines* and *Notes*, let alone those of the PBC document. An example may be seen in a change made to *The United States Catholic*

<sup>78</sup> See Ruth Langer, "Theologies of the Land and State of Israel," *Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations* 3 (2008) 1–17, <http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol3>. Israel may well be the most difficult issue in current relations between and among Jews and Christians—a topic deserving of its own essay.

<sup>79</sup> At <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/vatican-curia/282-pbc2001#5.%20The%20Unity%20of%20God%27s%20Plan%20and%20the%20Idea%20of%20Fulfillment>.

*Catechism for Adults*. Published in 2006, it initially included the following statement about the relations of the Jewish people to Catholicism: The call of Abraham “began the history of God’s revealing his divine plan of salvation to a chosen people with whom he made *enduring* covenants. Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses *remains eternally valid for them*.”<sup>80</sup> In 2008, however, the US bishops voted to replace the claim about the covenant’s eternal validity with a citation from Paul: “To the Jewish people, whom God first chose to hear his word, ‘belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ’ (Rom 9:4–5; cf. CCC [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*], no. 839).”<sup>81</sup>

This seemingly minor edit becomes more problematic in view of the rationale provided by two spokesmen. According to the then-general secretary of the USCCB, Msgr. David Malloy:

Catholics understand that all previous covenants that God made with the Jewish people have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ through the new covenant established through his sacrificial death on the cross. The prior version of the text might be understood to imply that one of the former covenants imparts salvation without the mediation of Christ, whom Christians believe to be the universal savior of all people.<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, the then-executive director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the USCCB, Rev. James Massa, a former doctoral student of Avery Dulles, said the change was intended to remove ambiguity. Massa stated that while church teaching affirms that Jews are “in a real relationship with God based on a covenant that has never been revoked,” nevertheless, “all covenants with Israel find fulfillment in Christ, who is savior of all.”<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Washington: USCCB, 2006) 131, emphasis added.

<sup>81</sup> At [http://old.usccb.org/mr/mediatalk/backgrounder\\_recognitio.shtml](http://old.usccb.org/mr/mediatalk/backgrounder_recognitio.shtml).

<sup>82</sup> Citation from the Catholic News Service story, “Bishops Vote to Change U.S. Catechism on Jewish Covenant with God” (August 12, 2008), [http://www.usccb.org/stories/bishops\\_vote\\_catec.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/stories/bishops_vote_catec.shtml). In March 2012, Malloy was appointed the bishop of the Diocese of Rockford, Illinois.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* Gavin D’Costa, in arguing for the theological legitimacy of a mission to the Jews, asserts that in principle fulfillment avoids both abrogation of Judaism and supersessionism; it “thus provides the argumentative link for why mission pertains to the Jews, who are still especially favored by God and to whom revelation has been granted in the Old Testament.” It is not clear, however, how this is the case. See his “What Does the Catholic Church Teach about Mission to the Jewish People?” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012) 590–613, at 604. Because this issue of *TS* includes two essays that challenge D’Costa’s arguments, I have chosen not to focus on his essay. See Edward Kessler, “A Jewish Response to Gavin D’Costa,” *ibid.* 614–28; and John T. Pawlikowski, “A Catholic Response to Gavin D’Costa,” *ibid.* 629–40.

The refusal to teach that God's covenant with Jews is "eternally valid" constitutes a "cloud on the horizon of Jewish-Catholic relations," according to Jesuit New Testament scholar John Donahue. The editorial change, he says, obscures the eschatological context of Romans and presages "disturbing developments that may make future dialogue less fruitful":

In removing the original wording of the *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, are the ambiguity and stimulus to reflection evoked by the phrase "covenant never revoked" qualified or are they nullified? Unless cited elsewhere, Pope John Paul II's strong statement will never be read in the revised catechism. . . . The toning down of the strong statements of John Paul II on "the covenant never revoked" "may herald a return to a discredited supersessionism, one that ultimately disregards the past and continuing action of God among the Jewish people."<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, ambiguity seems to be a problem for the USCCB, as may be seen in the June 2009 "A Note on Ambiguities Contained in *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*." In their critique of the study document, the Committee on Doctrine and the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs asserts that it is "incomplete and potentially misleading . . . to refer to the enduring quality of the covenant without adding that for Catholics Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God fulfills both in history and in the end of time the special relationship God established with Israel" (no. 5).<sup>85</sup> They continue, quoting Vatican II's *Dei verbum* no. 15: "The principal purpose to which the plan of the old covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ, the redeemer of all and of the messianic kingdom, to announce this coming by prophecy, and to indicate its meaning through various types" (no. 5).

In their aspiration to be unambiguous, the bishops here are either unacquainted with or reject the PBC's argument that fulfillment is "extremely complex." Further, the insistence in "Note on Ambiguities" that Christ fulfills the Scriptures stands in tension with the PBC's interpretation that such a claim should be seen as an element of a Christian retrospective rereading, not a literal claim. Rather than wrestle with how to communicate a more nuanced and complex understanding that has developed among biblical scholars and scholars of the Catholic-Jewish relationship,

<sup>84</sup> John R. Donahue, "Trouble Ahead? The Future of Jewish-Catholic Relations," *Commonweal* 136.5 (March 13, 2009) 19–23.

<sup>85</sup> USCCB, "A Note on Ambiguities Contained in *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*," <http://old.usccb.org/doctrine/covenant09.pdf>. See the news release issued by the USCCB's Office of Communication shortly after the 2002 release of "Reflections on Covenant and Mission," in which Cardinal Keeler is quoted as saying that the document "presents the state of thought among the participants of a dialogue that has been going on for a number of years between the U.S. Catholic Church and the Jewish community in this country" (<http://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/interreligious/bceia-ncs/1092-ncs-bceianews2002aug16>).



they simply reiterate and insist on a timeworn formulation.<sup>86</sup> A similar tension is evident in the question of mission.

### *Mission*

In their June 2009 “Note on Ambiguities,” the bishops criticized the claim that interreligious dialogue should be understood as a “mutually enriching sharing of gifts devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism.”<sup>87</sup> While the bishops agreed that Catholics participating in interreligious dialogue would not normally explicitly invite their dialogue partners to be baptized and join the church, yet “the Christian dialogue partner is always giving witness to the following of Christ, *to which all are implicitly invited.*”<sup>88</sup> This formulation raised immediate concern in American Jewish circles; within two months, five major Jewish agencies collaborated in sending a letter of concern. So too did others experienced in Catholic-Jewish dialogue.<sup>89</sup> In response, five members of the USCCB said that some Catholics and Jews had “misinterpreted” their “Note on Ambiguities.” Nevertheless, they indicated they would excise that sentence so as to “address the concerns you and others have raised about the relationship between dialogue and witness.” Thus, in the October 2009 revised “Note on Ambiguities,” the bishops appended a “Statement of Principles for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue,” including the assertion that this dialogue “has never been and will never be used by the Catholic Church as a means of proselytism—nor is it intended as a disguised invitation to baptism.”<sup>90</sup>

The bishops also repeated the claim that Jesus Christ “fulfills in himself all of God’s promises and covenants with the people of Israel.”<sup>91</sup>

The bishops, “acting in harmony with the Pope,” also reserve authoritative representation of Catholic belief to themselves. The work of theologians makes “an invaluable contribution to interreligious dialogue,” but the

<sup>86</sup> See Ralph W. Klein, “Promise and Fulfillment,” in *Contesting Texts: Jews and Christians in Conversations about the Bible*, ed. Melody D. Knowles et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 47–66.

<sup>87</sup> USCCB, “Reflections on Covenant and Mission,” August 12, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

<sup>89</sup> The leadership team of the Sisters of Sion, the Council of Centers for Christian-Jewish Relations, and the International Council of Christians and Jews were among those expressing disagreement with the suggestion that interreligious dialogue includes an implicit invitation to the following of Christ.

<sup>90</sup> This is the third of six principles issued in October 2009, “Statement of Principles for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue,” <http://www.addresscjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/us-conference-of-catholic-bishops/584-usccbdialogue09oct2>. The statement was issued by Cardinals Francis George and William Keeler, Archbishop Wilton Gregory, and Bishops William Lori and William Murphy.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* This is taken from the second of the six principles.

bishops “have a responsibility to our Jewish partners to distinguish for them when a statement refers to Church teaching and when it is a theological opinion of scholars.”<sup>92</sup> Since, however, the bishops have ignored the more nuanced understandings evident in postconciliar documents, their division between church teaching and the (mere) theological opinion of scholars is problematic.

One wonders what the bishops would say to Johann Baptist Metz: “Ask yourselves if the theology you are learning is such that it could remain unchanged before and after Auschwitz. If this be the case, be on your guard.”<sup>93</sup>

### *Facing History*

In their monograph, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures*, the PBC acknowledges the imperative of post-Shoah theology: “The horror in the wake of the extermination of the Jews (the *Shoah*) during the Second World War has led all the Churches to rethink their relationship with Judaism and, as a result, to reconsider their interpretation of the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament.”<sup>94</sup> Unlike the authors of the 1985 *Notes* who declared that catechesis should “help in understanding the *meaning for Jews* of the extermination during the years 1939–1945, and its consequences” (sec. VI, emphasis added), the PBC acknowledges that the Shoah necessitates Christian rethinking of its relationship with Judaism. Yet here too the bipolar tendencies are evident.

Three years before the promulgation of PBC’s monograph, the CRRJ released its own reflection on the Shoah, *We Remember*.<sup>95</sup> The horrors of this genocide, the CRRJ said, cannot be measured by ordinary criteria of historical research but must become the subject of moral and religious reflection. Unfortunately, the document distorts the historical record and obfuscates the extent of the church’s complicity both in the Shoah itself and in the long centuries of the “teaching of contempt,” as a considerable

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. This is based on the fourth of the six principles.

<sup>93</sup> Johann Baptist Metz, *Emergent Church*, trans. Peter Mann (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 29.

<sup>94</sup> *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* II.A.7. While *NA* makes no specific reference to the Holocaust, the preamble to the *Guidelines* situates *NA* in “circumstances deeply affected by the memory of the persecution and massacre of Jews which took place in Europe.”

<sup>95</sup> See Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Catholics Remember the Holocaust* (Washington: USCC, 1998) 47–55. This edition complements the statement of the Holy See by including statements of other episcopal conferences, including the more forthright 1977 “Declaration of Repentance” by the bishops of France.

literature attests.<sup>96</sup> Despite the document's significant shortcomings, it nevertheless expresses, at times quite eloquently, a deep sorrow "for the failures of her sons and daughters in every age" and a summons to repentance (*teshuvah*): "The Church approaches with deep respect and great compassion the experience of extermination, the *Shoah*, suffered by the Jewish people during World War II. It is not a matter of mere words, but indeed of binding commitment."<sup>97</sup>

But what is the nature of the church's repentance?<sup>98</sup> What might it mean to take responsibility, morally and religiously, for our "tormented history" with the Jewish people? Let me suggest three dimensions of the church's *teshuvah*: facing this history, engaging in a rigorous theological examination of what the church is teaching about Judaism in the course of teaching about the Christian life, and incorporating the scholarship that has emerged from Christian-Jewish dialogue.

To face our history means being affected by the wounds Christianity has inflicted on the Jewish people throughout the centuries. This requires a willingness to be attentive to disturbing truths about one's own tradition—a vulnerability that refuses defensiveness in the face of disquieting truths. For this we need the virtue of humility, as Elizabeth Groppe writes. Drawing on Augustine's *Confessions*, she suggests that human pride (*superbia*) is a fundamental misdirection of human desire. Augustine believed that the antidote to pride was God's love as mediated by the humility of the crucified Christ; Christ is the *medicus humilis*, the doctor of humility. Yet while walking the streets of Jerusalem in 2007 in the company of Jewish and Muslim scholars, Groppe muses about what the Bishop of Hippo would say of a "history in which *crucesignati* (crusaders, those signed by the cross) murder Jews in an archbishop's palace [in Mainz in 1096] and kill Muslim women and children seeking sanctuary in a mosque [Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque in 1099]." Such atrocities mean that the cross that served for Augustine as such a meaningful symbol of humility has today become a symbol associated with

<sup>96</sup> See John T. Pawlikowski, "The Vatican and the Holocaust: Putting 'We Remember' in Context," *Dimensions* 12.2 (1998) 11–16; Michael Phayer, "Pope Pius XII, the Holocaust and the Cold War," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 12.2 (1998) 233–256; Randolph L. Braham, "Remembering and Forgetting: The Vatican, the German Hierarchy, and the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13.2 (1999) 222–51; and Kevin Madigan, "A Survey of Jewish Reaction to the Vatican Statement on the Holocaust," *Cross Currents* 50 (2000) 488–505.

<sup>97</sup> NCCB, *Catholics Remember the Holocaust* 72. In a March 2000 service of repentance in St. Peter's Basilica, Pope John Paul II and various Vatican officials offered prayers that explicitly named sins committed by members of the church. These sins included causing Jewish suffering, violation of the rights of ethnic groups and peoples, failure to acknowledge women's equality, and intolerance.

<sup>98</sup> See Bradford E. Hinze, "Ecclesial Repentance and the Demands of Dialogue," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 207–38.

Christian violence. In response, she suggests, we follow Augustine in practicing theology in the mode of confession. Further, we need to scrutinize Christian teaching and worship to discern whether they “contain elements that may legitimate or even sacralize humiliation and violence.”<sup>99</sup>

Precisely because Christian identity is linked to Judaism, shallow or uninformed depictions of Judaism distort Christian self-understanding. Particularly after the Shoah, Christians are obliged to replace the “teaching of contempt” with educational materials that accurately represent Judaism. Again, a recent publication from the USCCB fails to engage postconciliar texts that present a more adequate understanding of Judaism. The section on Judaism in the 2008 *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* provides a striking case in point. Intended to provide guidance for the doctrinal content in Catholic secondary education, this 53-page manual, written in the form of sentence outlines, includes a section on the relationship of the Catholic Church to the Jewish people. While it notes that the church has a special link with the Jewish people, many propositions lack critical nuance. For example, the manual claims that the “Jewish people are the original Chosen People of God; Christians are the new People of God.”<sup>100</sup> The sentence implies that Christians have replaced Jews as God’s people. Granted, *NA* makes a similar assertion, but given the rich scholarship in the postconciliar years, simply to retain its formulation is highly problematic, if not irresponsible.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, the document states that the “New Covenant with Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promises of the first Covenant between God and the Jewish people.” After these claims, the document limns two fundamental differences between Judaism and Catholicism: (1) Jews “do not acknowledge Jesus as a Divine Person, the Son of God, or the promised Messiah, nor do they accept the revealed truth of the Triune God, which is what is unique to Christian Revelation”; (2) Jews have “no sacramental economy; they continue to rely on the ritual prescriptions of the first Covenant reinterpreted for post-Temple Judaism.”<sup>102</sup>

Passed over in silence is any sense of the “continuous spiritual fecundity” spoken of in the *Notes*. A simplistic promise-fulfillment schema is promulgated without any sense of the concept of “retrospective rereading.”

<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Groppe, “After Augustine: Humility and the Search for God in Historical Memory,” in *Learned Ignorance: Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (New York: Oxford University, 2011) 191–209, at 200, 202.

<sup>100</sup> *Doctrinal Elements* 51, <http://old.usccb.org/education/framework.pdf>. This assertion cites the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) no. 840.

<sup>101</sup> See Elizabeth T. Groppe, “Revisiting Vatican II’s Theology of the People of God after Forty Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue,” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011) 586–619.

<sup>102</sup> *Doctrinal Elements* 52.

as the PCB instructed. The writers leave no theological space for the Jewish people today. Drawing only on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, they make no reference whatsoever to *NA*, to the 1974 *Guidelines*, to the 1985 *Notes*, or to the formulations of the PBC's *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures* (2001). To assert that Jews lack a "sacramental economy" reveals a sort of Catholic narcissism in which the "other" is viewed only in accord with one's own framework. Similarly, the caricature of Jewish worship as a reliance on ritual prescriptions of the Old Testament reveals an astonishing ignorance of Jewish liturgy.<sup>103</sup>

*Doctrinal Elements* does admit that anti-Judaism or antisemitism "was evident among Catholics for many centuries," but it provides neither a definition of the terms nor any sense of what befell Jews because of the "teaching of contempt." Immediately following that admission, the document states that the Catholic Church condemns "all unjust discrimination," including antisemitism, but makes no reference to the church's anti-Jewish teachings and complicity in antisemitism. Further: "In the twentieth century, the Catholic Church dropped from its liturgy any inference that the Jewish people as a whole were responsible for the Death of Christ *because the truth is that the sins of all humanity were the cause of his Death*" (emphasis added). This is specious; *NA* no. 4 was not composed because the conciliar participants wanted to revive a classic teaching about the death of Jesus, but because the deicide charge had proven tragic for Jews.

Finally, *Doctrinal Elements* includes a number of points about dialogue with Jews, listing four aims: mutual respect, common witness on issues of peace and justice, mutual understanding of the one God, and conversion ("bring all to Jesus Christ and to his Church").<sup>104</sup> Thus, the USCCB has endorsed conversion as one of the goals of dialogue. So much for the eschatological vision of *NA* no. 4 that the church "awaits the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and serve him shoulder to shoulder (Zeph 3:9)."

The dependence on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* rather than on the postconciliar documents developing and refining *NA* is particularly problematic, because a supersessionist perspective pervades the *Catechism*. For example, it calls the OT divinely inspired and says its books retain a permanent value, "for the Old Covenant has never been revoked" (no. 121). Yet many other passages suggest that Judaism is obsolete. A simplistic salvation history schema is evident in the claim that God "makes everything converge on Christ: all the ritual and sacrifices, figures and

<sup>103</sup> See the excellent six-volume series, "Two Liturgical Traditions," including vol. 4, *Life Cycles in Jewish and Christian Worship*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1995).

<sup>104</sup> This last aim cites Romans 11:12, 15, 25; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 674, 1043.

symbols of the ‘First Covenant’” (no. 522). Further, “all the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus” (no. 1223). Some passages seem to suggest that Israel’s infidelity has led to the end of the Old Covenant: “But the prophets accuse Israel of breaking the covenant and behaving like a prostitute. They announce a new and eternal covenant. ‘Christ instituted this New Covenant’” (no. 762). Even Passover and Shabbat, so central to Jewish identity, are presented as fulfilled in Jesus: “By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning” (no. 1340). “The Sabbath, which represents the completion of the first creation, has been replaced by Sunday, which recalls the new creation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Christ” (no. 2190).

Overall, the *Catechism* manifests a reluctance to draw on the biblical scholarship that situates the ministry of Jesus in the context of Second Temple Judaism. Thus its authors draw sharp contrasts between Jesus and his contemporaries (no. 576), ignore the complexities of the “partings of the ways,” and recycle the stereotypical portrayal of the “extreme religious zeal” of the Pharisees (no. 579).<sup>105</sup> In contrast, however, the documentary expansion and refinement of *NA* appears largely absent from the *Catechism*. Changes to the *Adult Catholic Catechism* reveal a narrow interpretation of ways in which Jesus Christ “fulfills” God’s covenantal relation with Jews. It contradicts one of the most formative principles to emerge from the post-Vatican period, namely, Christians should learn how Jews define themselves.

According to the “Statement of Principles for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue” cited above, a catechism is a “compendium of the articles of faith, and therefore contains only settled teaching.” Yet, what the bishops regard as “settled teaching” many scholars of the Catholic-Jewish relationship may view as “premature finality.”<sup>106</sup> The “bipolarities of tendencies” that have characterized the reception of *NA* now seem resurgent.

<sup>105</sup> Ironically, the US bishops produced a brief monograph in 1988 that provides a more complex and nuanced portrait of the Pharisees; see *God’s Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching* (Washington: USCC, 1988) nos. 17–20. Among the many studies on the Pharisees, see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E.* (London: SCM, 1992); Anthony J. Saldarini, “Pharisees,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 289–303; Joseph Sievers, “Who Were the Pharisees?,” in *Hillel and Jesus: Comparative Studies of Two Major Religious Leaders*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Loren L. Johns (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) 138–53; John Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, *Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001) 289–388; J. Patrick Mullen, *Dining with Pharisees* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004).

<sup>106</sup> Michael Barnes, a Jesuit scholar of the religions of India, aware that Christianity, particularly Catholicism, runs the risk of seeking a “premature finality,” suggests that the experience of Christians learning how to relate to the religious other mirrors Christ facing death. In the language of Christian spirituality, interreligious

Wherein lies the divide? It seems to lie first of all in the experience of dialogue, which provides an understanding and appreciation of the depths of Judaism that cannot readily be grasped at the level of abstract theologizing. This is evident in the substantive conversations with Jewish figures that led Karl Thieme and John Oesterreicher to turn away from their earlier desire to convert Jews. In the postconciliar era, these dialogical exchanges have given rise to close friendships and allowed Catholic participants to see Judaism through the eyes of learned and passionately committed Jews.<sup>107</sup> It seems inconceivable that those intensely involved in Catholic-Jewish relations could ever speak, as does D'Costa, of Jews as in a state of "inculpable ignorance."<sup>108</sup>

Second, the divide involves the realms of biblical and historical scholarship not as familiar to those writing episcopal statements and crafting catechetical documents. Recent developments in biblical studies offer a far more complex view of Second Temple Judaism and the Jewish Jesus than many recent church documents mirror. The "new perspective on Paul" portrays him as faithful to Judaism, committed to thinking theologically about the relationship of non-Jews to the God of Israel and about the relationship of Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus.<sup>109</sup> Connelly's historical research documents the evolution in thought by which the ultimate draft of *NA* no. 4 drew upon the eschatological vision of the prophet Zephaniah ("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])" in order to express the mystery of God's covenantal relations with both Jews and Christians. This decision of the drafters was immensely significant. Indeed, Connelly concludes: "A glance into the history of *Nostra Aetate* suggests that the controversies of recent years in Catholic-Jewish relations has been counterproductive and probably

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encounter is an experience of the paschal mystery, a dying of self in order to live a transformed life (Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* 59).

<sup>107</sup> See James Fredericks, "Interreligious Friendship: A New Theological Virtue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35 (1998) 159–74.

<sup>108</sup> D'Costa, "What Does the Catholic Church Teach about Mission to the Jewish People?" 600–601.

<sup>109</sup> In brief, the origin of the "new perspectives on Paul" originated with the work of Krister Stendahl in the 1960s, and has been developed in various ways by E. P. Sanders and James D. G. Dunn, among others. See Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). For a superb overview, see Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

unnecessary. The essential thing that has been forgotten is that Catholic teaching does not obligate Christians to imagine Jews as Christians.”<sup>110</sup>

A glimpse into Zephaniah’s vision of the end time could be seen at the 2005 conference in Rome celebrating the 40th anniversary of *NA*. Hosted by the Pontifical Gregorian University, the participants included Buddhist scholars from Sri Lanka, Japan, and Turkey; Hindu scholars from India and the United States; Muslim scholars from Egypt, Lebanon, Malaysia, and Scotland; and Jewish and Christian (including Orthodox and Protestant) scholars from Europe, Israel, and North America. The presence of scholars, women as well as men, from diverse religious traditions engaging one another with respect, seriousness, and sensitivity was a true moment of interreligious hospitality. As the program read:

With the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965, the Catholic Church’s highest teaching authority initiated a new and unaccustomed discourse in which the religious Other is greeted with respect and esteem, and is seen as a partner in dialogue and action. This positive inclusion of the Other in our official discourse has brought about a dramatic change in the Church’s sense of itself, and it is this transformation of identities in dialogue on which we wish to focus in this conference. We reflect on the distance we have come together, and we celebrate it. At the same time we look to the future and map the more difficult paths we have yet to take if the dialogue of believers is not to remain simply an official policy practised by a few, but to become a key element of contemporary culture.<sup>111</sup>

There we were, shoulder to shoulder. It was, of course, not yet “that day, known to God alone.” Nevertheless, the participants bore witness that a conversion to the “providential mystery of otherness” had brought new life to the church in a way previously unimaginable.

<sup>110</sup> Connelly, “Catholic Church and Mission to the Jews” 125. See also Mary C. Boys, “Does the Catholic Church Have a Mission ‘with’ or ‘to’ the Jews?,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 3 (2008) 1–19.

<sup>111</sup> This introductory note, included in the conference program, was authored by Islamic scholar Daniel Madigan, S.J., then-director of the Gregorian’s Institute for the Study of Religions and Cultures and now a professor at Georgetown University.