

A CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO GAVIN D’COSTA

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*Some ambiguity remains in the official Catholic understanding of dialogue and mission, but the basic thrust of Vatican II Catholicism definitely leans toward a nonmissionizing position with regard to Jews. This seems evident in the several statements on Christian-Jewish relations beginning with the conciliar text *Nostra aetate* and continuing in papal statements and the writings of individual theologians. This thrust stands in opposition to Gavin D’Costa’s claim for a continued mandate of mission to the Jews.*

GAVIN D’COSTA HAS IDENTIFIED MISSION as a central issue in the current dialogue between Christians and Jews. One may even agree with him (and with Edward Kessler) that this is *the* central issue at the moment. I would demur at that assertion just a bit, however, as I believe that the Israeli-Palestinian question, in its increasing complexity politically and theologically, is beginning to challenge the primacy of the mission issue. Be that as it may, I would join D’Costa and Kessler in arguing that the question of mission must be confronted head-on in any authentic Christian-Jewish encounter.

The profound sensitivity of mission and evangelization (the two are not totally integrated) was seen several years ago when the original US bishops’ critique of the study document “Reflection on Covenant and Mission”¹

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¹ For the text of “Reflections on Covenant and Mission,” see *Origins* 32 (2002) 218–24. The statement, A Note on Ambiguities Contained in Reflections on Covenant and Mission, was originally issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on June 18, 2009; the revised text appeared on October 13, 2009. For a commentary on this controversy, see Philip 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.

was released. The initial text appeared to Jews and many of the Christians involved in the Christian-Jewish engagement as affirming mission as an integral part of the Catholic commitment to dialogue. This affirmation produced an immediate response from a unified leadership across Jewish denominational borders (a rarity in contemporary Judaism) as well as among Christian contributors to the dialogue. In fact, Bishop Richard Sklba, auxiliary bishop of Milwaukee, who chaired the bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs when the first draft of the document was presented to him by the Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, refused to sign off on the text. However, his successor, Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta, quickly reversed Sklba's decision when he assumed the chairmanship. The International Council of Christians and Jews, the Council of Centers for Christian-Jewish Relations, and the international leadership team of the Sisters of Zion also seriously questioned this mission-dialogue linkage. The message to the bishops was clear and direct: dialogue with integrity cannot continue if mission, especially in terms of evangelization, is to be defined as a central goal of such dialogue. This dispute had all the makings of a controversy that would rival, if not outstrip, the controversy generated by the proposed erection of a Catholic convent at Auschwitz some years earlier.

To their credit, the Catholic episcopal leadership quickly regrouped. A committee of five leading bishops, headed by then-president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) in the United States, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, revised the document, eliminating the controversial section about mission as an inherent part of the Catholic Church's dialogue with the Jewish community. The Jewish leadership accepted this correction and the crisis was defused.

My own observation is that the Jewish leadership let the bishops off the hook too easily because, while the explicit link between dialogue and mission was removed, the document does not resolve the more fundamental question as to whether mission to the Jews ought to be promoted outside the context of formal dialogical encounters with Jewish leaders and scholars. D'Costa has thus taken up an issue that remains a challenge within the Christian-Jewish dialogue. But I and many of my Catholic colleagues in the dialogue would disagree profoundly with the directions he takes in trying to respond to this continuing challenge.

There is little question in my mind that D'Costa is right about continuing ambiguity in the official Catholic position on mission and dialogue, not only regarding evangelization efforts with regard to the Jewish community but also in terms of the wider interreligious conversations in which institutional Catholicism had been involved. The three major Vatican documents released over the last several decades confirm this continuing ambiguity.

The first of these documents was Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris missio*, which underlined the need for Catholics to take up their responsibility to

proclaim the gospel to those not in communion with the Catholic Church. While this document did not discuss the question of dialogue in any substantive way, it clearly intended to reaffirm the continued validity of the more classical Catholic approach to mission, which the pope saw as somewhat flagging, particularly in certain so-called “missionary” orders that had turned their attention more toward justice rather than baptism.

The second document was far more important for the theme of this discussion. It was released in 1991 under the title, *Dialogue and Proclamation*.² A joint effort by the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Congregation for Interreligious Dialogue, the document went through numerous drafts, its final version being somewhat less satisfactory than were the drafts. As the late Jacques Dupuis noted in his exhaustive analysis of the text,³ there are some positive features in the document in terms of maintaining dialogue as a central feature of contemporary Catholic faith identity and keeping the dialogical arena free of explicit efforts at missionizing. But because the document was very much a compromise statement intended to incorporate the concerns of both Vatican offices, serious ambiguities remain in it. For Dupuis, as well as for John Borelli of Georgetown University, who held the interreligious portfolio at the NCCB for many years, *Dialogue and Proclamation* hardly resolves the continuing tension between dialogue and mission. Dupuis even observed that perhaps it is a tension that can never be fully resolved.

Dialogue and Proclamation at least led to an in-depth discussion that many hoped would be followed up with a further, constructive probing of the issue. Unfortunately this has not happened. The tensions have in fact increased in recent years, in large part because of the third important document, *Dominus Iesus*, the work of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then-head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.⁴ His statement took a highly theological approach to the Catholic Church’s perception of all other religious communities, Christian and non-Christian. It exhibited a tone that lacked any personal dimension to the interfaith and interreligious dialogue. Clearly the document did not emerge from the hands of people with extensive personal experience in the spiritual encounter that stands at the heart of authentic dialogue. Many Christian communities were much angered over the document, as were people of other faith traditions. Jews were rather

² The text of *Redemptoris missio* and *Dialogue and Proclamation* can be found in *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation*, ed. William R. Burrows (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993). See also John T. Pawlikowski, “Dialogue in Contemporary Catholicism,” *Modern Believing* 51.3 (July 2010) 47–55.

³ See Jacques Dupuis, S.J., “A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation,” in *Redemption and Dialogue* 119–60.

⁴ *Origins* 30 (2000) 209–19.

confused as to whether the document applied to them, since Jewish participants in the dialogue were under the impression that a series of post-Vatican II Catholic official documents as well as the many statements of John Paul II had solidified Catholicism's affirmation of the continued validity of the Jewish covenant after Christ.

Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, then-president of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, joined then-Archbishop Walter Kasper and Cardinal William Keeler, who oversaw Catholic-Jewish relations for the NCCB, in trying to convince the Jewish community that *Dominus Iesus* did not apply to them. Their efforts did reduce some of the tensions in the Jewish community regarding the document, although the logic of *Dominus Iesus* certainly seems to include Jews, since it places all other peoples of faith, including other Christians, in an insufficient condition regarding salvation.

The initial outcry against *Dominus Iesus* has subsided, but it has left a continuing measure of uncertainty among many non-Catholics. The document, as I said above, lacks any understanding of the personal dimensions of authentic dialogue, taking a very rationalistic theological approach to the question. Yet dialogue, while it definitely must be pursued on a theological plane for genuine authenticity, is first and foremost a personal encounter. Subtract the personal elements, and the dialogue is in trouble. As I argued in a panel presentation on *Dominus Iesus* at the Catholic Theological Society of America's meeting in Milwaukee soon after the appearance of the document,⁵ I cannot look my Jewish (or other) dialogue partners in their eyes, people whose deep-seated spirituality I have experienced, and simplistically utter some of the words of this document. It would violate their human dignity and spiritual integrity. I may not have as yet an adequate new theology of interreligious relations, but I can no longer continue merely with the classical theological formulations. This, I would add, I see as the basic orientation of the Good Friday prayer for the Jews formulated in the post-Vatican II 1970 missal of Pope Paul VI, where the continuing spiritual integrity of the Jewish community is affirmed without resolving the theological questions from the Christian side. Pope Benedict XVI's revision of this prayer for the Tridentine liturgy—Cardinal Kurt Koch, the then-president of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, has staunchly defended it as preferable to the 1970 prayer—adds further ambiguity to the official Catholic position.

In the opening part of his article, D'Costa summarizes the major statements on Catholic-Jewish relations from various Vatican sources as well as some important writings of individual theologians. D'Costa is supportive

⁵ See "*Dominus Iesus: A Panel Discussion*," *Proceedings of the Annual Meetings* 56 (2001) 97–116.

of improved Catholic-Jewish relations and even critiques someone such as the late Cardinal Avery Dulles for proposing a return to a pre-Vatican II supersessionist theology of the church’s relationship with the Jewish people. But—and this is critical—D’Costa believes that a post-Vatican II approach to the Catholic-Jewish relationship need not exclude a Catholic commitment to mission. In fact, he remains convinced that such a commitment remains the Catholic magisterial teaching. To this end, he cites the often-quoted exchange between Benedict XVI and Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner occasioned by the pope’s endorsement of Neusner’s *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*.⁶ In D’Costa’s view this papal exchange with Neusner shows that a Jew and a Christian can engage in respectful dialogue in a setting in which the Christian continues to affirm mission to the Jews.

D’Costa’s use of the Benedict XVI-Neusner exchange is illustrative of the incomplete nature of his overall analysis in several areas. In this case he never mentions that Benedict, in his second volume on Jesus,⁷ basically dismisses the need for Catholics to pursue the evangelization of the Jews, preferring to leave the issue to an eschatological future. This follows upon Kasper’s essay regarding Benedict’s revised Tridentine Good Friday prayer, an essay that Kasper has insisted the pope encouraged him to publish, which argued that the prayer was entirely eschatological in its focus and carried no concrete implications for missionizing Jews in the preeschatological era.⁸ Despite D’Costa’s claim to the contrary, Kasper and Benedict appear to be quite close to each other on this point.

A comment is in order here regarding D’Costa’s reliance on the Benedict XVI-Neusner exchange. Neusner is certainly a leading Jewish scholar of our time and has produced some important publications in such areas as the understanding of the Pharisaic movement, a movement that more than likely represented the basic context in which Jesus preached, according to the 1985 Vatican Notes celebrating the 20th anniversary of *Nostra aetate*.⁹ But the particular volume by Neusner that became the principal focus of his exchange with the pope is a rather shallow volume that repeats rather conventional stereotypes of Jewish and Christian beliefs and does not draw

⁶ Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University, 2000).

⁷ Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2011).

⁸ Cardinal Walter Kasper, “Christians, Jews and the Thorny Question of Mission,” *Origins* 32 (2002) 464; and Kasper, “La preghiera del Venerdì Santo,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, April 10, 2008, p. 1.

⁹ Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820306_jews-judaism_en.html.

upon newer scholarship from the so-called “Parting of the Ways” authors¹⁰ or even upon Neusner’s more substantial volumes. The newer scholarship on the Jewishness of Jesus and the positive outlook on the Church’s relationship with Jews and Judaism is critical for how we treat the issue of mission to the Jews in our day. Hence Neusner’s *A Rabbi Looks at Jesus* does not serve as an adequate foundation for such a discussion today.

Throughout D’Costa’s article I find a lack of clarity regarding key terms such as “mission,” “evangelization,” “witness,” and “fulfillment.” He initially defines “mission” in rather generic terms without any specific consideration of the special status of the Jews in this regard, a status confirmed by many ecclesial leaders in interreligious dialogue such as Cardinal Kasper and even Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, who once headed the Pontifical Council for Non-Christians. According to D’Costa, “mission” involves a deep concern for the greatest good of X when that good is understood as the free and uncoerced conversion to Jesus Christ and baptism into the Catholic Church. One can certainly applaud the first part of such a definition. As Catholic Christians, we certainly strive to promote the greatest good of the other, whether Jews or some other community. But as the 1974 Vatican Guidelines (issued to commemorate the tenth anniversary of *Nostra aetate*) rightly insisted, Catholics are obligated, before making pronouncements on Catholic-Jewish relations, to discern how Jews define themselves. And from my long experience in the Christian-Jewish dialogue, I would maintain that few, if any, Jewish leaders would define baptism as being the “greatest good” for themselves or for the Jewish community as a whole. In fact, most would say that in one way or another it would represent a subtle, yet real, form of genocide against the Jewish community.

Here I would return to an earlier point in my response, namely, that authentic dialogue and a theology that might emerge from it requires some integration of classical theological views with the concrete experience of genuine encounter with people of other faith traditions, in this case, Jews. D’Costa simply eliminates any consideration of the experiential dimensions of dialogue in favor of a prescriptive theology that shows no actual interchange with faithful Jewish believers. Such an approach totally undercuts the foundations of genuine dialogue. The Central Committee of German Catholics and Jews, which has produced important texts on Catholic-Jewish

¹⁰ Examples of the “Parting of the Ways” scholarship include the following: Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Texts and Studies in Judaism 95 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt, eds., *Paul and Judaism: Crosscurrents in Pauline Exegesis and the Study of Christian-Jewish Relations* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2012); Anthony J. Saldarini, “Jews and Christians in the First Two Centuries: The Changing Paradigm,” *SHOFAR* 10 (1992) 32–43.

relations for over 20 years, released a strong statement in June 2009 arguing against the missionizing of Jews in this vein.

Another point of reflection arises in any consideration of D'Costa's definition of mission with respect to Jews. Hypothetically, if D'Costa's vision were ever to become reality and masses of Jews were to accept the offer of Christian baptism, would that really be a good for Christianity in light of the affirmation by John Paul II and others that Judaism lies at the heart of the Christian vision? If this indeed is a true representation, then would Christianity not in fact lose part of its authentic "soul" with the disappearance of Judaism? I certainly do not foresee any chance of this occurring, but on the level of principle it requires discussion.

There is one and only one term that, in my judgement, can continue to be used with integrity in the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. That term is "witness." Cardinal Kasper has spoken well to this term in his foreword to the recent volume *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today*, which emerged from a multiyear discussion among Europeans and American Christian scholars in the presence of Jewish consultants, a discussion that he personally fostered and in whose opening session he took part. In that foreword he does not deny certain irreconcilable differences between Jews and Christians. These must be addressed by both sides in the context of dialogue. While Kasper insists that such discussions cannot include "covert proselytizing," he likewise maintains that the dialogue partners should share their deepest spiritual and theological understandings with each other.

I would fully embrace Kasper's perspective. D'Costa seems to imply that the alternative to the abandonment of mission is keeping silent about the core of our Catholic faith in situations of encounter with Jews or other non-Christians. This represents a false dichotomy. For myself and many of my Catholic colleagues in the dialogue with Jews, our Christian faith is paramount for our commitment to the dialogue. It is also critical for our wider witness to the world. I have absolutely no hesitancy in describing the basis of my Christian commitment in the presence of my Jewish partners in dialogue. I would hope that they would feel the same for, given my understanding of Christianity's rootedness in Judaism, Christians require such witness from their Jewish partners if they are to remain faithful to the spiritual vision given to the church as a sacred legacy by both Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Nontriumphalist proclamation of our basic beliefs is a central requirement of authentic dialogical encounter. But necessarily hoping for formal conversion in the manner D'Costa suggests cannot be the ultimate goal. This viewpoint does not preclude, however, the possibility of personal conversion on an individual level.

I now come to perhaps the most fundamental flaw in D'Costa's argumentation. While he acknowledges the basic Vatican documents on Catholic-Jewish relations since Vatican II as fundamentally positive, and sees John

Paul II's many statements on the church's relationship with the Jewish people in the same light, he regards most, if not all, of these statements as "pastoral," rather than having a modicum of magisterial authority. Yet papal statements on "mission" he seems to regard in a more magisterial vein. I and my colleagues in the work of enhancing Catholic-Jewish relations would roundly reject such an evaluation. Granted there are degrees of magisterial authority within a canonical context, even among the conciliar documents from Vatican II, but what does "pastoral" really mean for D'Costa? Making Jews feel good today in light of our conflicted history? Several of the people directly connected with the text of *Nostra aetate* have indicated that the framers of the document understood its significant theological implications. They did not regard it as merely a "pastoral" statement. Gregory Baum, who served as a *peritus* at Vatican II and was involved with the original drafting of the document, spoke to its theological significance in a 1986 address to the Catholic Theological Society of America. In that address Baum argued that *Nostra aetate* no. 4, which addressed the Christian-Jewish relationship, represented in his mind the most profound change in the ordinary magisterium of the church from the council.¹¹ And Thomas Stransky, who served as the principal staff person for the drafting of *Nostra aetate*, clearly left the impression that a fundamental theological change was at the base of *Nostra aetate* when he spoke to a session of the Christ and the Jewish People consultation at the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem. One hopes that Stransky will be able to complete his personal reflections on the drafting of *Nostra aetate* and confirm in writing the impression that he definitely communicated in his oral presentation.

Actually, even without the testimony of people directly connected with the text of *Nostra aetate*, the theological dimensions of the document ought to be self-evident to anyone familiar with the preconciliar theology of the Christian-Jewish relationship and the theological perspective of *Nostra aetate*. The preconciliar theology strongly emphasized the abrogation of the Jewish covenantal inclusion with the church replacing the Jewish people in that covenantal relationship. This attitude exercised a profound influence on the formulation of Christology throughout Christian history. So when *Nostra aetate* turned that preconciliar theology on its head by declaring continued Jewish covenantal inclusion, it obviously was bringing to the fore the kind of substantive theological change that Baum described in his 1986 address. So, while theologians may continue to discuss the relative status of *Nostra aetate* and the subsequent Vatican statements in 1974 and 1985 that further delineate its concrete implications, one cannot simply term it merely

¹¹ Gregory Baum, "The Social Context of American Catholic Theology," *Proceedings of the Annual Meetings* 41 (1986) 87.

a “pastoral” document. These statements were indeed responding to genuine pastoral concerns, but they in fact touched on the very nerve center of Christian theological self-identity in terms of ecclesiology and Christology. So they carry obvious theological import not merely for relations with the contemporary Jewish community but also for basic Christian self-understanding.

D’Costa also refers to the many speeches of John Paul II on the subject of the church’s relationship with Judaism.¹² Once more he regards them as essentially “pastoral” statements. Certainly John Paul II had pastoral considerations in mind when he spoke to the issue of the church’s relationship with the Jewish people, but his words carry considerable significance for Christian theology. In these speeches he set out a theological vision of the Christian-Jewish relationships that was marked by a deep-seated sense of bonding between the two faith communities. Judaism and its teachings were internal to Christianity. That was his clear message, even though regrettably, as I highlighted in my inaugural John Paul II lecture at Boston College in March, John Paul never produced a comprehensive statement on the implications of his vision of Christian-Jewish bonding for Christian theology as a whole. But without question his many presentations on this topic (more than any other pope in history) all highlight a significant theological impact from the fundamentally new understanding of the Christian-Jewish relationship generated by *Nostra aetate*. D’Costa is well aware of these papal statements. But once more he reduces them to mere pastoral documents, thereby undercutting any ultimate theological significance. It is hard for me to fathom how numerous statements made by a pope over a period of years carry no magisterial significance. They may not be on a par with more formal papal statements or conciliar documents, but surely they must be seen as carrying significant theological weight. D’Costa’s reduction of all post-Vatican II statements on Christian-Jewish relations as pastoral and not theological is where he and I ultimately part company.

I should mention that Benedict XVI, while he has not made Christian-Jewish reconciliation a mainstay of his papacy in the same manner as John Paul II did, nonetheless has affirmed the directions in which John Paul was leading the church on this question. At the outset of his papacy, in several meetings with international Jewish leaders, Benedict reaffirmed his commitment to all of John Paul’s efforts to redefine the Christian-Jewish relationship. And in his own right he addressed this issue in an important speech

¹² Pope John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage: Texts on Jews and Judaism, 1979–1995*, ed. with commentary and intro. Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki (New York: Anti-Defamation League; Crossroad, 1995). For a somewhat updated version of this volume, see Pope John Paul II, *The Saint for Shalom: How Pope John II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations*, ed. Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki (New York: Anti-Defamation League; Crossroad, 2011).

given in January 2011 at the synagogue in Rome.¹³ There Benedict portrayed the Jewish people as still in an ongoing covenantal relationship with God. One can see this as a repudiation of the destructive line of thought introduced by the late Cardinal Dulles a few years earlier. Dulles had questioned whether Vatican II really argued for continued Jewish covenantal inclusion, returning to a pre-Vatican II theological outlook that regarded the Church as replacing the Jewish people in this relationship. It is clear that Benedict, without directly mentioning Dulles by name, was putting to an end the validity of Dulles's perspective—an interpretation of the papal address that Kasper has in fact put forth in private conversation. To his credit, D'Costa rejects Dulles's perspective, which he seems to regard as a return to pre-*Nostra aetate* replacement theology. Unfortunately, however, he does not carry over this perspective into his discussion of mission to the Jews. Mission to the Jews in fact needs to be radically rethought within Christian theology, given the monumental transformation of the church's understanding of Judaism from a faith tradition excluded from any further covenantal link to God after the coming of Christ to one that continues in such a covenantal link after the Christ event.

Benedict XVI actually went even further in his Roman synagogue presentation. He recommended postbiblical Jewish source material to Christians as a potential enhancement of their own spirituality. As Philip Cunningham, long a leader in the Christian-Jewish dialogue, has remarked, a pope does not recommend spiritual perspectives from a supposedly "dead" religious tradition to members of his own faith community. So the only conclusion we can reach from this unprecedented citation of postbiblical Jewish religious sources by Benedict XVI is that he regards Judaism as a continuing living faith perspective in an ongoing relationship with the creator God.

The argument for continued covenantal inclusion on the part of the Jewish people remains crucial for any discussion of mission to the Jews. A claim for such inclusion necessarily involves a major reconsideration of the issue of mission. This is a central aspect of Cardinal Kasper's approach to the question. For Kasper the fact that the Jews, from the Christian theological perspective, have authentic revelation and especially because they remain in a covenantal relationship with God is the foundation for the view that no proselytizing of Jews is demanded from Christians.¹⁴

Moving beyond the realm of "official" ecclesial documents and statements by the popes and other church leaders, I come to the world of theological

¹³ See Pope Benedict XVI, "Papal Address at Synagogue in Rome," January 17, 2010, zenith.org/article-28074?I=English.

¹⁴ Cardinal Walter Kasper, "The Good Olive Tree," *America* 185.7 (September 17, 2001) 12–14; and Kasper, "Christians, Jews and the Thorny Question of Mission," *Origins* 32 (2002) 457–66.

scholarship. In the almost half century since the passage of *Nostra aetate* by Vatican II, both Protestant and Catholic theologians have struggled to revise Christian theology in a way that combines the affirmation of continuing Jewish covenantal inclusion with a universal significance for the Christ event. I have detailed earlier efforts along this line in my volume *Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue*.¹⁵ More recent attempts include several essays in the volume produced by the “Christ and the Jewish People” consultation.¹⁶ While theologians have not reached consensus on a Christian theology of Jewish covenantal inclusion, they have reached broad agreement on one central point: any such discussion must begin with the premise that the Jewish people’s covenant with God has not been abrogated by the coming of Christ.

Certainly I recognize that theological reflections by individual Christian scholars do not take on a magisterial dimension, even though Dulles, in his earlier creative phase, once spoke of the magisterium of the theologians alongside the official magisterium. But surely when consensus develops among a significant group of theologians, such agreement acquires a certain special status within the teaching of the church. And such a development is clearly present among the Christian theologians who have engaged the issue of Jewish-Christian relations. They recognize that they have no option except to start with an affirmation of ongoing Jewish covenantal inclusion.

D’Costa is aware of such theological developments among Catholic scholars. But he does not engage them in any meaningful way, most likely because his focus is on magisterial teaching. But just as his reduction of most Vatican and papal postconciliar statements as merely pastoral remains woefully inadequate, so his failure to take seriously the impact of the consensus reached by a significant group of theologians on the magisterial context significantly weakens his overall argumentation.

To summarize my response to D’Costa, his essay falls far short of an adequate presentation of the question of mission to the Jews within contemporary Catholicism on two counts: (1) his arbitrary dismissal of post-Vatican II statements to mere pastoral proclamations, and (2) his neglect of the emerging theological consensus on continued Jewish covenantal inclusion as a central argument against missionizing Jews. He is clearly swimming against the tide and can do so only through a questionable delimitation of the status of important documents and papal statements. Also he

¹⁵ John T. Pawlikowski, *Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue* (New York: Paulist, 1982; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

¹⁶ See articles by Philip Cunningham, Hans Herman Henrix, Gregor Maria Hoff, Thomas Norris, Didier Pollefeyt, and Christian Rutishauser in *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships*, ed. Philip Cunningham et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

shows little understanding that authentic dialogue has to bring together the theological tradition of the church past and present with the personal experience of encounter with members of other faith communities—Jews in particular—because of the inherent bonding Christians enjoy with them and their spiritual tradition. The question of mission to Jews, or mission to any other faith community in the context of interreligious dialogue, cannot be determined solely through theological reflection, as vital as that reflection remains. In short, while D’Costa basically appears to support in principle the new constructive Christian outreach to the Jewish people, his argument for a continued missionary involvement stands on quicksand.

I can agree with D’Costa that there exists a certain ambiguity in the official Catholic viewpoint on the need for a mission to the Jews, but the overwhelming thrust of the discussion definitely leads toward the conclusion reached by Cardinal Kasper that no proselytizing of Jews is required. The issue will be settled in the eschatological age by God himself in a way that we may not have envisioned. The official Catholic documents, the papal perspective, and the theological reflections by individual scholars all point in that direction rather than toward the view D’Costa suggests.