

WHAT DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACH ABOUT MISSION TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE?

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The article outlines and critiques three important arguments advanced by those who hold that the Catholic magisterium teaches that there should be no mission to the Jewish people. The author raises two important background issues: invincible ignorance and the difference between supersessionism and fulfillment. He argues that the trajectory of magisterial teaching from Vatican II to the present day supports mission but advises prudential judgment regarding practice.

MISSION TO THE JEWS is probably the most disputed theological question between Catholics and Jews today, second only to the Land. Much progress and agreement between Catholics and Jews has been reached since Vatican II’s teachings in *Nostra aetate* (hereafter *NA*) (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions [1964]) no. 4.¹ This was fuelled by the energetic pontificate of Pope John Paul II and an active Commission for the Jews established in 1974 within the existing Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (1960). The Secretariat has been guided by Cardinals Bea, Willebrands, Cassidy, Kasper, and, since 2010, Koch. A stream of important documents has also been published since the council, perhaps most importantly the Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration “*Nostra Aetate*” (n. 4) (1974), Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church (1985), and *We Remember: A*

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¹ All translations of church documents are taken from *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, *Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Washington: Georgetown University, 1990).

Reflection on the Shoah (1998). The Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) also published *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2002).² The good will and cooperation of many Jewish international groups and scholars have been critical for consolidating these developments, most notably the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, and the International Council of Christians and Jews.

Since there is no single center to world Jewry, it is inappropriate to indicate formal mutual agreement, but the following theological areas can be argued as having Catholic magisterial endorsement arising out of *NA*: that anti-Jewishness is sinful; that God does not revoke his promises to Israel; that the Jews should not be viewed as cursed, or their religion as worthless, for they are still the people of the Old Covenant; their Scripture, called the “Old Testament” by Christians, is regarded as revelation; the Jews, as a people, cannot be blamed for the death of Christ, as the primary cause of the cross was human sin, in which we all share, even if historically some Jews were responsible; that Jesus was a Jew and treasured the Jewish Scriptures; that Christians have much to learn from Jewish readings of Scripture and from Jewish forms of spirituality; that Jews and Christians should work together whenever possible toward social justice and peace; that individual and sometimes groups of Christians have regretfully misused their sociopolitical power to evangelize and convert Jews in aggressive and violent ways.³ There is no turning back from these important developments.

However, the question whether the church teaches that mission to the Jews is legitimate has been disputed by many Catholics (and not a few Jews).⁴ The long history of persecution and anti-Semitism toward the Jewish people within Christian cultures culminating in the Holocaust

² All Vatican dicastery documents can be found at <http://www.vatican.va> (this and all other URLs cited herein were accessed February 2, 2012). The PBC document should be read along with its *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (April 15, 1993), <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PBCINTER.htm>.

³ All these are rooted in *NA*. See Cardinal Bea’s commentary on *NA*: *The Church and the Jewish People: A Commentary on the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966). Bea’s commentary has weight, given his key role in the process of overseeing the document’s passage through the council. For an up-to-date assessment of ground consolidated, see Walter Kasper, foreword to *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) x–xviii.

⁴ A good outline of the options is presented by David J. Bolton, “Catholic-Jewish Dialogue: Contesting the Covenants,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 45 (2010) 37–60. I think Bolton’s tracing of differing views between high curial office holders (Kasper and Joseph Ratzinger) is helpful, but should not be conflated—Bolton does not do this—with differing views within magisterial statements.

inevitably gives “mission” genocidal overtones. Chief Rabbi Ricardo Di Segni argues that for Jews, Christian mission suggests that Judaism possesses “only part of the truth” and entails a view that “would amount to its [Judaism’s] end.”⁵ Chief Rabbi David Rosen suggests that mission is the major contentious issue between Jews and Catholics and requests a clear statement from the Catholic magisterium⁶—he feared that failure to provide it would jeopardize the future of Catholic-Jewish relations.⁷ I tentatively argue that there are clear teachings from the magisterium on this issue.⁸ I proceed by first outlining some arguments against the traditional position that mission and conversion of Jews is required by the gospel. I then develop critical counterarguments to defend the position that mission to the Jews is taught by the magisterium, even if the practice of this mission raises many complex questions that remain unresolved. I do not think that such a position by the Catholic Church need damage Christian-Jewish relations—to judge by recent exchanges between Rabbi Jacob Neusner and Pope Benedict XVI.⁹

⁵ Ricardo Di Segni, “Progress and Issues of the Dialogue from a Jewish Viewpoint,” in *The Catholic Church and the Jewish People: Recent Reflections from Rome*, ed. Philip A. Cunningham, Norbert J. Hofmann, and Joseph Sievers (New York: Fordham University, 2007) 12–22, at 18. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel made a similar passionate argument to the Council Fathers at Vatican II, that he was “ready to go to Auschwitz any time, if faced with the alternative of conversion or death” (Edward K. Kaplan, *Merton and Judaism: Holiness in Words; Recognition, Repentance, and Renewal*, ed. Beatrice Bruteau, preface Terrence A. Taylor, foreword Victor A. Kramer [Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2003] 223–24). Heschel is credited with persuading the Fathers to remove a remark about conversion; see Eugene J. Fisher, “Heschel’s Impact on Catholic-Jewish Relations,” in *No Religion Is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Harold Kasinow and Byron L. Sherwin (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991) 110–23. The emotional power of this and the tragic suffering argument cannot be underestimated. Archbishop Heenan saw it at the time as “pure rhetoric,” for properly understood conversion always presupposes the free acceptance of faith. See John M. Oesterreicher, *The New Encounter: Between Christians and Jews*, foreword Johannes Willebrands, intro. David M. Bossman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986) 193.

⁶ See Neville Lamdan and Alberto Melloni, eds., *Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish-Catholic Relations; Proceedings of the International Conference, Jerusalem, 30 October–1 November 2005* (Berlin: LIT, 2007) 177.

⁷ *Ibid.* 179.

⁸ For key magisterial texts supporting this position, see Bolton, “Catholic-Jewish Dialogue” 40 n. 12.

⁹ See Jacob Neusner’s response to Benedict’s *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007): “A Rabbi Debates with the Pope: And What Divides Them Is Still Jesus,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 29, 2007, <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/147421?eng=y>. See Benedict’s endorsement of Neusner’s *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University, 2000), praising Neusner’s “absolute honesty, the precision of

I define Christian “mission”¹⁰ as the desire for the greatest good of X, when the greatest good is understood as being X’s free and uncoerced conversion to Jesus Christ and baptism into the Catholic Church. X can be a person, a nation, a race, or a religion. There can be many reasons why X’s conversion might be problematic: for example, it will lead to the convert’s persecution by family, friends, members of their previous religion, perhaps even torture and death. These are problems that do not contradict the envisaged “greatest good” per se, but balancing all the goods and evils in a particular situation might lead to differing pragmatic judgments about pursuing the greatest good, rather than calling into question that conversion to Christ is the “greatest good.” In the literature other words are sometimes used interchangeably with mission: “evangelism,” “proselytism,” “witness,” and “preaching,” all with differing associations. “Proselytism” is often associated with aggressive and coercive mission, or “mission” as only applying to idolaters and therefore not applicable to Jews, who are of course true monotheists and have a sacred book that is considered revelatory. Some see “witness” as excluding mission. For the sake of clarity, I use “mission” as I have defined it above, recognizing the disputed use of the term.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST MISSION TO THE JEWS

The literature presents a number of arguments against the traditional teaching that the church has a missionary duty to the Jews. In what follows I do not consider individual Catholic theologians, but rather their use of teachings by bishops’ conferences, curial officials or curial bodies, the bishop of Rome, and universal ordinary magisterial statements. These sources carry different weights,¹¹ but magisterial teaching on the matter will help clarify Rosen’s demand for clarity in Catholic teaching.

analysis, the union of respect for the other party with carefully grounded loyalty to one’s own position” (back cover).

¹⁰ Of the many possible meanings of “mission,” this narrow definition is my sole concern. I later argue that it is consonant with Vatican II and subsequent magisterial teaching. On definitions of “mission” see James M. Phillips, “Three Models for Christian Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14 (1990) 18–24. It is arguable that the US Catholic trajectory has much in common with the US Protestant trajectory a century ago; see Robert M. Healey, “From Conversion to Dialogue: Protestant American Mission to the Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 18 (1981) 375–87.

¹¹ See Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist, 1996) esp. 141–74; and Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (Naples, FL: Sapientia, 2007) 47–83, for roughly corresponding accounts of the weighting of documents.

The first argument is one from omission. It is argued that mission to the Jews disappears from Catholic teaching after *NA* (1965). Significantly, a reference to the conversion of the Jews was dropped from an early draft of *NA* in the council debate during September 28–29, 1964. The phrase is nowhere to be found in subsequent papal magisterial teachings. Most importantly, the reform of the Good Friday prayer (1959, 1970) regarding the Jewish people clearly signaled a change. Before the council it read: “Let us also pray for the perfidious Jews [Latin: *perfidis Judaeis*, better translated “faithless Jews”]: that our God and Lord will remove the veils from their hearts, so that they too may acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ.” In 1959 John XXIII removed “perfidious.” In 1970 Paul VI further modified it to: “Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of His name and in faithfulness to His covenant.” Pope Benedict’s *Motu proprio* entitled *Summorum Pontificum* (2007) allowed the Roman Missal promulgated by St. Pius V to be used as an extraordinary expression of the church’s liturgy. This meant that the older Good Friday prayer would again be used in some Catholic worship, potentially bringing about two possible prayers whose meaning was not quite the same. Benedict’s move was criticized by Jewish and Catholic groups, some of whom felt that his action was overturning Vatican II’s positive advances.¹²

Strengthening this argument from omission is the priority of a “new” reading¹³ of Paul’s Romans 9–11, most especially 11:28–29: “As concerning the gospel, indeed, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are most dear for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance (irrevocable).”¹⁴ Two major themes present in this fresh reading emerge in the council’s use of this

¹² For background to this earlier material see, e.g., Philip A. Cunningham, “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; and Mary Boys, “Does the Catholic Church Have a Mission “with” Jews or “to” Jews?,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 3 (2008) 1–19. For a full account of the reactions and an analysis of Benedict’s change, see Hans Hermann Henrix, “The Controversy Surrounding the 2008 Good Friday Prayer in Europe: The Discussion and Its Theological Implications,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 3 (2008) 1–19. The articles cited in this note are available at <http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr/issue/archive>.

¹³ Such readings were present before World War II. See, e.g., Jacques Maritain, “The Mystery of Israel,” in *Ransoming the Time*, trans. Harry Lorin Binse (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1941). After the war, Krister Stendhal’s work continued this tradition.

¹⁴ I here use the Douay Rheims version, which avoids the oft-repeated mistranslation “enemies of God.”

text. First, the irrevocability of God's election is repeated in *Lumen gentium* (1964, hereafter *LG*) no. 16 and *NA* no. 4:

In the first place, there is that people to whom the testaments [*testamenta*] and promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh (see Rm 9,4–5), a people according to their election most dear because of their ancestors: for God never goes back on his gifts and his calling (see Rm 11, 28–29). (*LG* no. 16)

Nevertheless, according to the apostle, because of their ancestors the Jews still remain very dear to God, whose gift and call [*dona et vocati*] are without regret [*paenitentia*] (*NA* no. 4 [note 11 here references *Rom* 11:28–29 and *LG* no.16]).

The covenants God made with his people, the Jews, are irrevocable. Many have argued that this teaching means that the Jews today are therefore in a saving covenant with God because the ancient covenants are irrevocable. Whether the notion of valid covenant refers to each and every covenant or only to select ones (the Adamic, Noachic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic) has been a matter of debate, which for my purpose here does not require immediate resolution.¹⁵

Second, a further Pauline element from Romans is highlighted in *NA*, not found in *LG*. That is, Israel's no to Jesus Christ had a providential purpose: that the gospel may be preached to the Gentiles, to the nations; and when the "full number" of Gentiles has "come in," then "all Israel, will be saved" (Rom 11:25–27). This eschatological coming in of Israel is raised in *NA* no. 4: "The church awaits the day known only to God on which all peoples will call upon the Lord with one voice and "will serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Zeph 3:9); note 12 here references Isaiah 66:23; Psalm 65:4; and Romans 11:11–32. Some Council Fathers saw this eschatological "coming in" as implying that in history, no mission should be carried out to the Jews, for their salvation would be eschatologically "achieved."¹⁶ Benedict also seems to imply this.¹⁷

¹⁵ See Bolton, "Catholic-Jewish Dialogue" 41–42; and the interesting analysis of Ratzinger's writings on this particular matter by Marianne Moyaert and Didier Pollefeyt, "Israel and the Church: Fulfilment beyond Supersessionism?," in *Never Revoked: Nostra Aetate as Ongoing Challenge for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. Marianne Moyaert and Didier Pollefeyt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010) 159–84.

¹⁶ See *Acta synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, 5 vols. with multiple parts (Vatican City: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970–1978) III.8:648; for an account of some speeches on the floor see Giovanni Miccoli, "Two Sensitive Issues: Religious Freedom and the Jews," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo; English version ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, 5 vols. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003–2006) 4:95–194, at 161–63. See also Philip Cunningham, "Response to Bolton's 'Contesting the Covenants,'" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 45 (2010) 299–300, at 300, who argues that "the Council *did* address the question of a Christian conversionary mission to Jews and rejected it in historic time" (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part 2, Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius 2011) 44–45; and

While the eschatological resolution is present in *NA*, important supplementary evidence to the above is also cited, bearing upon the irrevocable covenant. John Paul II has constantly reiterated that “the people of the promises” refers as much to current-day Judaism as to pre-Christian Judaism.¹⁸ For example, when visiting Jews in Rome in 1986 he said: “The Jewish religion is not ‘extrinsic’ to us, but in a certain way is ‘intrinsic’ to our own religion. . . . You are our dearly beloved brothers, and in a certain way it could be said that you are our elder brothers.”¹⁹ In 2004, addressing a Jewish group, John Paul supposedly furthered Catholic teaching by interpreting Romans 11:29 to affirm a permanent covenant: “St. Paul was already speaking of the holy root of Israel on which pagans are grafted onto Christ, ‘for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable’ (Rom 11:29), and you continue to be the first-born people of the Covenant.”²⁰ He made this argument in response to the argument that the council only affirmed pre-Christian Judaism as enjoying a valid covenant, not rabbinical Judaism, which followed it and is the basis of Judaism today.

Another source, more authoritative than the pope’s pastoral speeches, is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which reiterates the council’s teachings on all the above matters and further establishes Paul’s eschatological resolution: “And when one considers the future, God’s People of the

Benedict XVI and Peter Seewald, *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times; A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, trans. Michael J. Miller and Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010) 106–7. These texts indicate Benedict’s personal thoughts, but they cannot count as formal magisterial teachings—see n. 11 above.

¹⁸ See this argument in Bruce Marshall, “Elder Brothers: John Paul II’s Teaching on the Jewish People as a Question to the Church,” in *John Paul II and the Jewish People: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. David G. Dalin and Matthew Levering (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) 113–31. See also Eugene Fisher, emeritus member of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Studies, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, “The Impact of Christian-Jewish Dialogue on Catholic Biblical Studies,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 3 (2008) R1–5. See the pope’s speeches to Jewish audiences in Pope John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage: Texts on the Jews and Judaism, 1979–1995*, ed., intro., and commentary by Eugene J. Fischer and Leon Klenicki (New York: Crossroads, 1995); and John Paul II, *In the Holy Land: In His Own Words; with Christian and Jewish Perspectives* by Yehezkel Landau and Michael McGarry, CSP, ed. Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., and Kevin di Camillo (New York: Paulist, 2005).

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963–2005)*, ed. Francesco Gioia (Boston: Pauline, 2006) 373.

²⁰ John Paul II, Message to the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Dr. Riccardo Di Segni, for the Centenary of the Great Synagogue of Rome, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2004/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20040523_rabbino-segni_en.html.

Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah.²¹ Some Catholics argue—Walter Kasper, e.g. (see below)—that the difference between the two religions is accepted as reasonable and explicable, without invoking sin or hard heartedness, and that this is a proper development from recognizing that the Jewish people are not accursed. Most importantly, the *Catechism* says nothing about mission to the Jews.

The line of argument so far is clear. There cannot be mission to the Jews, because it is not taught by the council and subsequent magisterial documents. Further, if the promises and the covenants to the Jews have not been revoked, and the Jewish no has a providential purpose, and if Paul says Israel will “come in” at the end times, it is cumulatively clear that the Jewish people are utterly different from the Gentiles, toward whom the church has a genuine and necessary mission. The church recognizes that the Jewish people do have a real relationship with God, even if Christians interpret that saving relationship as being causally through Christ. While some Catholics argue for two separate and valid covenants,²² invoking that radical reading will take us too far from my focus here.

A third argument is that the president of the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with the Jews, Cardinal Walter Kasper, has supported the position that mission to the Jews is inappropriate. As the leading Catholic charged by the pontiff to oversee this area, his interpretations are seen by some as authoritative. One important text appeared in a 2002 public lecture by Kasper, occasioned by Reflections on Covenant and Mission (hereafter RCM).²³ RCM sparked a controversy over the question of “targeted” mission to the Jews. RCM implied that mission to the Jews is no longer legitimate.²⁴ Kasper argued: “Jews in order to be saved [do not] have to become Christians; if they follow their own conscience and believe

²¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington: US Catholic Conference, 1994) no. 840; see also no. 839.

²² For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1980); Monika Hellwig, “Christian Theology and the Covenant of Israel,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (1970) 37–51; and Michael B. McGarry, *Christology after Auschwitz* (New York, Paulist, 1977).

²³ RCM was placed on the USCCB website that year; apparently it is no longer available there, but it can be found at http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/ncs_usccb120802.htm and *Origins* 32 (2002) 218–24. For Kasper’s lecture, “The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: A Crucial Endeavour of the Catholic Church,” delivered at Boston College, November 6, 2002; see http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20021106_kasper-boston-college_en.html.

²⁴ Targeted mission may cause fear and intimidation and is quite different from “mission” as I am using it. For an interesting commentary on this RCM affair see Cunningham, “Official Ecclesial Documents” 26–31.

in God's promises as they understand them in their religious tradition, they are in line with God's plan, which for us comes to its historical completion in Jesus Christ."²⁵ This, argue some, implies that Jews can be saved without reference to Jesus Christ and do not need mission from Christians. Kasper implies that the Jewish rejection of Christianity is theologically understandable and acceptable. Kasper seems to argue that Jews can rightly refuse Christ without fault:

The recent document of the Biblical Pontifical Commission entitled *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001), signed by Cardinal Ratzinger, shows for me very convincingly that from a strictly historical perspective and interpreted only with historical methods, both readings and both interpretations—the Jewish rabbinical and the Christian one—are possible and legitimate. What reading we choose depends on what faith we have chosen.²⁶

Kasper also notes that the church's dealing with the Jewish people has always been placed within the Council for Christian Unity. This indicates the special position of the Jews. Catholics share with them true revelation and the promises made by God—in the Old Testament. "Because we have all this in common and because as Christians we know that God's covenant with Israel by God's faithfulness is not broken (Rom 11:29; cf. 3:4), mission—understood as call to conversion from idolatry to the living and true God (1 Thess 1,9)—does not apply and cannot be applied to Jews."²⁷ The argument is analogous to an ecumenical one: Just as one might welcome an Anglican who wishes to become a Catholic, there is likewise no formal mission to Anglicans or other Christian denominations. The Jewish people share this special status.

To summarize all three arguments: (1) There is no mention of mission to the Jews in magisterial teachings. (2) A fresh reading of Paul means that if Jews have an authentic covenant, based on God's irrevocable promises, along with the fact that their "coming in" is an eschatological event, and their no had a special purpose, then Christian mission to them is inappropriate. (3) The magisterial official in charge of relations with Jews has made it clear that mission is not appropriate. This teaching replaces traditional "supersessionist" teachings that were revoked at Vatican II. Thus, magisterial teaching from Vatican II until the present pontificate (despite some odd moves from the latter) affirms that there should be no mission to the Jewish people. How convincing is the argument?

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

The argument from omission works both ways because no formal teaching indicates that mission to the Jewish people is wrong. Any mission that

²⁵ Kasper, "Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews."

²⁶ Ibid. ²⁷ Ibid.

is coercive or otherwise fails to respect the freedom and dignity of the human person is condemned.²⁸ Kasper's comment about mission works with a particular notion of mission different from the one I am using, and it is clear that mission to the Jewish people would be different from mission to any other group precisely because the Jewish people share a part of the sacred text of Christians. But Kasper is clear that "witness" is required by Christian discipleship. In 2008, after Benedict changed the Good Friday prayers, Kasper commented:

The exclusion of a targeted and institutionalized mission to the Jews does not mean that Christians must stand around with their hands in their pockets. Targeted and organized mission on one side, and Christian witness on the other, must be distinguished. Naturally, Christians must, where it is opportune, give to their "older brothers and sisters in the faith of Abraham" (Pope John Paul II) a witness of their own faith and of the richness and beauty of their faith in Christ. Paul did this as well. During his missionary journeys, Paul always went first to the synagogue, and only when he did not find faith there did he go to the pagans (Acts of the Apostles, 13:5,14ff., 42–52; 14:1–6 and others; Romans 1:16 is fundamental).

Such a witness is also asked of us today. It must of course be done with tact and respect; but it would be dishonest if Christians, in meeting with their Jewish friends, should remain silent about their own faith, or even deny it. We expect just as much from believing Jews toward us.²⁹

When forced on this point the answer is clear. Yes, mission in principle is appropriate. It is also clear from the context that targeted conversions are associated with fear and threat and thus rightly condemned. To contextualize, some of the arguments regarding silence were made prior to Benedict's restoration of the earlier Good Friday prayers, but Kasper's commentary just cited suggests that the silence has been broken. Here, there is no judgment about the practical means of pursuing such a mission, but the principle is clear.

Furthermore, the argument from silence fails on its own if we recognize two other important factors in the conciliar documents. First, nowhere in the documents is there a call to mission toward *any* specific religion, but only a clear call to universal mission toward *all* peoples. Some Council

²⁸ See the continuous teaching from *Dignitatis humanae* (1965), to the *Catechism* nos. 2104–9, to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's declaration *Dominus Iesus* no. 2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html. For a good analysis of continuity in *Dignitatis humanae*, see James Carr, "Did Vatican II Represent a U-Turn in the Catholic Church's Teaching on Liberal Democracy?," *International Journal of Public Theology* 6 (2012) 228–53.

²⁹ Initially in Walter Kasper, "God Decides the When and the How," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 21, 2008; and later with notes in *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 10, 2008, English translation at <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/197381?eng=y>, from which the cited text is taken.

Fathers' resistance to a statement on the conversion of Jews was simply because "many Council Fathers felt it was not appropriate in a document [NA] striving to establish common goals and interests first."³⁰ While some Fathers clearly felt that the final "coming in" of the Jews is a matter for God, such an attitude does not discount the importance of mission to Jewish people, all the time recognizing that the final "coming in" is in the hands of God. Second, Vatican II on mission and subsequent magisterial documents on mission teach that since Christ came for *all* peoples, mission must be toward *all* peoples.³¹ Mission is also presented as indissolubly related to baptism and ecclesial belonging, along with many other aspects of church existence.

Vatican II's *Ad gentes* no. 3 (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity [1965], hereafter *AG*) makes three significant points on this matter. First, that mission to *all* peoples derives from God's universal plan of salvation: "Jesus Christ was sent into the world as the true Mediator between God and men. . . . Now, what was once preached by the Lord, or fulfilled in him for the salvation of humankind, must be proclaimed and spread to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)." Second, this mission involves the reality of Christ's body, the church, not just missionary preaching to seek the common good and celebrate what is held in common (which is obviously important): "It is necessary, therefore, that all should be converted to him, made known through the preaching of the church, and that through baptism they should be incorporated into him and into the church, which is his body" (*AG* no. 7). The necessity of the church for salvation is cross-referred back to *LG* no. 14, where it was earlier taught in continuity with a long tradition. The necessity of the church has been reiterated in subsequent teaching documents consistently through to *Dominus Iesus* (2000) no. 20.³² Third, the Fathers of the council acknowledge that many people will be in a state of inculpable

³⁰ See Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild, 1966) 665 n. 19. For a detailed background on *NA*'s composition, see Stjepan Schmidt, *Augustine Bea: The Cardinal of Unity*, trans. Leslie Wearne (New Rochelle, NY: New City, 1992), esp. 524–33; and Giovanni Miccoli, "Jews and Other Non-Christians," in *History of Vatican II* 4:135–66; and Mauro Velati, "The Decree on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in *ibid.* 5:211–21. The latter three sources indicate that there was never a serious question about mission being inappropriate to the Jews. Some Fathers, however, did think that because Romans 11:25 entailed a futurist eschatology that accounted for the Jews, mission to the Jews should not be the task of the church. But no decision was taken to either affirm or deny this point as it was not germane to *NA*. Center stage was the question of the decide charge and the condemnation of anti-Semitism.

³¹ For key magisterial texts supporting this position see Bolton, "Catholic-Jewish Dialogue" 40 n. 12.

³² The nature of this necessity is contended as one of means or precept. See my *Christianity and World Religions* 161–211.

ignorance; they will not have heard the gospel in their heart through no fault of their own, and God's offer of salvation in this instance is never withheld from them: "God, through ways known to himself, can lead people who through no fault of their own are ignorant of the gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him, nevertheless the church has both the obligation and the sacred right to evangelise" (AG no. 7). Who then is "ignorant of the gospel" through no fault of their own? Answering this question is important to establishing my thesis.³³

The "invincibly ignorant" refers to everyone and can include Jews (and, of course, can in principle include baptized Catholics who are not conscious of what their baptism entails, through no fault of their own). This claim is essential to my argument, as it also provides a magisterially endorsed theological context to understand the many positive comments made about the Jewish people (which have led to the three arguments I am seeking to question), without logically detracting from the principle of mission. To clarify this significant point, I distinguish between three possible classes of persons, each of which could be Jewish, Muslim, or atheist. First, there are people who have never heard the gospel preached to them but follow the dictates of their conscience and discerningly use the means offered them within their culture, religious or not, to seek and follow the truth (group A). There are others who have had the gospel preached to them and, after careful existential and rigorous intellectual consideration, freely reject it and are thus culpable for rejecting the truth they have heard (group B). Group C are those who have had the gospel preached to them and, after rigorous intellectual consideration freely reject it, but are not culpable in their heart (proper "existential" consideration), as they have failed to hear the truth of this preaching in their hearts through no fault of their own. This could be for all sorts of reasons. It may well be for the reason that they are actually related to the truth (as are the Jews) and cannot find biblical grounds to accept the plausibility of the incarnation. One can imagine many situations where C exists, although neither B nor C is transparent to discernment by an outsider. Matters of the heart are between God and the believer.

These distinctions throw a different light on various comments made in official documents that are often cited, because those statements do not presume that there is a knowing rejection of the gospel by Jews (B), but rather that it is a nonculpable rejection (C). If we adopt this hermeneutic,

³³ On the significance of this move in Catholic dogmatics, see Stephen Bullivant, "Sine culpa? Vatican II and Inculpable Ignorance," *Theological Studies* 72 (2011) 70–86; and Stephen Bullivant, "The Salvation of Atheists: A Critical Exploration of a Theme in Catholic Dogmatic Theology" (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 2009), forthcoming as *The Salvation of Atheists and Catholic Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Oxford University, 2012).

many alleged tensions in the texts evaporate. Certainly, *AG* no. 7 and *LG* no. 14, when speaking of those outside the church through no fault of their own, clearly refer to groups A and C, not B. A and C can include individual Jews or non-Jews, during and after the time of Christ. Importantly, the material difference between Jews and others is that Jews have been given revelation and God's covenants and promises, which cannot be annulled. But clearly a group B person, either a Jew, atheist, or Catholic, who knowingly rejects the truth, falls foul of the stricture in *AG* no. 7: "Consequently, those people cannot be saved who know that the Catholic Church has been established as necessary by God through Jesus Christ, and yet refuse to enter it or to remain in it" (*AG* no. 7; see also *LG* no. 14). It may well be that Catholic theologians fit this category best, given the level of consciousness required of Catholic teaching, but let me leave that aside. Since only God can judge who is in group B or A, *LG* no. 14, *AG* no. 7, and *Dominus Iesus* no. 20 hold together this same tension: insisting on the necessity of the church for salvation, yet holding that those outside the church, in genuine ignorance of the gospel, may be saved. From this angle, then, mission is a universal imperative to *all* peoples, and must include Jews.

John Paul II, who is frequently cited by those who argue against mission to the Jews, in fact in all his encyclicals maintains the above clear conciliar teaching on universal mission, and most clearly so in *Redemptoris missio* (1990, hereafter *RM*), the encyclical given to this topic: "what moves me even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of missionary evangelization is the fact that it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to *all* humanity in the modern world" (no. 2, emphasis added).³⁴ In his references to mission, he has never implied that any group of peoples is exempt, although he has acknowledged that there may be important cultural and historical factors that mean that baptism and explicit belonging to the church are problematic or dangerous for certain individuals or peoples. John Paul urges that these inhibiting factors "must be removed where they still exist, so that the sacrament of spiritual rebirth can be seen for what it truly is" (*RM* no. 47). How one removes such factors is another matter entirely, but that one should remove them is clear, so as to allow genuine universal mission. For obvious reasons it may well be that these inhibiting factors are particularly operative in the case of the Jewish view of Jesus Christ and Christianity, but the church must attend to understanding these factors as much as possible before dismantling them, knowing always that finally conversion of heart lies in God's power, not in human missionary effort. Clearly, when John Paul II met and addressed

³⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html.

Jewish brothers and sisters, he was rightly keen to stress what Catholics and Jews have in common and to build on those commonalities. These were pastoral addresses, and we would expect such messages. The pope was also rightly keen to express his deep personal love and appreciation of the Jewish religion,³⁵ and in such contexts, he was unlikely to mention mission. This same pattern is found in all his speeches when meeting people from other religions: Hindus, Buddhists, or Muslims.³⁶ He never mentions mission to them, but rather what the church has in common with them. Below I return to the claim that John Paul II's comments support the notion that the Jewish people are in a valid covenant.

What of the changes to the Good Friday prayers in 1959 and 1970 that apparently support the omission thesis? Benedict's restoration of the earlier, but nevertheless modified, prayers could be best interpreted not as a criticism of Vatican II, as many have argued,³⁷ but as a concern that the council's intent has been misunderstood and misconstrued, and that the way to reshape the mind of the church is through its liturgy.³⁸ The previous changes, first by John XXIII and then by Paul VI, removed some words that were sometimes falsely construed as anti-Jewish. *Perfidies* was better translated "faithless," not "perfidious," which had clear negative connotations, as was especially the case in the German translations of the word. Furthermore, the patchwork of words that constitute the restored old prayer are

³⁵ See David G. Dalin, "Pope John Paul II and the Jews," in *John Paul II and the Jewish People* 15–36, which traces John Paul's interest and concern to his childhood in Poland; and Darcy O'Brien, *The Hidden Pope: The Untold Story of a Lifelong Friendship That Is Changing the Relationship between Catholics and Jews; the Personal Journey of Pope John Paul II and Jerzy Kluger* (New York: Rodale, 1998).

³⁶ See Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, esp. 253–1114. The pope mentions mission only when speaking to the local bishops of a given country—see, e.g., *ibid.* 1033, to the bishops of India.

³⁷ See Henrix, "Controversy surrounding the 2008 Good Friday Prayer," which cites both Jews and Catholics who think that the present papacy is going against the traditions of Vatican II.

³⁸ For a sense of Ratzinger's orientation to these questions, including the Jewish question, see his *Many Religions, One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999); and *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004). The former work does not touch on the question of mission but reiterates the conciliar teachings on the authentic covenant. On the misinterpretation of the council see Benedict XVI, "A Proper Hermeneutic for the Second Vatican Council," in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, trans. and ed. Mathew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University, 2008) ix–xv; and Benedict XVI, *Ad Romanam Curiam ob omnia natalicia* (December 22, 2005), *Acta apostolicae sedis* 98 (2006) 40–53. On the Good Friday controversy see Henrix, "Controversy surrounding the 2008 Good Friday Prayer."

entirely biblical, more truly reflecting the early prayers of Christians and sentiments that wish the greatest good for everyone, including the Jews.³⁹

Benedict's restoration of the earlier Good Friday prayers was in part a more general restoration of an earlier liturgy (and not just that particular prayer), but also a clear recognition of the ground achieved by *NA*: that the Jews, whom God has always loved and has promised never to desert, are called to the *fulfillment* of the promise given to them. I would suggest that this both/and relationship (*both* mission toward the Jews, *and* appreciation for Judaism's special relationship) is entirely in keeping with the Pauline themes in Romans. This claim is not supersessionist, as it does not invalidate the covenant, but that it should come to its proper fulfillment both in historical time and eschatologically, when finally all the Jews will "come in." However, the confusion caused by having two forms of liturgy that contain differing sentiments on the same issue rightly raises problems that, at the time of writing, remain unresolved.

The "fulfillment" theme is central to the council's attitudes to other religions and nonreligions—and is explicitly entailed by the church's christological confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited hope of Israel, the one who has inaugurated the end times in his person. That Jews of groups A and C continue devoutly to discern God's ways and live lives of holiness is not in question, but rather the necessity of mission to Jews in these groups. For the purpose of my argument, the term "fulfillment" must be distinguished from "supersessionism" and "abrogation," both of which imply the total invalidity of post-New Testament Judaism.⁴⁰ Jesus understood himself as a devout Jew throughout his ministry, who came not to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to fulfill them (Mt 5:17). This understanding was shared by many of his Jewish disciples. Central to my argument is that fulfillment, in principle, avoids supersessionism and abrogation and 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. Space constraints prevent my offering a biblical exegesis for this position, but given that I am arguing that it is the magisterium's position, solid evidence is presupposed.

³⁹ For a good summary of the patchwork of old prayers see Henrix, "Controversy surrounding the 2008 Good Friday Prayer" 9–11.

⁴⁰ Avery Dulles advances a supersessionist position in his, "Covenant and Mission," *America* (October 21, 2002), http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2550. Whether fulfillment and supersessionism are elided in Ratzinger's writings (as claimed by Bolton, "Contesting the Covenant") or are kept distinct but require clarification (as argued by Moyaert and Pollefeyt in "Israel and Church") need not be resolved for the purpose of my argument. I am arguing that fulfillment does not *logically* require a resolution on the status of the covenant or covenants.

The important question is this: do these acknowledgments in *NA* no. 4 amount to affirming a valid covenant operating in contemporary Judaism? Many have argued the case vigorously, based on “implication,” usually with the only explicit materials drawn from John Paul II’s pastoral speeches.⁴¹ Before turning to them, let me be clear on two points. The notion of two covenants as two ways of salvation has been formally criticized since the council.⁴² Defenders of the position that Judaism has a valid covenant accept that this must be through Christ, otherwise it falls foul of the unicity of Christ taught by the council and in subsequent magisterial teachings. Second, the contemporary validity of the Jewish covenant was not discussed at the council, but rather that the Jewish people were granted covenants that will never be revoked. That they cannot have an independent salvific validity apart from Christ is clear. The weight of the argument against my position thus rests on John Paul’s pastoral remarks, which are both difficult to interpret and have been used by those who argue both for and against mission—as is evident. But, prescinding from a close textual analysis of his speeches, which I cannot offer here, I want to make a logical point. If John Paul II were shown to teach that there was a valid covenant, that in itself would not count against mission, for his formal and informal teachings are clear that Christ is the fulfillment of the story of God’s actions with humanity, which starts with the Jewish people in the Old Covenant and is fulfilled in the universal people of God in Christ. Hence, if John Paul did teach that contemporary Jews all enjoy a valid covenant with God, that does not overturn my argument regarding mission.

However, there is a further problem. John Paul II’s commendation of current-day Judaism does not actually settle two as-yet-unresolved issues. First, is the church’s endorsement of the Old Testament and the faithfulness of God’s promises tantamount to actually affirming all forms of post-New Testament Judaism? These forms are characterized initially by the Talmud and the rabbis, who around the third century ascend to dominant leadership of the Jewish people. When the span of history is taken into consideration, the internal diversity is akin to Christianity’s internal diversity: groups claiming that others are illegitimate for diverse reasons (faithless to doctrines, practices, laws, etc.). Paul never knew these forms of Judaism at all. There is no evidence that all these forms have been affirmed by the magisterium, except in the teachings that there are spiritual resources in contemporary Judaism (“rich in religious values”), deriving

⁴¹ Cunningham’s “Official Ecclesial Documents” is an excellent example; see pp. 5, 27, 29.

⁴² See *Dominus Iesus* as the culmination of this criticism; it argues that two covenants call into question the unicity of Jesus Christ as savior for all peoples. While those outside the church may be saved through Christ, this would not logically call into question the necessity of mission.

from their covenant origins (“promises” and “Old Testament”), from which the church can certainly learn.⁴³ Furthermore, some strands of contemporary Judaism arguably turn their backs on these origins. Within Judaism that judgment has been made by various orthodox Jews who believe that modernity marks a serious break in the unity of the *halakha* (religious practices). Some progressive Jewish movements have even dispensed with *halakha* altogether, while some orthodox Jews view it as a defining norm. David Hartman, a leading Jewish authority, explains:

One of the salient features of modern Jewry is the lack of consensus about what constitutes membership in the Jewish people. The impact of modern history on Jewish life has led to the gradual disintegration of the organizing frameworks which defined the Jewish community both internally, in terms of standards of membership, and externally, in terms of relations with the outside world. . . . The once assumed connection between minimal faith and membership in the Jewish people can no longer be taken for granted with respect to the majority of Jews.⁴⁴

It would be odd for a pope to declare anything about contemporary Judaism, given contemporary Judaism’s own irresolution on the question of its identity and what constitutes legitimate Judaism. And, ironically, there is danger of smothering Jewish “otherness” in the haste to give Christian affirmation. Admittedly, these intra-Jewish questions do not per se block a Christian theological evaluation, and John Paul II was rightly keen to emphasize positive connections and evaluations.

In light of the above, if we take John Paul’s 2004 statement to the Roman synagogue audience, “you continue to be the first-born people of the Covenant,” does it really imply that: (a) All Jews are now in an objective valid covenant relationship? (b) And if it does imply this (which I do not think is obvious), does it mean that that covenant is not fulfilled by Christ and the church, both in history and eschatologically? (c) Or does it simply

⁴³ See Guidelines and Suggestions, part III. Cunningham, “Official Ecclesial Documents” 14–21 closely analyzes the Guidelines and Suggestions of 1974 and the 1985 “Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church” (from the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820306_jews-judaism_en.html); but Cunningham is unable to find a single citation that affirms a presently valid “covenant,” precisely because of the Catholic claim of fulfillment, even if this awaits completion in the eschaton. He argues by “implication” from texts that fail to cite what is implied. Implication sometimes approximates eisegesis.

⁴⁴ See David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating Its Future* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2000) 12–13; and David Ellenson, *Tradition in Transition: Orthodoxy, Halakhah, and the Boundaries of Modern Jewish Identity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989). This internal pluralism was evident very early; see Paula Fredriksen, “Torah-Observance and Christianity: The Perspective of Roman Antiquity,” *Modern Theology* 11 (1995) 195–204.

imply that the Jewish people are especially beloved, for their existence is intrinsic to Christian identity (shared Scripture), while also acknowledging their extrinsic worth—to the world and in themselves; and they continue to bear witness to the importance of Scripture (shared witness). There are good grounds for (c) especially, as (c) is in keeping with other teachings. Among Catholic exegetes (a) is not settled, even if it is clear that if the answer to the question is no, this does not entail a negative view of God's special and chosen people.⁴⁵ If it were magisterially affirmed that all contemporary Jews are in a valid covenant, it would not necessarily entail that mission to these beloved was inappropriate. On (b), I have been arguing that Christ fulfills the OT without eradicating or destroying the earlier covenant, but fulfilling it. The manner of this fulfilling requires much explanation, but most importantly for my purpose, it implies that mission is necessary while also indicating that this would not entail the eradication of Jewish culture and religious sensibilities. It is coherent to interpret John Paul II's pastoral speeches as indicating that there is no clear, detailed magisterial teaching on the theological validity of contemporary Judaism, other than affirming that the OT is revelation, that God is faithful to his promises and covenants, that some forms of Judaism may be faithfully related to this revelation, and that Christians must work together and learn from these forms of Judaism while still continuing to preach Christ.

What of the eschatological resolution of Romans 11:25, which apparently means that mission is not required since the final "coming in" of the Jews is utterly in God's hands? Some points to be noted: (1) All conversion to Christ is in God's hands, but this does not detract from mission. (2) While Paul rightly emphasizes the importance of the mission to the Gentiles as a result of the Jewish no, he never stops his own preaching to the Jews. Jesus Christ, the Jew, preached to these same people, his own people. He felt his ministry was for them, as they were the people of the covenant and promises. To suggest that mission to the Jewish people is now inappropriate would render central NT teachings and practices inappropriate. (3) The interpretation of Romans 11:25 is deeply contested. However, even if the Jewish "coming in" will happen at the end times, logically it does not actually say anything about historical mission to Jews before the end times.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Cardinal Albert Vanhoye, "The Jewish People and their Sacred Scripture in the Christian Bible" (2008), <http://www.zenit.org/article-23841?l=english>. See also Christina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, eds., *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000); and E. Elizabeth Johnson, "Romans 9–11: The Faithfulness and Impartiality of God," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 211–39, who is critical of many who employ Paul for better Jewish-Christian relations, for Paul's concerns are not these. Contemporary Pauline studies pull in very different directions.

The biblical evidence is that preaching to Jewish communities continued even if it was believed that the final “coming in” would happen only in the end days. (4) My reading of Romans 11:25 is guided also by the conciliar and postconciliar use of the Pauline texts, not just by reading the Bible “alone.” This hermeneutical strategy is in keeping with the exegetical traditions of the council.⁴⁶ It does not disallow for the ongoing debate about the proper understanding of Paul and Romans.

(5) The *Catechism* citation from nos. 839–40, said to provide an exclusively eschatological resolution to the differences between Catholicism and Judaism, actually contains an important clause that completes the paragraphs regarding the Jews’ awaiting of the Messiah: this waiting “is accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Christ Jesus.” In relation to groups A, B, and C cited above, this clearly speaks only of group A or C, not B. It thus fails to signify that mission to the Jews is inappropriate. It certainly does not imply that the Jewish no is a legitimate alternative to Jesus Christ. The *Catechism*’s statements on mission, nos. 849–59, reiterate the themes I have outlined above: mission should be to *all* peoples without exception, even while recognizing difficulties and problematic contexts.

(6) One can acknowledge from Benedict’s writings—which cannot be considered as formal magisterial statements but rather as those of a Catholic theologian who is also the pope—that he thinks Romans 11:25 indicates that it is God’s action that will bring about the final “coming in” of Israel, and that this means that Christians do not have to attend to this particular scenario as a duty of the church.⁴⁷ But we should be clear that in these same texts he affirms that anyone’s conversion to Christ is a cause of joy, including that of any Jewish person. So, while the final “coming in” is an eschatological act of God, the obligation to mission and witness is in no way cancelled. I will not pursue this matter, as Benedict’s writings do not

⁴⁶ On biblical exegesis, see the underdeveloped comments initially in *Dei verbum* (1965) no. 12; and Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* nos. 42–49, 117–20. Historical-critical readings alone cannot be normative on the matter. Obviously, not all readings that I contest stem from historical-critical procedures.

⁴⁷ See n. 17 above for the particular texts in question. According to Benedict, the texts cited have no magisterial authority; in the foreword to *Jesus*, he writes of the book: “It goes without saying that this book is in no way an exercise of the magisterium, but is solely an expression of my personal search. . . . Everyone is free, then, to contradict me” (xxiii–xxiv). In *Jesus* 125–45 the argument is clear: Jesus came as a fulfillment of all of Israel’s hopes and promises, and 229–40 explores the universal atonement required by Jesus for the sins of all peoples. Benedict XVI, *Truth and Tolerance* 162–209, 231–58 also supports universal mission, without exception. These views cannot be said to support my position, as it is based purely on formal magisterial teachings in the attempt to clarify Rosen’s request.

actually constitute formal magisterial treatment of our topic, which is the subject of this article.

(7) Another indirect factor here is that Vatican II deploys the *preparatio evangelica* approach in relation to the Jews, and, innovatively, toward other religions as well. Joseph Carola's fine study of this matter concludes:

While *LG* 2 and 9 elaborate a theology that does justice to the patristic idea of the *preparatio evangelica*, *LG* 16 and *AG* 3 go beyond the Fathers' original conception. These latter texts no longer limit the *preparatio evangelica* to the gospel's supernatural prophetic preparation in the history of the people of Israel. Rather they expand its meaning to include that natural revelation present since the beginning of creation by means of which humanity comes to knowledge of the one true God and the moral law.⁴⁸

Carola is clear that the term *preparatio evangelica* is primarily used of the Jewish people. It is arguable that the wider application employed in *LG* no. 16 and *AG* no. 3 indicates a development of traditional perceptions, i.e., the "religions," but that is not part of my concern here. My concern is that this term, which the council applied to the Jewish people, entails the necessity of mission.

What of Kasper's frequently cited comments? A significant disclaimer made by Kasper in his 2002 lecture needs to be registered: "It should be borne in mind from the outset that I do not speak on behalf of the Vatican; I am used to thinking with my own head, and so I risk my own head and speak only on behalf of myself. The role of our dicastery is to promote dialogue, and *not to officially guide its development or to decide on its outcome.*"⁴⁹ Technically, this means that Kasper's speeches cannot be used as evidence of official magisterial doctrinal teaching, as some Catholics claim. Obviously, given Kasper's wide experience and great wisdom, his reflections are important. His point about Jews being saved if they remain Jews is quite compatible with groups A and C, as argued above.⁵⁰ Kasper is obviously correct in saying that mission to the Jews is not mission to idolaters (whoever they may be), but it is not a necessary implication of his words to say that mission to those who believe in the true God is ruled out. I have labored above to show otherwise. The special position of the Secretariat (now Pontifical Commission) on the Jews does indicate the

⁴⁸ Joseph Carola, "Vatican II's Use of Patristic Themes regarding Non-Christians," in *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study*, ed. Karl Josef Becker and Ilaria Morali, with collaboration of Maurice Borrmans and Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010) 143–52, at 150.

⁴⁹ Kasper, "Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews," emphasis added.

⁵⁰ I do not claim that Kasper would agree. Bolton's reading of Kasper's position, "Catholic Jewish Dialogue," is supported by John T. Pawlikowski, "Reflections on Covenant and Mission Forty Years after *Nostra Aetate*," *Cross Currents* 56 (2007) 70–94.

special nature of the Jewish people. This is important and is to be cherished. But it should also be noted that the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) is not concerned with mission, but this does not mean that the church does not intend mission toward the religions with which the PCID engages. There is a separate pontifical body for mission to the world, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (named in 1982, but preexistent as the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, *Propaganda Fidei*, founded in 1622).

Finally, let me return to the occasion of Kasper's 2002 speech, which was prompted by a controversy within the US Catholic Church.⁵¹ On August 12, 2002, Jews and Catholics made public a document they had composed entitled RCM, consisting of two parts, one presenting Catholic, the other Jewish, reflections. The document originated from an ongoing consultation between the National Council of Synagogues and the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, which is a Committee of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The Catholic section was written by scholars and ecclesiastics who made up an advisory group to the USCCB. The document was published on the USCCB website. In saying that targeting Jews for conversionary campaigns was not acceptable and that mission could properly consist of working together for justice and peace, it attracted predictable press coverage. The *Boston Globe* ran a front-page article entitled "Catholics Reject Evangelization of Jews"; the *Washington Post* ran one entitled "U.S. Catholic Bishops Disown Efforts to Convert Jews."⁵² Seven years later, on June 18, 2009, the USCCB's Committee on Doctrine and Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs published clarifications: "A Note on Ambiguities Contained in *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*."⁵³ The USCCB criticized aspects of the original document, RCM, declaring that it does not represent Catholic teaching on the matter. While RCM cannot be considered the teaching of the universal magisterium, its arguments are very important to my concerns here.⁵⁴

⁵¹ For a broader US picture see Bolton, "Catholic-Jewish Dialogue" 53–58; and for the crucial correction in 2009 to the statement on Jews published in the USCCB's *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* ("Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them"), see <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/us-conference-of-catholic-bishops/577-usccb09aug27>. This changed statement brings the earlier statement into line with the position I advance here.

⁵² As cited by Avery Dulles, "Covenant and Mission," *America* 187.12 (October 21, 2001) 8–11, http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2550.

⁵³ See <http://old.usccb.org/doctrine/covenant09.pdf>.

⁵⁴ See Ratzinger's comments reported in *AD2000* 11.8 (September 1998) 7, http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/1998/sep1998p7_547.html. See also John Paul II, *Apostolos suos* (1997) no. 21 on the authority of bishops' conferences and their teachings. At the press conference on the occasion of this document, Ratzinger

Two particular points are germane and reinforce my argument. First, “A Note on Ambiguities” (no. 5) rightly acknowledges the special status of Jews while at the same time speaking of Jesus Christ as their fulfillment:

[RCM] correctly acknowledges that “Judaism is a religion that springs from divine revelation,” and that “it is only about Israel’s covenant that the Church can speak with the certainty of the biblical witness.” Nevertheless, it is incomplete and potentially misleading in this context to refer to the enduring quality of the covenant without adding that for Catholics Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God fulfils both in history and at the end of time the special relationship that God established with Israel.

This statement reiterates points I have been arguing for above: (1) Only the biblical covenant with Israel can be affirmed with certainty as springing from the revelation of the OT, not comments about particular forms of contemporary Judaism being in valid covenantal relationship. (2) The validity of Israel’s covenant does not count against the importance of Christ and his historical church as the fulfillment, not supersession or abrogation, of Israel’s covenant; and (3) this acknowledges an eschatological element in the historical drama of the Church’s relation with the Jews.

The document then directly addresses the Pauline exegetical question as well as the issue of mission and its rightful conditions:

[RCM] also rightly affirms that the Church respects religious freedom as well as freedom of conscience and that, while the Church does not have a policy that singles out the Jews as a people for conversion, she will always welcome “sincere individual converts from any tradition or people, including the Jewish people.” This focus on the individual, however, fails to account for St. Paul’s complete teaching about the inclusion of the Jewish people as [a] whole in Christ’s salvation. In Romans 11:25–26, he explained that when “the full number of the Gentiles comes in . . . all Israel will be saved.” He did not specify when that would take place or how it would come about.⁵⁵ This is a mystery that awaits its fulfillment. Nevertheless, St. Paul told us to look forward to the inclusion of the whole people of Israel, which will be a great blessing for the world (Rom 11:12).

In its conclusion, the document unambiguously supports mission to the Jewish people, and not just to individuals:

With St. Paul, we acknowledge that God does not regret, repent of, or change his mind about the “gifts and the call” that he has given to the Jewish people (Rom 11:29). At the same time, we also believe that the fulfillment of the covenants, indeed, of all

commented: “Episcopal conferences do not constitute *per se* a doctrinal instance which is binding and superior to the authority of each bishop who comprises them. . . . [However,] if doctrinal declarations emanating from a conference are approved unanimously by the bishops, they can be published in the name of the conference itself, and the faithful must adhere” to these teachings.

⁵⁵ Interestingly, footnote 11 inserted here cites Walter Kasper, “La preghiera del Venerdì Santo,” *L’Osservatore Romano* (April 10, 2008) 1, where he defends the change in the Good Friday prayers. The quoted texts are from RCM.

God's promises to Israel, is found only in Jesus Christ. By God's grace, the right to hear this Good News belongs to every generation.

This clearly implies a theology of fulfillment, not of supersession or abrogation. RCM is an important development in doctrinal clarity on my question, but certainly not one that Rosen and some Catholic theologians would welcome. It clearly states a theological rationale for mission to the Jewish people.

I have not touched on the important question about whether Jewish converts need to renounce *all* elements of their Jewish heritage. Such a renunciation is neither required nor necessary. Leaving many elements intact might address the understandable concern that conversion would mean the end of the Jewish people.⁵⁶ On his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger told his Jewish parents: "I am not leaving you. I'm not going over to the enemy. . . . I am not ceasing to be a Jew; on the contrary, I am discovering another way of being a Jew."⁵⁷ If Lustiger's claim makes sense, and I think it does, it questions the monopoly exercised by "Messianic Jews" and "Jews for Jesus" to keep intact the Jewishness of Jews who accept Jesus as Messiah. Lustiger represents a Catholic Jew, who sees his Jewishness as intact despite his conversion.⁵⁸ The Association of Hebrew Catholics in the United States represents an important growth of the original wild olive tree within the heart of the Catholic Church. To question the necessity of mission to the Jewish people is not only a possible betrayal of such Jews, who have made the costly and difficult choice of becoming followers of Christ, but a possible abandonment of the teachings of the necessity of Christ and his church for salvation.

CONCLUSION

Many Jewish voices testify to the terrible associations that mission has for them: extermination, extinction, and the destruction of Jewry. It is impossible to ignore this tragic and terrifying history and the profound faults of many Catholics both past and present. Nevertheless, it is vital to address these and other important cultural and historical factors that hinder

⁵⁶ Orthodox Jew Michael Wyschogrod spells this out nicely in "Letter to a Friend," *Modern Theology* 11 (1995) 165–71. Particularly important is Wyschogrod's attempt to argue that if and when Jews do convert, they should and must retain their Jewish religious identity, and that the church should support this, otherwise the church will covertly support the extinction of the Jewish people. See the debate on this claim in three articles following Wyschogrod's, 173–241.

⁵⁷ Jean-Marie Lustiger, *Dare to Believe: Addresses, Sermons, Interviews, 1981–1984* (New York: Crossroads, 1986) 38. Edith Stein also expressed the same sentiments; see Gavin D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 157–66.

⁵⁸ Lustiger's practices are interestingly problematized by Wyschogrod in "Letter to a Friend."

or preclude the universal missionary preaching of the gospel. This can be done only when there is a clear answer to the question, What does the Catholic Church's magisterium teach about mission to the Jewish people?

I have here argued the following points: (1) The magisterium teaches that mission to the Jewish people and individuals is required if Catholics are to be faithful to the truth of the gospel. (2) There is also recognition that Jews may adhere to their ancient religion in good faith (group A or C) which contains true revelation, but that this revelation is completed in historical and eschatological time, in Jesus Christ. (3) This view avoids traditional supersessionism and abrogation, and affirms the continuing validity of the Jewish covenants and promises. (4) Identifying which particular forms of contemporary Judaism may have these characteristics is problematic; this question has not yet been properly addressed. (5) While the final "coming in" of the Jewish people to Christ will be an eschatological event, this does not in any way mitigate the importance of the mission in history toward God's beloved people. (6) All the above does not undo any achievements of Vatican II and subsequent church teachings about the Jews. Mission cannot be carried out in any way that perpetuates anti-Semitism or suggests supersessionism or abrogation, but must work along the lines of fulfillment and the retention of many Jewish practices and beliefs—as was the case with the early church. Nor does such a claim imply that there is nothing to learn from Jewish exegesis, doctrines, and spiritual practices throughout the ages. (7) Mission can never take place that fails to respect the dignity and freedom of the individual. But there should be no misunderstanding of the basic principle: mission to the Jews is theologically legitimate. Learning how best to implement that principle is the complex task that still awaits the careful attention of the contemporary Catholic Church in honest dialogue with Jewish groups and individuals in their great diversity.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ I am indebted to Cardinal Karl Josef Becker, Jonathan Campbell, Philip A. Cunningham, Sven Ensminger, David Jay, Edward Kessler (with whom this paper was conceived and presented in a public debate at the University of Bristol in October 2011), Archbishop Kevin McDonald, David M. Neuhaus, and Bede Rowe for comments on earlier drafts, and the three anonymous referees of this journal. None are responsible for any views contained herein.