

Searching Her Own Mystery

Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People,
and the Identity of the Church

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The Ecclesiological Challenge of *Nostra Aetate*

A Theological Revolution

Two Popes and Four Propositions

On April 27, 2014 the Catholic Church officially recognized Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II as saints. Media reports focused on the appeal these two figures held for rival segments of the Church—John XXIII inspired progressives, while John Paul II earned the devotion of traditionalists. Little attention was given to the revolution in Catholic teaching and sensibility that these two Popes *jointly* accomplished—John XXIII as initiator, John Paul II as interpreter, emblematic personality, and implementer.

I refer to the new Catholic teaching concerning the Jewish people and their way of life. Pope John XXIII summoned the Council which would make that teaching an official part of Catholic dogma, and without his personal intervention that Council would have avoided the topic.¹ While he did not live to witness the adoption of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965, this extraordinary breakthrough in Jewish-Catholic relations is rightly credited to his pontificate.

Karol Cardinal Wojtyla was elected pope thirteen years after the adoption of *Nostra Aetate*. The document's teaching concerning the Jewish people had profound personal meaning for this son of Poland. He had grown up in the company of Jews, and had witnessed the tragedy of the Holocaust firsthand. The new pope behaved as though *Nostra Aetate* 4 imposed upon him a sacred obligation to explore its significance theologically and embody its truth in concrete deeds and relationships. With iconic acts such as his visit to the Rome Synagogue in 1986 and his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in

1. Connelly, *Enemy to Brother*, 239–40, 49.

2000, and in many public addresses dealing with the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, this pope made the fourth chapter of *Nostra Aetate* a tangible and living reality.

The fourth chapter of *Nostra Aetate* inaugurated a revolution in Church teaching.² It was adopted only two decades after the fall of Nazi Germany, whose racial ideology was shared in part by many Catholics of that era who questioned whether even baptism could remove the stain upon the Jewish soul resulting from rejection of the Son of God.³ In 1943 a Catholic theologian as eminent as Karl Adam could argue that the immaculate conception of Mary rendered her virtually a non-Jew: “Through a miracle of God’s grace Mary is beyond those characteristics that are passed by blood from Jew to Jew.”⁴ While the focus on “blood” and “race” was a modern novelty, the belief among Christians that the Jewish people were corporately guilty of the crime of “deicide” (i.e., the murder of God) had a long and tragic history.

This context helps us better appreciate the significance of *Nostra Aetate* 4. This chapter established four propositions as fundamental to the Catholic view of the Jewish people.⁵ First, in response to the still recent catastrophe of the Shoah, the document rejected the claim that the Jewish people were corporately culpable for the death of Jesus, and denounced all forms of anti-Semitism. This proposition seems obvious to most Christians in the twenty-first century, and it is difficult for us to conceive of a time when it would be a contentious assertion. The fact that we must now mobilize our historical imagination to understand the controversial nature of this aspect of *Nostra Aetate* is itself a tribute to the document’s success.

However, *Nostra Aetate* 4 was not primarily an exercise in combating a false and harmful teaching. The remaining propositions articulated by the document are all positive in character.

The second focuses on the “mutual understanding and respect” that should exist between Christians and Jews owing to their common “spiritual patrimony.” The description of this common heritage forms the core of

2. The complete text of *Nostra Aetate* 4 is found in Appendix 1.

3. John Connelly shows how widespread such views were among Catholics in this era. Here is one example: “In December 1933, Father Wilhelm Schmidt, the century’s leading Catholic anthropologist, told an audience in Vienna that ‘a perversion of the Jews’ inner being,’ was ‘punishment’ for killing Christ. ‘Two thousand years have had a psychological effect on [Jews’] being,’ intoned Schmidt, and that could not be ‘undone by baptism’” (*Enemy to Brother*, 112).

4. Cited by Connelly, *ibid.*, 21.

5. My numbering of these propositions follows my analysis of the logic of *Nostra Aetate*, rather than the order in which the propositions appear in the document.

Nostra Aetate 4. That heritage includes, of course, the “Old Testament,” but it also draws upon the contribution of Jews who cherished and preserved those books after their composition and passed them on to the Church: “The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy deigned to establish the ancient covenant.” Moreover, Jesus himself and the Virgin Mary come from Jewish stock, as did “the apostles . . . as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ to the world.” Based on this “common patrimony,” Christians should move beyond the mere renunciation of anti-Semitism and build a new relationship of trust and cooperative endeavor with their Jewish neighbors.

The second proposition of *Nostra Aetate* 4 seeks to foster a positive relationship between Christians and Jews on the basis of a common past. The third proposition goes further and asserts that the Jewish people share with Christians more than a common past: like the Church, the Jewish people have received an irrevocable calling from God and enjoy a special spiritual status in God’s presence. Citing Paul’s letter to the Romans (11:28–29), the document states that “according to the apostle, the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for he does not repent of the gifts he makes nor of the calls he issues.” In other words, the Jewish people remain an elect nation, retaining a unique role in the divine plan. The first proposition rejected the view that Jews suffer under a horrific curse. The third proposition declares that, in fact, they live under a singular blessing.

The sharing of ancient treasures should foster a relationship of “mutual understanding and respect” between Christians and Jews, and the Church’s recognition of the election of “Abraham’s stock” should inspire reverence for the Jewish people and their way of life. However, neither of these propositions requires that her relationship with the Jewish people constitute an essential feature of the Church’s ongoing corporate identity. Jesus, his family, and his disciples were all Jews—but that was all in the remote past. Both the Church and the Jewish people enjoy a special status in the sight of God—but it is still possible that the Church’s position as “the new people of God” is of such a higher order as to negate any sense of mutual interdependence. The relationship between the two communities may exist purely on an external level—as one might reasonably infer from *Lumen Gentium* 16, adopted almost one year before *Nostra Aetate*. Is there some reason to think that “Christians and Jews” are inextricably linked in God’s sight, and that they possess not only a common heritage and two divinely appointed vocations but also an intertwined identity and destiny? The suggestion that such is the case forms the fourth and perhaps most important proposition of *Nostra Aetate* 4. While it is the final assertion in my exposition, in the

document itself this proposition appears as the opening statement: “As this sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it recalls the spiritual bond linking the people of the new covenant with Abraham’s stock.” I have drawn the title of my book from this crucial sentence, and the content of the sentence deserves special attention in my opening chapter.

The Jewish People and Judaism as “Intrinsic” to the Church

Are we justified in placing so much weight on this introductory statement of *Nostra Aetate* 4, which upon initial reading seems no more than a literary transition to a new topic? The history of the document and of its interpretation enable us to answer this question with a resounding “yes.” In discussing a draft of the document at a Vatican Council session in September of 1964, the German bishops explained why they thought a Council statement dealing with the Jewish people was essential: “If the Church in Council makes a statement concerning her own nature, she cannot fail to mention her connection with God’s people of the Old Covenant. . . .”⁶ At that time the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) was in its final stages of development, and its official adoption two months later would constitute one of the greatest achievements of Vatican II.⁷ Thus, “the Church in Council” was indeed about to make “a statement concerning her own nature.”⁸ For these German bishops, such a statement necessarily required reflection on the Church’s relationship to the Jewish people.⁹ It is this conviction—that the identity of the Church is in some sense inseparable from that of the Jewish people—that is formulated in the introductory sentence of *Nostra Aetate* 4. Rather than a mere literary transition, this sentence provides the fundamental theological rationale for the chapter it introduces.

In 1974 the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews issued a document entitled “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (n. 4).”¹⁰ The conclusion to the Guidelines includes the following:

6. Norris, “The Jewish People,” 259.

7. For more on *Lumen Gentium*, see chapter 3 of this volume.

8. In fact, all the work of the Council—and not just *Lumen Gentium*—could be viewed as part of an effort to speak about the “nature of the Church.”

9. In his 1969 commentary on *Nostra Aetate*, John Osterreicher—one of the document’s authors—has this to say about such speeches presented at the Council: “What is new is especially the statement that the Declaration on the Jews belongs essentially to the Church’s self-realization, which was the principal task of Vatican II.” (Cited by Norris, “The Jewish People,” 259.)

10. For the text of this document, see Willebrands, *Church and Jewish People*,

The Second Vatican Council has pointed out the path to follow in promoting deep fellowship between Jews and Christians. But there is still a long road ahead. *The problem of Jewish-Christian relations concerns the Church as such, since it is when “pondering her own mystery” that she encounters the mystery of Israel.* Therefore, even in areas where no Jewish communities exist, this remains an important problem. There is also an ecumenical aspect of the question: the very return of Christians to the sources and origins of their faith, grafted onto the earlier covenant, helps the search for unity in Christ, the cornerstone.¹¹

Nine years after the adoption of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican Commission responsible for the implementation of the chapter dealing with the Jewish people singled out its introductory sentence and underlined its unique importance. The “problem” of Jewish-Christian relations does not arise as a result of merely practical and pastoral concerns deriving from the Church’s relationship to particular Jewish communities. Instead, it arises as a result of the Church’s own essential nature. This means that the “problem” affects the Church as a whole, in all of its parts and manifestations—“even in areas where no Jewish communities exist” and where no immediate pastoral issues present themselves. The issue is of such great importance that addressing it properly offers the hope of healing the Church’s own internal divisions.

If any doubt remained concerning the unique importance of the introductory sentence of *Nostra Aetate* 4, it would dissolve in the face of the consistent teaching of Pope John Paul II.¹²

Only five months after being named the Bishop of Rome, the Pope addressed a group of representatives of Jewish organizations:

As your representative has mentioned, it was the Second Vatican Council with its declaration *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4 that provided the starting point for this new and promising phase in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish religious community. In effect, the Council made very clear that, “while searching into the mystery of the Church,” it recalled “the spiritual bond linking the people of the New Covenant with Abraham’s stock.” Thus it is understood that our two religious

211–19.

11. *Ibid.*, 218. Emphasis added.

12. In the collection of his speeches on this topic from 1979 to 1995 found in *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, I have counted at least seven occasions when Pope John Paul II cites and comments on this statement (see 4, 11, 18, 55–56, 63, 126–27, 141–42).

communities are connected and closely related at the very level of their respective religious identities.¹³

Pope John Paul II articulates the significance of this sentence of *Nostra Aetate* with piercing clarity: the Catholic Church and the Jewish people are bound together not only by a common past but also—and most importantly—“at the very level of their respective religious identities.” In his visit to the Rome Synagogue in 1986, the Pope underlined this point by way of another contrast.

We are all aware that, among the riches of this paragraph number 4 of *Nostra Aetate*, three points are especially relevant. . . . The first is that the Church of Christ discovers her “bond” with Judaism by “searching into her own mystery.” The Jewish religion is not “extrinsic” to us, but in a certain way is “intrinsic” to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain sense, it could be said that you are our elder brothers.¹⁴

For John Paul II, the introduction to *Nostra Aetate* 4 means that Jewish religious life is not “extrinsic” but (“in a certain way”) “intrinsic” to Christian faith.¹⁵ This extrinsic/intrinsic contrast vividly conveys the significance of the words, “while searching into the mystery of the Church.” In the paraphrase offered by Richard John Neuhaus, “The Church does not go outside herself but more deeply within herself to engage Jews and Judaism.”¹⁶

Originally, the Vatican II declaration concerning Judaism and the Jewish people was to appear as an independent document. However, in the course of its deliberations the Council decided to set this teaching in the broader context of “The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.” Thus, section 1 of the final form of *Nostra Aetate* provides a general introduction to “non-Christian religions.” Section 2 focuses on “the religions which are found in more advanced civilizations,” with Hinduism and Buddhism receiving explicit mention. Section 3 speaks of Islam, and only then does section 4 take up the topic of Judaism and the Jewish people. Whatever the benefits of such an arrangement, the introduction of Judaism as the final member of a series of “non-Christian religions” could be

13. Ibid., 4.

14. Ibid., 63.

15. We will say more about the significance of the phrase “in a certain way” in chapter 3. See pages 52–53.

16. Neuhaus, “Salvation,” 73.

interpreted as undermining the unique status of the Jewish people and of its relationship to the Church. Pope John Paul II unequivocally rejects such a reading, and does so by leaning once again on his construal of the opening sentence of *Nostra Aetate* 4:

The universal openness of *Nostra Aetate*, however, is anchored in and takes its orientation from a high sense of *the absolute singularity of God's choice of a particular people*, “His own” people, Israel according to the flesh, already called “God’s Church” [*Lumen Gentium* 9]. Thus, the Church’s reflection on her mission and on her very nature is intrinsically linked with her reflection on the stock of Abraham and on the nature of the Jewish people (cf. *Nostra Aetate* 4). The Church is fully aware that sacred Scripture bears witness that the Jewish people, this community of faith and custodian of a tradition thousands of years old, is an intimate part of the “mystery” of revelation and of salvation.¹⁷

For Pope John Paul II, section 4 of *Nostra Aetate* transcends the first three sections and “anchors” and “orients” them. Thus, *Nostra Aetate* does not present Judaism as the noblest member of a general category, “non-Christian religions,” but instead views this religious tradition as reflecting the “*absolute singularity of God's choice of a particular people*.” With the Jewish people, we move beyond the realm of natural religion into the sphere of “the ‘mystery’ of revelation and salvation,” in which the Church herself dwells.

The “Spiritual Bond” Linking the Two Communities

Pope John Paul II sees the Jewish people and its religious way of life as in some sense “intrinsic” to the identity of the Church. As the opening sentence of *Nostra Aetate* 4 states, the Church discovers her “bond” to the Jewish people when “searching her own mystery.” What precisely is that “bond”? The Pope offered his answer while addressing leaders of the Jewish community in Strasbourg in 1988. He began by acknowledging the irrevocable election of the Jewish people and its vocation to sanctify the divine name and bear witness to God’s identity.

It is then through your prayer, your history, and your experience of faith, that you continue to affirm the fundamental unity of God, his fatherhood and mercy toward every man and woman, the mystery of his plan of universal salvation, and the consequences which come from it according to the principles

17. John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, 141–42. Emphasis added.

expressed by the Prophets, in the commitment for justice, peace, and other ethical values.¹⁸

The Church needs to receive this witness and learn from it, and engagement with the “prayer,” “history,” and “experience of faith” of the Jewish people will better enable her to understand the “spiritual bond” that links the two communities. However, the deeper meaning of that “spiritual bond” will only be appreciated by the Church when she focuses on “the Good News of salvation” which is central to her own being. The Pope thus continues:

With the greatest respect for the Jewish religious identity, I would also like to emphasize that for us Christians, the Church, the people of God and Mystical Body of Christ, is called throughout her journey in history to proclaim to all the Good News of salvation in the consolation of the Holy Spirit. According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, she could better understand her bond with you, certainly thanks to fraternal dialogue, but also by meditating upon her own mystery. *Now that mystery is rooted in the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ, a Jew, crucified and glorified.*¹⁹

For Pope John Paul II, *Jesus himself is the bond joining the Church and the Jewish people*. This is because Jesus is the “Christ” (i.e., the Messiah of Israel), and as such lived as a Jew, was crucified as a Jew—or, rather, as the “King of the Jews”—and remains a Jew in his resurrected and glorified humanity. The Church’s identity is rooted in the person of Jesus, and the identity of Jesus is rooted in his relationship to the Jewish people and its spiritual heritage. Therefore, as the Church ponders her own mystery, she encounters the mystery of Israel.

This truly is a theological revolution. Formerly, perverted expressions of Christian devotion to Jesus had inspired hatred of Jews and Judaism. According to the theological bombshell planted by Pope John XXIII and ignited by Pope John Paul II, this ancient reflex of contempt had been disrupted, and even reversed. Now Christian devotion to Jesus was to become the source of love for the Jewish people and appreciation for Judaism.

This obviously has profound implications for concrete relations between Christians and Jews. But what does this mean for the Church’s self-understanding, and for her comprehension of the truth of the “Good News of salvation” which she carries and proclaims?

18. *Ibid.*, 126.

19. *Ibid.*, 126–27. Emphasis added.

Israel-Ecclesiology and Israel-Christology

Nostra Aetate and Catholic Theology

While revolutionary in their practical effects, the first and second propositions of *Nostra Aetate* 4—the rejection of anti-Semitism and the acknowledgement of a shared spiritual heritage—could each be embraced without any radical reorientation of the Church’s overall theological framework. The third proposition—the affirmation of the irrevocable election in love of the Jewish people—raises questions about the universal salvific mediation of Christ which require attention, but it need not send shock waves through the Church’s entire theological system. The fourth proposition, on the other hand, poses a fundamental challenge to the Church’s way of understanding herself and the message of grace she proclaims.

If the Jewish people and the Jewish way of life are in any sense “intrinsic” to the very identity of the Church, as Pope John Paul II claimed in interpreting *Nostra Aetate* 4, then the Church’s theological vision of herself—in other words, her *ecclesiology*—must account for this reality. Moreover, this accounting cannot be a mere appendix to a pre-existing and self-contained ecclesiological system, but must entail a reconfiguring of the central pillars of the structure.

And if the inner spiritual bond joining the Church to the Jewish people is to be found in “*the person of Jesus Christ, a Jew, crucified and glorified,*” then the identity of the one the Church worships and proclaims is likewise formed in part by his enduring relationship to his flesh and blood family. Consequently, the Church’s theological vision of the person and work of Jesus—in other words, her *Christology*—must highlight and explore the significance of Jesus’ Jewishness.

This means that the Church’s theology of the Jewish people cannot exist as a discrete and compartmentalized topic, insulated from the wider framework of Catholic doctrine. The affirmations of *Nostra Aetate* 4 reverberate throughout the entire system of Catholic theology—Christology, ecclesiology, sacramental teaching, and all that remains. In 1985, in an address commemorating the twentieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, Johannes Cardinal Willebrands—then president of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews—recognized this challenge:

[O]ur task is to face adequately, study and try to solve, in all fidelity to Catholic normative tradition . . . the questions that a renewed vision of Judaism poses to many aspects of Catholic theology, from Christology to ecclesiology, from the liturgy to

the sacraments, from eschatology to the relation with the world and the witness we are called to offer in it and to it²⁰

The fulfillment of this “task” is still at its preliminary stages. I offer the present volume as a contribution to its ongoing realization.

Israel-Ecclesiology and its Christological Foundation

The ecclesiological challenge posed by *Nostra Aetate* was heightened by the adoption of *Lumen Gentium* (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) almost one year earlier. On the one hand, this document anticipates the teaching of *Nostra Aetate* by affirming the enduring election of the Jewish people: “On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues” (LG 16). On the other hand, this affirmation plays no structural role in the document’s overall vision of ecclesiology. It is merely one of several statements dealing with those who “have not yet received the Gospel.” There is no hint here of an “intrinsic bond” to the Jewish people that the Church discovers by “searching her own mystery.”

Nevertheless, *Lumen Gentium* moves ecclesiology decisively in a Jewish direction. It accomplishes this task by highlighting the Church’s identity as “the People of God” (LG 9–17). *Lumen Gentium* seeks to correct a conventional Catholic view that equated “the Church” with “the Hierarchy.” It does so by developing an “Israel-ecclesiology” in which the “Old Testament” picture of the people of God typologically anticipates the Church of Christ. In this way the Council Fathers sought to establish an ecclesial identity that has something in common with that of the Jewish people in its long sojourn through history. *Lumen Gentium* thus both affirms the unique spiritual status of the Jewish people and develops its vision of the Church in a way that makes the Church more like the Jewish people. Yet, it never relates the former proposition to the latter. In so doing (or rather, *not* doing), *Lumen Gentium* left the Church with the heritage of an emphatic question-mark that only became more urgent with the adoption of *Nostra Aetate*.

In its fourth chapter *Nostra Aetate* informs us that the Church’s identity as the “new People of God” is bound up with the identity of the Jews as “the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant.” Pope John Paul II teaches that the spiritual link joining the two is “*the person of Jesus Christ, a Jew, crucified and glorified.*” Thus,

20. Willebrands, *Church and Jewish People*, 28.

the Israel-ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* should be rooted in a particular Christological vision. How can we best articulate that Christological vision?

The Catholic Church now appears to recognize the need to address this question. In the early years of the new century the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews suggested that an international group of Christian theologians should gather to study “the specific question of how to relate the universal saving significance of Jesus Christ to Israel’s ongoing covenantal life with God.”²¹ The group began meeting in 2006, and the fruit of its labor was published in 2011 under the title, *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships*. While the question this group addressed is formulated differently than the one I am considering here, their scholarly efforts contribute substantially to the advancement of my own project.

One of the proposals reiterated by several of the articles in this volume draws from the writings of Pope Benedict XVI.²² Engaging with Jewish concepts in his interpretation of Jesus, Pope Benedict presents Christ as the personal embodiment of the Torah:

The Torah of the Messiah is the Messiah, Jesus, himself. . . . In this way the “Law” becomes universal. . . . In this Torah, which is Jesus himself, the abiding essence of what was inscribed on the stone tablets at Sinai is now written in living flesh, namely, the twofold command of love. . . . To imitate him, to follow him in discipleship, is therefore to keep the Torah, which has been fulfilled in him once and for all.²³

Jesus understands himself as the Torah—as the word of God in person. The tremendous prologue of John’s Gospel—“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1)—says nothing different from what the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount and the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels says.²⁴

The contributors to *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today* employ this Torah-Christology in order to demonstrate the ongoing relationship between Jesus and the Jewish people. For them, not only is Jesus the Torah in person—the Torah observed by the Jewish people is also a manifestation of the grace and power of Jesus. Thus, Hans Hermann Henrix writes:

21 Kasper, “Foreword,” xiii.

22. See Henrix, “Son of God,” 121–22, 131–38; Groppe, “Tri-unity,” 175; and Ruttishauser, “Old Unrevoked Covenant,” 236.

23. Benedict XVI, *Many Religions*, 70.

24. Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two*, 110–11.

If Christians trust in God's blessing upon Jewish walking in accord with Israel's Torah and if this halakhic "walking" can be considered salvific only when related to the fundamental Christian belief that every salvation is the salvation of Jesus Christ, then saying that Jesus Christ is the living Torah can be understood as denoting such mediation. Then that which for Jews is salvific—life according to the Torah, trust in God's Word, faith in God's promise—would be in contact with Jesus Christ and would be taken up in him in a way that confirms, reaffirms, or reinforces, since Jesus Christ is obedient to the Torah and fulfills it. . . . Whoever obeys the Torah as a Jew and strives toward the goal "to be an incarnation of the Torah," walks on his or her way in a manner that, because of Jesus Christ's link with the Torah, Christians believe to be salvific communion with Christ as the Torah incarnate.²⁵

While Pope Benedict did not draw this conclusion from his Torah-Christology, Henrix's proposal deserves serious consideration.

Henrix argues forcefully that the Torah always retains its particular reference to the Jewish people. Therefore, when gentile Christians become disciples of the incarnate Torah, they are thereby brought into relationship to the Jewish people.²⁶ In this way the Church can discover her link to the Jewish people by searching her own mystery, i.e., Jesus as the living Torah. While this argument has merit, its persuasive power will be lost on most Christians—including those who are theologians. For them, the Torah that Jesus incarnates is generally assumed to be a universal Logos, stripped of its temporally circumscribed ethnic trappings. Pope Benedict himself could be interpreted as saying only this when he states that "the *abiding essence* of what was inscribed on the stone tablets at Sinai is now written in living flesh, namely, the twofold command of love"—the "abiding" and universal "essence" of the Torah, not the Torah as a whole in all its troubling particularity and peculiarity. If Christians are to understand the essential connection between Jesus—and his Church—and the Jewish people, Torah-Christology alone will prove insufficient for the task.

Cardinal Lustiger and Israel-Christology

Henrix appears to recognize the limitations or potential pitfalls of Torah-Christology as an independent christological model. This is evident in the

25. Henrix, "Son of God," 137–38.

26. *Ibid.*, 134–37.

fact that he founds his proposal not only on the Torah-Christology of Pope Benedict XVI but also on the teaching of Pope John Paul II regarding Jesus' Jewish identity. Before raising the topic of Torah-Christology, Henrix quotes the following from the Polish pontiff:

Jesus' human identity is determined on the basis of his bond with the people of Israel, with the dynasty of David and his descent from Abraham. And this does not mean only a physical belonging. By taking part in the synagogue celebrations where the Old Testament texts were read and commented on, Jesus also came humanly to know these texts. . . . Thus he became an authentic son of Israel, deeply rooted in his own people's long history²⁷

Henrix thus sets his discussion of Jesus' identity as "Torah in person" within the context of reflections on the significance of Jesus as "an authentic son of Israel." Jesus is rooted in the life of his people both genealogically (through descent from David and Abraham) and culturally (through a spiritual formation dependent on a Jewish religious institution, i.e., the synagogue). Therefore, the Torah he incarnates cannot be abstracted from the life and history of the particular people to whom it was given.

Henrix points us in the right direction, but his exposition of the theological implications of Jesus' identity as an "authentic son of Israel" lacks adequate substance. To remedy this deficiency, we look to the writings of Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger. The Cardinal articulates a view of Jesus that may be best termed *Israel-Christology*. According to this perspective, Jesus is the perfect representative and individual embodiment of the Jewish people. He is the Christ—i.e., the Messiah, the King of the Jews. He demonstrates that he is such by obeying the Torah as God always intended it to be obeyed.

In his short but remarkable book, *The Promise*, Cardinal Lustiger offers a set of meditations on the Gospel of Matthew. Commenting on the slaying of the innocents by Herod in Matthew 2, the Cardinal sets forth his basic thesis:

The most common reading of this chapter assimilates Herod to Israel and sees Jesus only as Jesus himself. Whereas, in fact, the entire logic of the narrative is directed toward showing that Israel is Jesus and that Herod is not the king of Israel. . . . In this conflict, the figure shown to us of the Son and Messiah sums up the totality of Israel. It is a prophetic text in which the evangelist—as Isaiah and the prophets often do—plays with what the exegetes called the "corporate personality," which refers to both

27. *Ibid.*, 116–17.

a person and a people. The figure of the Messiah is at the same time a figure of Israel; the figure of Jesus is at the same time that of his people, of his Church, and a figure of Israel. What is said of one can sometimes be applied to the other, sometimes to both. Many things can be understood only by recognizing the solidarity of Jesus with those who are his, of the Messiah with his people.²⁸

As the messianic King of Israel, Jesus “sums up the totality of Israel.” He represents and embodies the people as a whole. Cardinal Lustiger reiterates this theme in his discussion of Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3). When the voice from heaven says, “This is my Son, the Beloved” (Matt 3:17), we are to recognize an allusion to the identity of Israel as God’s Son (Exod 4:22–23): “The most obvious level of meaning [in the words of God to Jesus at his baptism] is that Jesus is designated as the Son *par excellence*. He is designated not as a substitute for Israel, but as the very realization of Israel’s vocation. He is the one in whom the Promise destined for all of Israel is realized and by whom it can be communicated.”²⁹

Following his baptism, Jesus goes into the wilderness of Judah for forty days of testing. Just as Jesus recapitulates in himself the people of Israel, so in this act he recapitulates the history of Israel’s forty years of testing in the Sinai desert. Cardinal Lustiger draws the appropriate inference: “From that moment, it is made clear that Jesus is able to fulfill the Law of God completely and perfectly, and so he acts as the true Israel should act. . . . Therefore, his encounter with the Tempter in the desert, just as Israel was tested on coming out of Egypt, will focus on God and on the totality of his Law.”³⁰ Jesus obeys the Torah in its fullness, and so becomes “the very realization of Israel’s vocation.”

It is possible for non-Catholics to hold such an Israel-Christology without seeing any necessary implications for the Church’s ongoing relationship to the Jewish people.³¹ It is more difficult for a Catholic to do so, for *Nostra Aetate* 4 affirms both the irrevocable election of the Jewish people and the spiritual bond which links them to the mystery of the Church. If that spiritual bond is found in “*the person of Jesus Christ, a Jew, crucified and glorified*,” as Pope John Paul II asserted, then the Israel-Christology of Cardinal Lustiger offers us a way to explore this bond. The Cardinal himself

28. Lustiger, *The Promise*, 33, 39.

29. *Ibid.*, 64.

30. *Ibid.*, 28.

31. A prime example of an eminent scholar who adopts such a position is N. T. Wright.

takes the first steps on this path. Reflecting on Jewish suffering through the generations, and especially in the Shoah, he writes:

We must believe that all the suffering of Israel, persecuted by pagans because of its Election, is a part of the Messiah's suffering, just as the killing of the children in Bethlehem makes up a part of Christ's passion. Otherwise, God himself would appear incoherent regarding his promise to Israel. If Christian theology is unable to inscribe in its vision of the Redemption, of the mystery of the Cross, that Auschwitz also makes up a part of Christ's suffering, then we have reached the summit of absurdity.³²

Jesus' identity as the individual embodiment of the Jewish people thus affects not only the Jews of his own day but also all Jews of future generations. It is not only the martyrs of the Church whose suffering is linked to the atoning work of Jesus, but also the martyrs of the Jewish people.

As those joined inextricably to their Messiah, the Jewish people become a test of whether the Church has truly received Jesus as her Lord. Cardinal Lustiger has this to say about the title, "King of the Jews," which was placed by the Romans over the cross: "This title designates, from the pagans' point of view, not the king 'of Israel,' but the king 'of the Jews,' to emphasize that which was the most ethnic and contemptible aspect in the Romans' eyes. He whom the disciples recognize as universal Lord is so only to the extent that his disciples, Jew and non-Jews alike, accept that he is the king of the Jews."³³ If Christians treat the Jewish people as just another ethnicity, without any special connection to Jesus and the Church, they show that they are not yet worthy to be called Christians.

To make of Israel only a particular case, and, ultimately, an ethnic case—which it is also in certain respects—is a temptation for the Christian. We yield to this temptation if we consider the Jewish population as we would any other. . . . But the mystery of Israel remains at the center of the Christian faith. If we consider it unessential, we expose just how far we are from being Christians.³⁴

For Cardinal Lustiger, Israel-Christology has profound implications which Christians ignore at their own peril.

When set in the context of Israel-Christology, Torah-Christology also proves immensely valuable. The two become complementary ways of

32. Lustiger, *Promise*, 50.

33. *Ibid.*, 85.

34. *Ibid.*, 93.

looking at the humanity and divinity of Jesus through a Jewish lens. We are less tempted to detach the Torah which Jesus incarnates from the integral reality of the Jewish people and their way of life if we first grasp the intimate bond between Jesus and his flesh and blood family.

“The mystery of Israel remains at the center of the Christian faith.” Cardinal Lustiger here articulates a principle implicit in *Nostra Aetate* 4. Once the Church fully recognizes this principle, the new consciousness will send shock waves through her understanding of Christology, ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and the entire framework of Christian truth.

Israel-Ecclesiology and the *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*

Nostra Aetate and Jewish Disciples of Jesus

Cardinal Lustiger’s seminal contribution to the Christological unpacking of *Nostra Aetate* 4 cannot be divorced from his own identity as a Jew. He was proud to be a Jew, and he considered his faith in Jesus to be a realization of that identity rather than its nullification: “in becoming a Christian, I did not intend to cease being the Jew I was then. I was not running away from the Jewish condition. I have that from my parents, and I can never lose it. I have it from God, and he will never let me lose it.”³⁵

For me at the time, the contents of Judaism were no different from what I was discovering in Christianity. I saw Judaism then as a historical condition marked by persecution. I did not think for one moment of leaving it. But it found its fulfillment in welcoming the person of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel; it was in recognizing him, and only in recognizing him, that Judaism found its meaning.³⁶

Cardinal Lustiger always saw himself as a Jewish disciple of Jesus, and his insight into “the mystery of Israel” derived from his personal experience of encountering “Christ as Messiah and image of the Jewish people.”³⁷

In a recent volume chronicling the thirty years of theological controversy which prepared the way for the composition and adoption of *Nostra Aetate* 4, John Connelly underlines the essential role played in the drama by Catholics from a Jewish background. He focuses most of his attention on John Oesterreicher, but also credits the efforts of Dietrich von Hildebrand,

35. Lustiger, *On Christians and Jews*, 6.

36. *Ibid.*, 11.

37. *Ibid.*, 10.

Paul Demaan, Annie Kraus, Bruno Hussar, Renee Bloch, Geza Vermes, Gregory Baum, Leo Rudloff, and Raissa Maritain. These Jewish Catholics affirmed the enduring theological significance of the Jewish people, but they also believed that their own identity as Jews was fulfilled in Christ.

While acknowledging their indispensable role in making *Nostra Aetate* 4 possible, Connelly also argues that the truths enunciated by that document led ultimately to the Church's renunciation of any missionary agenda in relation to the Jewish people. A major reason for this development was the insight gained in late 1948 by one of the pioneers of a Catholic theology of the Jewish people, Karl Thieme:

The new reading of Paul's letter to the Romans opened his mind to the revolutionary idea that God had meant Jews to continue as a people after the time of Christ. Suddenly he was projecting the Jewish decision not to follow Christ as perfectly understandable. Not only that, but the Jews' refusal seemed justified, because *for Jews to accept Christ would have meant the end of the Jewish people*.³⁸

Individual Jews (such as Monsignor Oesterreicher or Cardinal Lustiger) who become Catholics may continue to identify as Jews. However, it is rare for those of them who marry to have children or grandchildren who identify as Jews. If all Jews were to become Catholics, then indeed this would seem to entail the *end of the Jewish people*.

Does this mean that, despite the past contributions of Jewish disciples of Jesus such as the Monsignor and the Cardinal, we are now in an era when Jews should be discouraged from believing in Jesus and when those who find their way to such faith no longer have a distinctive part to play in the unfolding drama of Jewish-Christian relations? In the present volume I will argue against such a proposition. I do so not as a Jewish Catholic but as a Messianic Jew—a Jewish disciple of Jesus who lives a traditional Jewish way of life and seeks to be a loyal member of the Jewish people. The Messianic Jewish voice has not previously been heard in this discussion. I believe that we are now ready to speak, and that what we have to say can enable Catholics to better appreciate the implications of their own authoritative decisions.

Recovering the *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*

Increasingly in the post-*Nostra Aetate* environment one hears Catholic scholars speak of the *ecclesia ex gentibus* (the Church from the gentiles) and

38. Connelly, *Enemy to Brother*, 204. Emphasis added.

the *ecclesia ex circumcissione* (the Church from the circumcision) in reference to the early centuries of Church history.³⁹ Thus, in its 1985 document, “Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Catholic Church,” the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews speaks of the particular and universal dimensions of the incarnation and the Church:

Thus the Son of God is incarnate in a people and a human family. This takes away nothing, quite the contrary, from the fact that he was born for all men . . . and died for all men. . . . Thus he made two people one in his flesh (cf. Eph 2:14–17). This explains why with the *ecclesia ex gentibus* we have, in Palestine and elsewhere, an *ecclesia ex circumcissione*, of which Eusebius for example speaks (H.E., IV, 5).⁴⁰

The text from Eusebius mentioned here describes the community of Jewish disciples of Jesus which had its origins in Jerusalem, and which was governed by Jewish bishops until the Bar Kochba revolt of 132 C.E. This Jewish *ecclesia* receives similar attention from Christian Rutishauser, S.J., in his article for *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today*:

The *ecclesia ex gentibus* (“Church from the Gentiles”) takes its position in difference but in proximity to Judaism as God’s people. In this process, the *ecclesia ex Judaeis*—the community of the “Church from the Jewish people” gathered by Christ (see Romans 9–11)—is the bond between the Church out of the nations and nascent rabbinic Judaism, which was further interpreting and living out the Sinai Covenant.⁴¹

In light of the language of *Nostra Aetate* 4, Rutishauser’s use of the word “bond” in this context has particular significance. Jesus himself—the Messiah of Israel and the individual embodiment of the Jewish people—is the fundamental spiritual bond linking the Church to the Jewish people. However, at her beginnings the linking-role of Jesus was mediated by Jewish apostles and a Jewish Mother Church in Jerusalem.

For a host of reasons, the *ecclesia ex Judaeis* (an expression equivalent to *ecclesia ex circumcissione*) disappeared early in the Church’s first millennium.

39. These Latin terms are found in a mosaic of the fifth-century Church of St. Sabina in Rome. For a volume from a Catholic scholar which uses this terminology in its title, and which was published only a few years after the adoption of *Nostra Aetate*, see Bagatti, *Church from the Circumcision*. The book has a photograph of the St. Sabina mosaic on its cover.

40. Section III, paragraph 23. See Willebrands, *Church and Jewish People*, 233.

41. Rutishauser, “Old Unrevoked Covenant,” 239.

Rutishauser suggests that the loss of this communal Jewish setting for life in Jesus had radical consequences for the validity of the Christian “mission to the Jews.” Rutishauser recognizes that the “claim of Jesus Christ” was “truly a claim for Jews and also for other people,” but in a “differentiated way” that would enable Jewish disciples of Jesus to continue to live as faithful Jews in loyalty to the Jewish people as a whole (i.e., as part of the *ecclesia ex Judaeis*) while empowering gentiles to worship the God of Israel without becoming Jews.⁴² The breakdown of this differentiated mission and differentiated community posed a dilemma for the Church which she has never adequately confronted or resolved: “If the classical Christian ‘mission to the Jews’ with the purpose of integrating them through baptism into the Church—i.e., into the *ecclesia ex gentibus*, the Church out of the nations as she is in fact—cannot really be an option, it is also true that the universal importance of Jesus to Christian eyes cannot be questioned.”⁴³ Rutishauser acknowledges that the empirical Church as presently constituted—“as she is in fact”—is only “the *ecclesia ex gentibus*, the Church out of the nations.”⁴⁴ She is unable to offer prospective Jewish disciples of Jesus an environment in which they can fulfill their distinctive covenantal responsibilities as Jews, and so any deliberate “mission to the Jews” from the Church “cannot really be an option.” Yet, the Church still cannot be true to herself if she denies “the universal importance of Jesus.” This is a dilemma indeed.

Cardinal Lustiger likewise refers to the two-fold character of the Church at its foundation, and employs the ancient Latin terms to capture this dimension of her identity. He makes explicit what is only implicit in the assertions of Rutishauser—namely, that the Church’s claim to *catholicity* hinges on her adequately expressing this two-fold reality:

The Church appears as “catholic” . . . meaning “according to the whole.” She is “according to the whole” because she is composed of both Jews and pagans. In order to remain “Catholic” in the original sense—that is, “according to the whole”—recognizes, in a single gift of God’s grace, both the *Ecclesia ex circumcissione*

42. Ibid., 242.

43. Ibid., 243.

44. As Rutishauser perceives, in normal use the English word “Church” connotes what has become de facto the “*ecclesia ex gentibus*, the Church out of the nations.” Because of this, I will in this volume avoid using the word “Church” to refer to the fully catholic reality of the Body of Christ and instead employ the Greco-Latin term *ecclesia* to speak of that reality which always remains in essence a communion of Jews and gentiles.

(the Church born from circumcision) and the *Ecclesia ex gentibus* (the Church born from the pagan nations).⁴⁵

Thus, like Rutishauser, the Cardinal sees the disappearance of the *ecclesia ex circumcissione* as highly problematic. Unlike Rutishauser, however, the Cardinal does not accept the situation as historically inevitable—or even as divinely ordained—but instead considers gentile Christians of the Byzantine era to be culpable for this disappearance. He also asserts that the result was a situation which became a “cause of unfaithfulness to Christ”:

The Jerusalem Church, destroyed under Byzantine pressure, was undoubtedly a major loss for the Christian conscience. The memory of the grace bestowed was thus practically erased—not by the Church, as the bride of Christ, but by Christians. This became for them a source of temptation and a spiritual trial, a cause for unfaithfulness to Christ. Herein lies one of the major problems of Christianity.⁴⁶

Elsewhere he describes the dissolution of the “Jewish Church” as “both a sin and tragedy.”⁴⁷ While grieving over the loss of the Church’s two-fold catholic form, Cardinal Lustiger retains a hope that this form could one day be restored. He pins this hope not on Messianic Jews, but on the Jewish Catholics of the new State of Israel: “Contemporary history has placed before us another paradoxical event: the rebirth of the State of Israel. . . . In this situation, a ‘Church,’ an *Ecclesia ex circumcissione*, as it is designated in a mosaic at Saint Sabina in Rome, once again becomes conceivable.”⁴⁸ Cardinal Lustiger thus shows himself unwilling to regard the *ecclesia ex circumcissione* as irrecoverable. He sees her loss as tragic, and her restoration as possible and desirable.

Writing as a Messianic Jew in conversation with Roman Catholics, I will make a version of Cardinal Lustiger’s thesis my own, exploring its meaning and supporting its validity through biblical exegesis. If the Church is to uphold an Israel-ecclesiology of the sort expounded in *Lumen Gentium* (as she should), she must root that ecclesiology in both Israel-Christology and in a recovery of the foundational character of the *ecclesia ex circumcissione*. In Jesus the Messiah of Israel, and in the *ecclesia ex circumcissione*, we discover the double “spiritual bond” between the Church and the Jewish people which the Church encounters when she “searches her own mystery.”

45. Lustiger, *Promise*, 6, 125. See also Lustiger, *On Christians and Jews*, 15.

46. Lustiger, *Promise*, 7.

47. Lustiger, *On Christians and Jews*, 70.

48. Lustiger, *Promise*, 126.

Mapping the Road Ahead

This book takes the documents of the Second Vatican Council as its starting point, and its proposal can be understood only in the context of the theological efforts undertaken by Catholics since the Council to reflect on the “mystery of Israel” and its relationship to the “mystery of the Church.” This volume also originates in my own personal experience as a Messianic Jew whose entire adult life has been spent in friendship, community, and theological engagement with Catholics. To understand what I am saying and why I am saying it, the reader needs to know something about that experience. Therefore, in the next chapter I will shift from a discursive to a narrative mode, and tell something of my own story.

My focus in the present chapter has been on the meaning and implications of *Nostra Aetate* 4, but I have also commented briefly on the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) which was adopted almost one year before *Nostra Aetate*. This foundational document presents a type of Israel-ecclesiology and, in passing, anticipates *Nostra Aetate*’s affirmation of the irrevocable election of the Jewish people. Yet, in leaving the connection between these two truths unexamined, and in speaking of the Church in terms that suggested discontinuity with the genealogical-Israel that was her antecedent, *Lumen Gentium* raised as many questions as it answered. Therefore, before entering into the heart of my argument, I will devote the third chapter of this book to a study of *Lumen Gentium* and the Jewish people.

With discussion of *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium* in the background, and having informed the reader of the personal experience which has brought me to the point of writing this book, I will proceed in the following five chapters to elaborate on and argue for my thesis—namely, that Jesus as “King of the Jews,” and the *ecclesia ex circumcissione* as his appointed mediator, together constitute the “spiritual bond” linking the Church to the Jewish people. My argument will consist of a series of biblical studies dealing with the sacramental life of the Church. Chapter 4 will look at holy orders, chapter 5 will focus on baptism, and chapters 6 and 7 will discuss the Eucharist. In chapter 8 I will employ the Catholic concept of sacrament to reflect on Jewish religious life in light of the material presented in the previous chapters. The book will conclude with a chapter considering the practical implications of what I am proposing.

The majority of this book will consist of biblical exegesis. In part, this is because I was trained as an exegete, and I am doing what I do best. However, I also believe that this is what is most required in our current situation. Catholics need a way to understand the implications of *Nostra Aetate* 4 and

Lumen Gentium (as interpreted by means of *Nostra Aetate*) for the entire range of Catholic doctrine and theology. To accomplish this task, Catholic theologians cannot follow their usual method and draw upon a rich storehouse of pre-Vatican II Church teaching. As regards the Jewish people and Judaism, that storehouse is rather bare. Just as *Nostra Aetate* itself focused on interpretation of the biblical text, so we who stand in its debt must go back to the basic sources of the Church's faith and rethink their meaning.⁴⁹

Throughout the chapters that follow I focus intently on the theological significance of Jesus' identity as a Jew, and its implications for our understanding of the Church's identity and her sacramental life. As a result, I devote far less attention to Jesus' identity as the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, who opens the way for human beings and the created order to share in his divine life. This means that my treatment of Christology, the Church's identity, and the sacraments falls far short of comprehensiveness and perfect balance. This would be a deficiency if I were aiming to present a comprehensive or perfectly balanced Christology, ecclesiology, or sacramental theology. However, that is not my purpose. I am only attempting to fill some gaping holes in the Catholic Church's teaching on these subjects.

To remove any doubts, let me state from the outset that I concur wholeheartedly with Thomas Torrance and his commitment to a dual Christological orientation:

So far as our knowledge of Jesus Christ is concerned . . . we should adopt a two-fold approach. On the one hand, we should seek to understand Christ within the actual matrix of interrelations from which he sprang as Son of David and Son of Mary, that is, in terms of his intimate bond with Israel in its covenant relationship with God throughout history. On the other hand, however, we should seek to understand Christ . . . in the light of what he is in himself in his internal relations with God . . .⁵⁰

In other words, thorough and balanced Christological reflection requires attentiveness to both Israel-Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. In this current volume I focus on the former. I am examining a topic that has received little theological attention, and so I am limiting the scope of my

49. As Gerhart Riegner notes, "of all the documents promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, it [i.e., *Nostra Aetate*] is the only one which contains no reference whatsoever to any of the Church's teachings—patristic, conciliar or pontifical" (Preface to Willebrands, xi). John Connelly emphasizes the fact that *Nostra Aetate* 4 "ignored many centuries of tradition" and "centered its understanding of the Jews on three chapters in one of Paul's epistles" (Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother*, 4).

50. Torrance, *Mediation*, 3.

discussion in order to give it the space it deserves. I ask the reader to judge the volume on what it seeks to accomplish, and not on what it leaves for the moment unsaid.⁵¹

While I attend more to the Israel-context than the trinitarian context of Jesus' person and mission, the latter actually constitutes an essential presupposition of the type of Israel-Christology set forth here. Israel-Christology can only aid the Church in understanding her relationship to the Jewish people when it is set within a broader framework of convictions that includes both *Nostra Aetate's* affirmation of Jewish covenantal identity and the Church's ancient creedal heritage. Without the former, Israel-Christology goes the way of N. T. Wright, a path in which Jesus so fulfills Israel's destiny that those Jews who do not accept him as Messiah are excluded from Israel's covenantal identity.⁵² Without the latter, Israel-Christology can easily become a form of dual-covenant theology. In fact, already in 1952 the Jewish theologian Will Herberg proposed just such an Israel-Christology:

As the one by whom and through whom the covenant of Israel is opened to mankind, Christ appears in early Christian thinking as, quite literally, an incarnate or one-man Israel, the Remnant-Man. Through union in faith with him, the gentile believer becomes part of Israel; he therefore comes under the covenant and thereby becomes heir to the promises of God in Israel.⁵³

For Herberg, this means that Jesus has covenantal significance for gentiles but not for Jews, who are already in covenant with God. To his credit, Herberg recognizes that this form of Christology will be considered inadequate by traditional Christians: "I know that what I say here will not satisfy those who are Christians, although they will, I hope, recognize its truth so far as it goes."⁵⁴ For a mainstream Jewish theologian, this type of Israel-Christology represents a noteworthy theological advance. For a Christian theologian, on the other hand, it lacks the universal soteriological implications which necessarily derive from Jesus' divine identity. The Israel-Christology of Cardinal Lustiger presupposes both *Nostra Aetate* and the Nicene Creed, and

51. In my writing and teaching for the Messianic Jewish world I have argued that Messianic Jews should receive Nicene orthodoxy as a gift bequeathed to the entire *ecclesia*—Jewish and gentile—by the early *ecclesia ex gentibus*. To better understand my view of this topic, see my article "Finding our Way through Nicaea," reprinted in Appendix 4.

52. The following comment from Wright illustrates his thinking: "throughout the letter [to the Romans] as well as elsewhere . . . [Paul] has systematically transferred the privileges and attributes of 'Israel' to the Messiah and his people" (Wright, *Climax*, 250).

53. Herberg, "Judaism and Christianity," 244–45.

54. Herberg, "A Jew Looks at Jesus," 261.

the Israel-Christology of the following chapters functions within the same theological framework.

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to comment on a term that will at times be employed in this book. When I speak of “genealogical-Israel,” I am referring to the Jewish people as a community that traces its descent back to the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs. The term is thus equivalent to Paul’s “Israel according to the flesh (*kata sarka*)” (1 Cor 10:18). The context of the argument in 1 Corinthians demonstrates that the phrase *kata sarka* has no pejorative connotation in this verse, but, as in Romans 1:3, merely refers to physical descent. However, Paul’s pejorative use of the phrase elsewhere in his writings (e.g., Rom 8:5) makes its English equivalent problematic as a description of the Jewish people.

“Genealogical-Israel” has four advantages as an English rendering of “Israel *kata sarka*”: (1) the phrase has biblical resonance, since genealogies are a central component in the way the biblical narrative establishes membership in familial groupings; (2) the phrase emphasizes physical descent, as is also the case in Paul’s use of *kata sarka*; (3) at the same time, the phrase allows for the inclusion of individuals who enter the family from outside the genealogical grouping (as with Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus—see Matt 1:3, 5, 6); and (4) the phrase also permits the inference that membership in the family is socially as well as biologically constructed, since not every biological descendant is mentioned in a biblical genealogy (e.g., only as an exception are women included).

In this study, I stand on the shoulders of several giants—most notably, Pope Saint John XXIII, Pope Saint John Paul II, and Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger. With their help, and the wisdom of Scripture, we may be able to behold an ecclesiological landscape unperceived by our forbears. May we be obedient to the vision in our days, so that the Church may fully express her catholic identity, and discover that her mystery and the mystery of Israel are wrapped together, each within the other.

2

A Stranger in a Strange (Yet Familiar) Land

From Theological Discourse to Personal Narrative

All have heard of Pope Saint John XXIII and Pope Saint John Paul II, and many know of Cardinal Lustiger. These are teachers who command attention by their proven wisdom and courage as much as by their positions of eminence. But who is Mark Kinzer, and why should Catholics listen to what he has to say about their Church and her relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people?

I have already stated that I am a Messianic Jew—a Jewish disciple of Jesus who seeks to live a traditional Jewish way of life. I serve as Rabbi of a small Messianic Jewish congregation in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I am also a theologian and biblical scholar, and founder of a theological institute established to educate the next generation of Messianic Jewish leaders.

But what is my connection to the Roman Catholic world? Why does that world elicit from me such passionate concern and insatiable curiosity? To answer these questions, I must temporarily veer from the path of theological discourse and tell something of my personal story. While acknowledging the distinction in literary genre, we should not exaggerate the difference between theology and personal narrative. The God of Israel, the God and Father of Jesus Christ, acts in history. When I reflect upon the events of my own life, I cannot but believe that I have seen God act in the midst of and through those events.

Let me begin with a short episode from the middle of the story. It is the fall of 1977—twelve years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, and three years after my graduation from college. I sit in the backseat of a car driving from Rome to Florence. Behind the wheel sits the man who many expect to be the next Pope. His name is Giovanni Cardinal Benelli,

and he has recently become the Archbishop of Florence after serving for ten years at the right hand of Pope Paul VI.¹ Next to him sits my mentor, Steve Clark, a leader in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I am working this year as Steve's assistant, and am only along for the ride.

We have just made our way out of Rome's congested traffic when Steve mentions to the Cardinal that I am Jewish. His Eminence immediately becomes quite animated (he is, after all, Italian), and asks me to tell him my story. We have an abundance of time, and my audience is as attentive as it is captive. So, I launch into the extended version of my autobiography. The Cardinal asks many questions about my family background, my religious upbringing, my encounter with Jesus at the age of nineteen, and the importance of my identity as a Jew. My story does not reach its conclusion until we have nearly arrived in Florence.

As Steve and I say goodbye to our driver in front of his episcopal residence in Florence, I am astonished and bewildered. Cardinal Benelli is an exalted figure in the hierarchical world of Catholicism, and Steve Clark is one of the most influential intellectual and pastoral voices in a noteworthy movement for spiritual renewal in the Catholic Church. There were a multitude of issues of importance they could have discussed during their hours together on the road. Yet, they wasted much of their precious time together listening to the story of a young Jewish man who had found in Jesus the fulfillment of his Judaism.

I learned personally on this day how much had changed in the Catholic approach to Jews and Judaism in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. Jews and Judaism are now respected by many, and are seen to possess enormous importance in the divine plan. I also learned that some of the highest placed Catholic officials are spiritual men seeking to discern the work of God, even among people who are lowly and apparently insignificant.

I am writing this book in 2014, one year before the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of *Nostra Aetate* and the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. I am now sixty-two years of age—six years older than Cardinal Benelli was on that autumn day in 1977. Much has happened in my relationship to Catholics and the Catholic Church in the decades that have passed since we drove together from Rome to Florence. If the remainder of this

1. In 1969 *Time Magazine* had described his role in this way: "When Pope Paul VI sits down at breakfast, the newspaper clippings and reports in front of him have been prepared and organized by Archbishop Giovanni Benelli. When there is a sudden crisis in the Roman Catholic Church, the man who rushes to the papal chambers with the message is Archbishop Benelli. When a cardinal prefect of a curial congregation wishes to see the Pope, his appointment is arranged—or postponed—by the same Benelli. And when President Richard Nixon helicoptered into St. Peter's Square two weeks ago, who was there to greet him officially but Giovanni Benelli." ("The Pope's Powerful No. 2").

book is to make any sense, I must take you with me on a journey somewhat like the one I traveled that day with Cardinal Benelli. Hopefully, you will find the tale as intriguing as he did.

Family, Friends, Faith

I grew up in the last Jewish neighborhood within the city limits of Detroit. My father and mother were first-generation Americans whose parents had immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe early in the twentieth century. Like most Jews of that era, they had each felt the personal impact of Christian-inflected anti-Semitism. My mother recounted her shame and confusion when, as a child, other children accused her of being a Christ-killer. My father told of being passed over by a potential employer because he was Jewish. Despite such experiences, my parents were remarkably free of anti-Christian prejudice, and my mother was just as quick to tell how Catholic neighbors had arranged for Mass to be said on her behalf when she, a prematurely-born infant, was clinging to life by a tenuous thread.

My father had special affection and respect for Catholics and their Church. He admired Pope John XXIII, and spoke with intense emotion of how this man had saved the lives of thousands of Jews during the Second World War. On a more personal level, my father had attended a Catholic law school (the University of Detroit), which had admitted him to its program after he had finished only two years of undergraduate classes upon returning from military service. Many of his instructors were priests, and his stories of them always depicted them as generous, fair, and wise. My father loved being a lawyer, and he was forever grateful to his alma mater for welcoming him and preparing him for his profession. Upon graduation, he was taken under the wing of a wise and accomplished Irish Catholic attorney by the name of Leo Sullivan. In my father's eyes, his mentor could do no wrong. When Leo died of a heart attack in middle age, my father grieved as though for an elder brother. In memory of his friend, he began donating money to a Catholic charity that Leo had favored, and he continued the practice for the rest of his life.

In keeping with my family environment, I grew up without any notable religious prejudices—but also without any notable religious knowledge. Most of my friends before high school were either Jewish or Catholic, and in the settings that were important to me—such as the classroom, the basketball court, or the baseball field—it did not seem to make much difference whether they were one or the other. On one occasion, however, the difference surfaced in a disturbing manner. I was twelve or thirteen years old

at the time, and one of my Catholic friends told me that I would go to hell after I died because I was Jewish and did not believe in Jesus. I found such views repellent, and thought he needed some physical education to clarify his thinking. The incident holds some prominence in my memory, for I did not often express myself with my fists. Unfortunately, my angry response probably confirmed his opinion of my hopeless spiritual condition.

My first glimpse of the substance of the Catholic faith—or, at least, of its rich cultural expression—came as a result of a freshman history class in college. The course focused on medieval Europe, and I was introduced for the first time to monasticism, Romanesque and Gothic architecture, Francis of Assisi, and Thomas Aquinas. The professor was sympathetic to the values and virtues of the period, and the material had a powerful effect on my imagination. I now saw the beauty of that civilization in which faith, piety, learning, rational discourse, and artistic expression were all integrated as expressions of a coherent vision of the meaning of human life. I was aware of medieval anti-Judaism, but that did not disturb me greatly, since I had little affection for Jewish life myself. Of course, I was still convinced that the Catholic religious beliefs of that bygone era were illusory. But my imagination had been awakened to an ideal that had previously been unrecognized, and—in retrospect—I can see that I had turned a decisive corner in my spiritual life.

The moment of illumination was slow to come, but it is surely no accident that the defining event consisted of a seven-week backpacking expedition to Western Europe. In England, Scotland, France, Italy, Austria, and the Netherlands I saw with my own eyes the remnants of the civilization I had read about in my freshman history class. Many other factors contributed to my forsaking agnosticism and embracing faith in God and in Jesus, but I cannot discount the role played by my visits to Saint Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel, Notre Dame de Paris, and Westminster Abbey.

It was only after I had received the gift of faith that my identity as a Jew became a pressing issue for me. In an ironic twist, Jesus kindled in me for the first time a love for Judaism and a commitment to the Jewish people. The details of that story have little relevance in this context, and I have written of them elsewhere.² The key point to note here is that my renewed sense of Jewish identity added a layer of complication to my thinking about Catholicism. I could no longer minimize the history of Catholic anti-Judaism as a minor blemish on the achievements of the High Middle Ages.

2. Mark S. Kinzer, "Messianic Fulfillment." See also the autobiographical comments in my *Postmissionary*, 17–21.

I returned to school in the fall of 1971 a changed person. I had come to believe in God, to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, and to realize that my identity as a Jew was important. However, I still lacked a clear sense of how I was to live this out. Little did I know at the time, but more changes were on the horizon.

Life in an Almost-Catholic Charismatic Community

In the first week of my sophomore year at the University of Michigan I attended a charismatic prayer meeting of an ecumenical Christian community called “The Word of God.” These prayer meetings had begun four years earlier, but the community itself had only formed one year before I first walked into the St. Thomas Parish social hall. Yet, to me—nineteen years old, with little experience and less knowledge of Christian institutions—this group of over 500 appeared to be as solidly established as the turn-of-the-century Catholic sanctuary to which the social hall was attached.

The group had been founded by four Catholic laymen—Steve Clark, Ralph Martin, Jim Cavnar, and Gerry Rauch—who had met as students at Notre Dame, and who had moved to Ann Arbor in 1967 to launch an evangelistic outreach to students. In that same year they were among the first group of Catholics to experience a Pentecostal awakening (which they called “being baptized in the Spirit”). Energized by this transformative encounter with God, their prayer meetings grew from just ten participants to over one hundred in four months. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, born among them and their network of friends across the country, grew nationally and internationally at a similar pace. Ann Arbor became the Jerusalem of this movement, the symbol and institutional center for its diverse and widespread constituency.

It is difficult to imagine that either the Word of God in Ann Arbor or the Catholic Charismatic Renewal around the world would have emerged in the late 1960s apart from the Second Vatican Council which had concluded only a couple of years earlier. In many Catholic settings the years immediately following the Council brought chaos, confusion, and bizarre forms of experimentation. While the Catholic Charismatic Renewal was not totally immune to such phenomena, to a great extent it embodied and manifested the love of Scripture, creative engagement with tradition, and Christ-centered openness to the Spirit, which were hallmarks of the Council. The Word of God in Ann Arbor had all of this, along with a renewed consciousness of what it meant to be part of the Body of Christ and the people of God—a consciousness central to the ecclesiology enunciated so

powerfully in *Lumen Gentium*. Here one could find capable lay leadership, a commitment to ecumenical engagement, and a fervent dedication to living and proclaiming the good news. In Ann Arbor, at least, and in the international movement that looked to this city as its capital, the Second Vatican Council was alive and well.

I felt much ambivalence in my first two years of participation in The Word of God. On the one hand, I could not deny the vivid sense of the presence of God when the community gathered for worship. I respected its leaders, and drew much personal support from the other student members who lived in my university residence hall. It was also exciting to live in the hub of an international movement, with a sense that the world was watching. On the other hand, as a Jew and a non-Catholic, I felt like a stranger in a strange land. Two-thirds of the community membership, and virtually all of its leaders, were Roman Catholic. Our main community meetings were held in Catholic buildings; priests in clerical garb and nuns in habits were often present, and sometimes addressed the group; weekly folk-Masses were held in the lounge of our residence hall, and the midnight Mass at the Catholic student center was an unofficial community event. We hosted Catholic visitors—or, perhaps more accurately, pilgrims—from all over the world, and organized and staffed Catholic Charismatic conferences which were held in Ann Arbor and elsewhere. I appreciated much of what I was learning about Catholicism, but this seemed to be too much of a good thing. I was overwhelmed, and as a Jew I felt near to cultural suffocation.

I survived the shock—and then began to flourish. After graduation from the University of Michigan in 1974, I joined one of the two households of a celibate brotherhood led by Steve Clark. Steve had taken interest in me in my first year of involvement with The Word of God, and quickly became a trusted mentor. He had a Jewish father, but had been raised without any religious identity. Steve had come to faith in Christ as an undergraduate at Yale, and there had become a Roman Catholic. He was just what I needed at that moment—brilliant, learned, sympathetic, attuned to the distinctive traits of a Jewish temperament, and respectful of my concerns and Jewish commitments. Steve never attempted to persuade me to become a Catholic, but he did provide me with a winsome model of what Catholic thought and life could be at its best.

At the ripe age of twenty-four I became a member of the governing body of The Word of God. There were approximately twenty of us in leadership, and the community itself now numbered close to two thousand members. In that same year our community entered into a partnership with Leo Joseph Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels and primate of Belgium. Cardinal Suenens had been a prominent architect of Vatican II,

serving as one of its four moderators, and giving shape to its key documents. In the early 1970s he discerned the significance of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as a fruit of the Council and a potential instrument of its aims, and he took the bold step of becoming its episcopal patron and champion. He visited Ann Arbor (as our most distinguished pilgrim), and invited Steve Clark and Ralph Martin to relocate to Brussels to work with him in integrating the Charismatic Renewal into the life of the Catholic Church. Steve and Ralph accepted the invitation, and moved to Belgium in the fall of 1976.

One year later I joined Steve in Brussels to work as his assistant and travel companion. I soon became familiar with the episcopal residence of the Cardinal, and joined Steve as he visited some of the dynamic Catholic Charismatic communities that had emerged in France. That year Steve was also guiding my personal study to help me think through two major topics: how I should live as a Jewish disciple of Jesus, and how Jewish life related to the Eucharist. Two texts were especially helpful for me that year—Jean Cardinal Daniélou’s *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* and Louis Bouyer’s *The Eucharist* (the second of these volumes will play an important role in the later chapters of this book). In this way I was introduced to the Nouvelle Théologie which had played such a constructive role at Vatican II. In this way I also came to see more clearly the profound connection between Judaism and Catholicism.

A Synod of Catholic Bishops was gathering in Rome in the fall of 1977 to discuss the topic of catechesis, and Cardinal Suenens would of course be among them. The real subject of discussion in Rome that month, however, was of more burning interest: who would be the next Pope? The health of Pope Paul VI was failing, and it was evident to all that a conclave was imminent. With this at the forefront of his mind, Cardinal Suenens invited Steve, Ralph, and others of us who had accompanied them from Ann Arbor to join him in Rome and to hold daily prayer meetings there. He would attend those meetings, and bring along other Cardinals whom he thought were likely candidates to be the next successor to Peter. Our group would pray with and for each of these guests, encouraging them in their work and preparing them for what might lay in store for them. It was thus that I met Cardinal Benelli, and on the following day came to have him as my chauffeur on the road to Florence.

I returned to Ann Arbor in 1978, and for the next eleven years devoted myself to pastoral work in the Word of God, including the development of a Messianic Jewish neighborhood group. I was also engaged in service beyond the boundaries of our local community life—writing articles and books for our publishing operation and teaching Scripture to leaders of related

communities from around the world.³ Through these latter activities I came to know two men who would eventually play an important role in my engagement with Catholicism—Fr. Peter Hocken and Johannes Fichtenbauer.

Fr. Peter was an English priest who at that time lived as part of the Mother of God Community, a Catholic Charismatic body in Washington, DC.⁴ Fr. Peter specialized in the history of renewal movements in the Church, with a particular focus on Pentecostalism. I met Fr. Peter in 1980 at a theological conference organized by our community in which we were both presenters.⁵ We immediately sensed an intellectual and spiritual affinity. Fr. Peter displayed a keen interest in the Messianic Jewish movement, which had begun at much the same time as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. He believed that these two movements were central to God's purposes for the Church and the world in the remainder of the twentieth century and beyond.⁶ After our first interaction in 1980, Fr. Peter and I would always find time to meet and talk at any event that we both attended.

Johannes Fichtenbauer founded and led a Charismatic community in Vienna, Austria. I met him when he visited Ann Arbor for an extended stay in the late 1970s, but we became better acquainted in the 1980s when I travelled to Europe each summer to teach Scripture to leaders of various Charismatic communities. Johannes was outspoken, outgoing, dedicated, and abounding in vision for the future. In coming years our paths would converge in a manner that neither of us anticipated in the 1980s.

From the Charismatic Renewal to Messianic Judaism

While my primary communal sphere in the 1970s and 80s was the world of Catholic and ecumenical Charismatic communities, in the late 1970s I also began to develop close ties to the Messianic Jewish movement. As noted above, this movement began in the same period as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. It developed initially as a dynamic youth revival within an existing movement known as Hebrew Christianity. Hebrew Christians were Jews who, while believing in Jesus and participating in various Protestant

3. The journal for which I wrote was *Pastoral Renewal*, and the publishing house was Servant Publications.

4. The Mother of God Community included among its members two other significant Catholic theologians—Fr. Francis Martin and Fr. Thomas Weinandy.

5. The papers from that conference were later published in Williamson and Perotta, *Christianity Confronts Modernity*.

6. Fr. Peter has articulated these convictions clearly in several of his books. For example, see *Glory* and *Challenges*.

Churches, continued to call themselves Jews and to see a theological significance to their Jewish identity. They had their own conferences, organizations, and publications, and were especially active in missionary activity to their Jewish neighbors. While expressing loyalty to the Jewish people and (after 1948) support for the Jewish state, their theology and piety differed little from that of their fellow congregants in the Protestant Churches they attended. They worshipped on Sunday, and viewed the ritual laws of the Torah as obsolete.⁷

In the late 1960s the youth of the Hebrew Christian movement became dissatisfied with this bifurcation of their identities—Jewish in ethnicity, Christian in religion. They—and those older leaders who resonated with their vision—sought a more integrated life as Jewish disciples of Jesus. To make this a reality, they established their own Messianic Jewish congregations, which worshipped on Saturday and adopted certain elements of traditional Jewish liturgy. Many of them were also affected by the charismatic awakening that was spreading within the Christian world, and were looking for new forms of community. Out of the new congregations that emerged, the Messianic Jewish movement was born.

After coming to believe in Jesus in 1971, my first mentor was a Jewish man who had participated actively in the Hebrew-Christian movement but who had left it because of what he considered its lack of Jewish integrity. His name was Haskell Stone, and in some ways he was a forerunner of what became the Messianic Jewish movement. However, Haskell never connected with the new movement, and was unable to introduce me to its leaders or institutions. While I attended a Conservative synagogue in Ann Arbor and observed Jewish holidays with other Jewish members of the Word of God, I had no direct ties to the Messianic Jewish movement until 1977.

In an odd yet providential ordering of events, my initial exposure to the new movement came through my role within the Word of God and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In 1977 our community took a leading role in organizing and staffing a conference in Kansas City that Pentecostal historian Vincent Synan has called the “climax” of the twentieth-century Charismatic movement.⁸ Fifty thousand people from a variety of denominational traditions gathered together for worship and preaching in a Kansas City stadium. In addition, the denominational groups each had their own conference sessions. The committee overseeing the general conference (which

7. On Hebrew Christianity and the emergence of Messianic Judaism, see Kinzer, *Postmissionary*, 263–302.

8. Bailey, “Witness.”

included Steve Clark and Ralph Martin) decided that one of the groups to be represented would be the Messianic Jews.

The Word of God in Ann Arbor took responsibility for providing administrators for each of the denominational conferences. Our community was ecumenical, and so we could staff each conference with an administrator who was part of that particular tradition. There was not much debate as to who would be the administrator for the Messianic Jewish conference.

The chair of the Messianic Jewish conference was Dr. David Stern, and I was to function as his assistant. At this time David was not yet a well-known figure in the Messianic Jewish world. He was then preparing to immigrate to Israel to begin what he rightly considered his life-work. Within a decade he would become one of the most recognized spokesmen for Messianic Judaism in the world—furnishing the movement with its own interpretative translation of the New Testament into English, a New Testament commentary for lay readers based on his translation, and a widely read programmatic statement of the movement's meaning and purpose.⁹ Our close working relationship in Kansas City established a foundation for a lasting friendship.

As the conference administrator, I participated in the leadership team meetings, which included all of the Messianic Jewish conference speakers. It was a colorful cast of characters, and the experience gave me a speedy education in the nature of the new movement.¹⁰

A major Messianic Jewish leader whom I did not meet at the Kansas City conference was Daniel Juster. Dan was the chief architect in the formation of the first Messianic Jewish congregational organization, the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC). Well educated, well read, and a capable thinker, Dan added another seminal theological voice to Messianic Judaism.¹¹ In the early 1980s I visited Dan at his home in Gaithersburg, Maryland. I had become suspicious of what I saw as divisive sectarian tendencies in the Messianic Jewish movement at large, but my time with Dan reassured me. Here was a man with a broad vision of the Church and the Jewish people, who—like Fr. Peter Hocken in a different context—combined respect for tradition with sensitivity to the renewing activity of the Holy Spirit. As it turned out, in the 1990s Dan's congregation would rent

9. See Stern, *New Testament*; Stern, *New Testament Commentary*; and Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*.

10. Speakers included Moishe Rosen, Manny Brotman, Art Katz, David Chernoff, Paul Liberman, Ray Gannon, Phil Goble, and Mike Evans.

11. His major work of popular theology, *Jewish Roots*, was published in the early 1980s. A revised fourth edition is now available.

space from the Mother of God Community, and Dan would develop a close friendship with Fr. Peter.

At the end of the 1980s The Word of God in Ann Arbor experienced a leadership crisis resulting from disagreements within the broader international community to which it belonged.¹² The crisis produced a split in the Ann Arbor community, with the majority of community members deciding to refrain from participation in either group. The crisis also led to a parting of the ways between Steve Clark and co-founder Ralph Martin. All the Messianic Jewish members were part of the majority that did not participate in either body, and I joined with them in 1993 to form Congregation Zera Avraham (Offspring of Abraham). I also returned to school, and in 1995 completed my PhD in Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament.¹³

I was now ready and eager to contribute theologically to the Messianic Jewish movement. However, the Messianic Jewish movement was not quite ready for me. The religious world of Messianic Judaism had been shaped heavily by conservative evangelical Protestant models of thought and piety. While I understood and respected this expression of Christian faith, my own intellectual and spiritual formation owed far more to Jewish and Catholic sources. My theological framework and idiom appeared strange to my new community, and many suspected that I was not quite “orthodox” in my doctrine. I leaned too much on tradition—Jewish and Christian—in my interpretation of Scripture; embraced ritual as an integral expression of a life of faith; and highlighted the significance of community as a check on unfettered American individualism. It would take a while for many in the movement to understand my way of thinking and expressing myself.

Birth of the Roman Catholic—Messianic Jewish Dialogue Group

But the Messianic Jewish movement was changing. In the summer of 1995 a group from our congregation drove to Chicago to attend the national conference of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, and to begin the process of joining the UMJC. At this conference the President of the UMJC, Marty Waldman, announced the launching of a new initiative, to be called Jerusalem Council II (later, the name was modified to “Toward Jerusalem Council II”). The long-term goal of this project was to inspire leaders from

12. The international community is called “The Sword of the Spirit,” and it remains to this day a vibrant Christian presence in many countries.

13. My University of Michigan dissertation was entitled “*All Things Under His Feet*”: *Psalm 8 in the New Testament and in Other Jewish Literature of Late Antiquity*.

the full spectrum of the Christian world to gather for an ecumenical council which would do for Jewish disciples of Jesus what the first Jerusalem Council did for gentile disciples—namely, acknowledge their distinctive vocation and eliminate cultural expectations inappropriate to that vocation. However, this second Jerusalem Council would have the additional burden of reckoning with an extended history in which the Church had actively suppressed Jewish life among baptized Jews.

Dan Juster joined with Marty Waldman in advancing this initiative. They quickly realized that their goal was unlikely to be attained in the near future, and thus adopted a more modest agenda—but their long-term aims remained the same. To my surprise, Dan and Marty involved Catholics in the project from its inception—and two of the earliest Catholic participants were my old acquaintances, Fr. Peter Hocken and Johannes Fichtenbauer. Johannes was now a Catholic deacon, and his prominence in Catholic circles increased in 1995 when his long-time friend Fr. Christoph Schönborn was named Archbishop of Vienna. Johannes soon took a new position as the head deacon of the Archdiocese of Vienna. Eventually, Fr. Peter would move to Vienna, making that city the center of Catholic concern for relationship with the Messianic Jewish world.

Fr. Peter's efforts to facilitate a relationship between the Catholic Church and Messianic Jews extended beyond his work in Toward Jerusalem Council II. In 1997 he met Fr. Georges Cottier, Theologian of the Papal Household, who had taken an interest in the Messianic Jewish movement.¹⁴ Their interaction eventually led in September 2000 to the convening of an informal, unofficial, and confidential dialogue at a secluded monastery in Camaldoli, Italy. Seven Messianic Jews and eight Catholics participated in this initial gathering. Fr. Peter, Fr. Cottier, and Johannes Fichtenbauer were among the eight Catholics. Dan Juster and I were among the seven Messianic Jews (the other five were all from the land of Israel).

The timing of this original meeting was momentous. In March of that year Pope John Paul II had made his historic pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in which he had prayed for forgiveness for “the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours [i.e., the Jewish people] to suffer.” On the Sunday immediately before the beginning of our dialogue, a statement signed by over 220 eminent Jewish leaders appeared in the *New York Times*. Called *Dabru Emet* (Speak Truth), the document recognized the marked improvement that had occurred in the Christian Church's view of Judaism, and called upon Jews to become informed of these developments

14. In 2003 Fr. Cottier was named a Cardinal by Pope John Paul II, whom he served so ably as Papal Theologian.

and to reconsider their critical attitudes toward the Church. In comparison to these two milestones in Jewish-Christian relations, our small private meeting in a remote region of Italy might seem insignificant. Only time will tell if that is in fact the case.

Over these past fourteen years our Dialogue Group has remained informal and unofficial, though no longer confidential. It is the personal initiative of some prominent Catholics and Messianic Jews, rather than a Vatican sponsored ecumenical conversation. Still, from the Catholic side we have always operated under the oversight of a bishop (for the past several years that role has fallen to Cardinal Schönborn). I have never ceased to marvel that such highly placed figures as Cardinals Cottier and Schönborn would see the importance of the Messianic Jewish movement. Of course, I think they are right to do so—but I also realize that our movement is small, fractious, immature, and still highly influenced by evangelical Protestant forms of thought and piety. From these two Cardinals, princes of the Catholic Church, I have experienced the same discerning openness that I encountered on the road to Florence with another Cardinal decades before.

For me personally, one of the greatest fruits of the Roman Catholic–Messianic Jewish Dialogue Group has been my friendship with Fr. Jean-Miguel Garrigues of Toulouse, France. Fr. Jean-Miguel is one of the most respected Catholic theologians in France. In particular, he has written extensively on the Catholic theology of the Jewish people.¹⁵ Fr. Jean-Miguel had worked with his longtime friend, Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, in the composition of the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, taking special concern for the sections of the Catechism dealing with Judaism.¹⁶ He has been the leading Catholic theologian in our dialogue group, and he and I have often found ourselves as the main presenters in our meetings. Our discussions and debates have enlarged and refined my thinking, and I hope that they have had the same salutary effect for him.

Fr. Jean-Miguel, Cardinal Schönborn, Cardinal Cottier, Fr. Peter, and Johannes Fichtenbauer—all had experienced the impact of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in its early years, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. Is it merely a coincidence that these were the Catholics who sensed most vividly the historical significance of the Messianic Jewish movement?

15. See Garrigues, *L'unique Israël* and *Le peuple*.

16. The Catechism was officially approved in 1992. Its Latin edition was published in 1994, and its English translation appeared in 1995.

A Distinctive Perspective

As should be clear at this point, I write this book from a distinctive perspective. I have experienced Catholic life as closely as is possible without actually becoming a Catholic. After an early session in the Roman Catholic–Messianic Jewish Dialogue Group, one of the Catholic participants approached me and said, “You know us in the way we know ourselves.” I recognized the truth in his statement without taking it as a compliment to my intellectual acumen. My inside knowledge of Catholicism derived not from special abilities but from a providentially peculiar life-experience. I have had the privilege of living and working among dedicated, theologically-informed, and spiritually-vibrant Catholics, and this has imparted both knowledge and appreciation. In continuity with my youthful response to my freshman history class at the University of Michigan, I see the beauty in Catholicism. Yet, I remain a non-Catholic.

My primary reason for doing so is not because I deny certain central points of Catholic doctrine (though there are such points that I do not affirm), but because I see no way to fulfill what I understand to be my religious obligations as a Jew within a Roman Catholic context. As I have argued in an earlier volume, I believe that all Jews—including those that are baptized—are assigned the responsibility of living a Torah-observant life, in accordance with the basic pattern transmitted by Jewish tradition.¹⁷ This requires serious engagement with the wider Jewish community and adherence to the Jewish calendar. For Jewish disciples of Jesus, this also requires a distinctive ecclesial environment that supports faith in Jesus along with Jewish religious observance and Jewish communal involvement. As a result, I have contended that the *ecclesia* should be conceived of as inherently twofold in character: it is a body of Jews and gentiles, with the Jewish disciples of Jesus remaining a visible communal presence within the one *ecclesia*, joining her to the Jewish people as a whole. I have called this model *bilateral ecclesiology*; it resembles closely the framework suggested by Cardinal Lustiger, which envisions the one catholic *ecclesia* as consisting of both an *ecclesia ex circumcisione* and an *ecclesia ex gentibus*.

The emergence of the Messianic Jewish movement at the end of the twentieth century amounts to an attempt to recapture this crucial bilateral dimension of the Church’s life. This movement provides a concrete expression of the truth which Pope John Paul II saw in the introductory sentence of *Nostra Aetate* 4: “The Jewish religion is not ‘extrinsic’ to us, but in a certain way is ‘intrinsic’ to our own religion.”

17. Kinzer, *Postmissionary*.

Thus, I write as a “non-Catholic” (i.e., one who has not been admitted to the Roman Catholic communion) because I believe that the Catholic Church is not yet sufficiently “catholic”—according to the definition of that word offered by Cardinal Lustiger: the Church is catholic (i.e., “according to the whole”) because “she is composed of both Jews and pagans,” of “both the *ecclesia ex circumcisione* (the Church born from circumcision) and the *ecclesia ex gentibus* (the Church born from pagan nations).”¹⁸ Like this Jewish Cardinal, I do not seek to purge the Church of its dross but to widen its tent-pegs.

From Personal Narrative to Theological Discourse

I will now turn off the side path of autobiography and make my way back to the main road on which we must journey in the coming pages. At this point the reader should be able to understand why I write this book, and hopefully also desires to continue the journey with me.

More can be gained from this chapter-long digression than mere insight into the motives and concerns of the author. In both its substance and intent, this book is not only a theological reflection on a historical ecclesiological drama. The theological ideas found in these pages have emerged from more than forty years of participation in the drama itself. The purpose of the book goes beyond the desire to improve existing theoretical paradigms. It is written as an attempt to discern how all concerned actors—gentile Christians, Jewish disciples of Jesus, mainstream Jews—should perform their next scenes. Thus, while returning to the main road of theological discourse, my ultimate concern remains with the ostensible side path; the overarching goal in view is to participate in shaping the future of the story.

Our next station is a place we have never really left—the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council. Having spoken of some of the historical and personal results of that vision, we must now reflect on the vision itself and its development and interpretation in light of *Nostra Aetate* 4.

18. Lustiger, *Promise*, 6, 125.

3

Lumen Gentium, Gloriam Israel¹

“The Church’s self-realization . . . was the principal task of Vatican II.”² So wrote Monsignor John Oesterreicher, one of the authors of *Nostra Aetate*. From this perspective, ecclesiology was ever front and center in the mind of the Council Fathers. If that is indeed the case, then the Council’s 1964 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church known as *Lumen Gentium* has pride of place as the most fundamental theological document produced by Vatican II.

Viewed in its own historical context, *Lumen Gentium* must be regarded as a theological achievement of the highest order. Writing less than a decade after the conclusion of the Council, Thomas Torrance—one of the greatest Protestant theologians of the second half of the twentieth century—had this to say about the document:

Lumen Gentium is the first fully authoritative formal declaration of the *doctrine* of the Church ever made by Rome in its long history. . . . Here at last the Roman Catholic Church has produced a doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ which, in its careful theological formulation, goes far to meet the Reformed criticism of the ways in which it had traditionally been conceived.³

1. This chapter draws heavily on a paper I presented to the Roman Catholic–Messianic Jewish Dialogue Group in 2008. The initial document was prepared in consultation with the Messianic Jewish team, and was ultimately endorsed by the entire Messianic Jewish contingent. An abbreviated version of the paper appeared (“Messianic Gentiles”) in *First Things* with a response from Matthew Levering. A more complete version is found in Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 156–74.

2. Cited by Norris, in “The Jewish People,” 259.

3. Torrance, *Reconciliation*, 59–60.

As noted in chapter 1, the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* gave new prominence to a vision of the Church as the people of God, akin to the people of Israel. Torrance also underlined the significance of this feature of the document:

Another outstanding aspect of the new orientation in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Church is its development of the Biblical concept of the Church as the covenanted people of God destined to spread out all over the world, that is the one messianic people which in living continuity with historical Israel was reborn in Christ and universalized through the coming and indwelling of the Spirit at Pentecost.⁴

In the terms we have been employing, *Lumen Gentium* explored the meaning and implications of Israel-ecclesiology. This immediately raised the question of the Church's relationship to genealogical-Israel, i.e., the Jewish people. While *Lumen Gentium* touches upon this question in passing, the document does not aim to offer a direct and full response to it. Happily, one would need to wait less than a year in order to see that question addressed with the seriousness it deserved.

That would come to pass with the adoption of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965. From one angle, *Nostra Aetate* 4 merely develops the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* in a manner that one might have expected. From another angle, however, *Nostra Aetate* 4 presents a challenge unanticipated in *Lumen Gentium*, a challenge that requires new developments in the ecclesiological paradigm of the earlier document. In this chapter I will examine the Israel-ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* in light of *Nostra Aetate* and propose a way forward for the doctrinal development of that ecclesiology.

A Christ-Centered Israel-Ecclesiology

As Torrance perceived, *Lumen Gentium* treats two biblical concepts as central to the identity of the Church: the Body of Christ and the people of God. The first concept highlights the Church's union with the crucified and risen Jesus and her identity as the continuing earthly embodiment of his presence (LG 7). Because the Church is the Body of Christ, she serves as a sacrament in the midst of the world, mediating to the world the reality of the risen Lord (LG 48). The second concept highlights the Church's identity

4. Ibid., 61. As we will note later in this chapter, Torrance may have exaggerated the extent to which *Lumen Gentium* describes the Church as "in living continuity with historical Israel."

as an ordered society with continuity through time (LG 9–17). Because the Church is the people of God, she lives as a community that is fully in the world, though not of it. The first concept emphasizes the Church's union with God through Christ in the Spirit; the second emphasizes the Church's role as the communal expression in this world of a humanity renewed and transformed through the redemptive work of the Messiah. By linking the two concepts, *Lumen Gentium* asserts that the Church is both a mystical reality and a fully human community, and that neither may be emphasized legitimately at the expense of the other.⁵

In line with this dual identity, the document describes the functions of the Church in terms of the traditional threefold office of Christ as priest, prophet, and king (LG 10–13, 21, 25–27, 34–36).⁶ Characterizing the Church in this way implies her union with Christ as his Body, since she corporately assumes the same functions that properly belong to him as her Head. On the other hand, the three offices refer originally to established roles of leadership within the people of Israel, and their prominence in the document therefore implies a likeness to the communal and institutional reality of Israel's life. The reiterated motif of the threefold office thus confirms and reinforces the central importance of the Church's dual identity as the Body of Christ and the people of God.

Perhaps the greatest strength of *Lumen Gentium* is its overall design, which gives such prominence to this dual identity. The document addresses some of the most distinctive and controversial teachings of Roman Catholicism—such as the infallibility and universal jurisdiction of the Pope, the immaculate conception and bodily assumption of Mary, and the seven sacraments—but it contextualizes these teachings in a spiritual and communal framework that gives new perspective on their meaning. Beginning with trinitarian reflection on the Church's mystery as the Body of Christ (LG

5. “But, the society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ, are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things; rather they form one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element. For this reason, by no weak analogy, it is compared to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united to Him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body” (LG 8).

6. The threefold office of priest/prophet/king provides a key structural motif for the entire document. Thus, the Church as the people of God is described in its priestly (LG 10–11), prophetic (LG 12), and royal roles (LG 13–16). The next unit shows how the episcopal office (with its subordinate clergy) embodies and represents these three roles (LG 21, 25–27). Finally, the document portrays the laity as participating in its own distinctive manner in the threefold office (LG 34–36).

2–4), *Lumen Gentium* makes clear that the spiritual reality of the Church takes precedence over her juridical structure. The document then proceeds to discuss the Church as a human society, but it does so by characterizing the Church as the people of God (LG 9–17). The Church’s nature as an ordered community, a people, with continuity through time, involves all her members and not just her official leaders. Thus, the communal reality of the Church also takes precedence over her juridical structure. Of course, *Lumen Gentium* sees the Church’s hierarchical structure as of immense importance, and devotes much of its space to explaining its role (LG 18–29). At the same time, by setting the discussion of the hierarchy within the context of the Church’s nature as the Body of Christ and the people of God, the document indicates that the hierarchical structure exists to serve ends greater than itself.⁷ Similarly, by presenting the Council teaching on Mary as an appendix to its teaching on the Church (LG 52–69), rather than devoting a special document to her, the Council indicates that Mary’s primary role is to serve as a model, type, and mother for the Church, rather than to function as an independent object of devotion.

Israel-Ecclesiology and the Jewish People

In ascribing such importance to the Church’s identity as the people of God, *Lumen Gentium* raises the ecclesiological question that is our primary concern here: what is the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people?

The document first speaks of “the people of Israel” at the beginning of its trinitarian introduction (LG 2), which considers the divine plan conceived “before time began”:

All the elect, before time began, the Father “foreknew and predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren.” He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church

7. It should also be noted that *Lumen Gentium* sets its teaching on the Papacy (LG 22) in the broader context of the episcopate and apostolic succession (LG 19–21). The bishop of Rome exercises “full, supreme and universal power over the Church” (LG 22), but he does so as the head of an episcopal college—though he does not need the explicit approval of the other bishops to exercise his authority.

was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest.

God's purpose—"to raise men to a participation in the divine life"—is realized in his plan "to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ." The history of the people of Israel "foreshadows" and "prepares" for the establishment of the Church, which is "constituted" through Christ's person, life, and work, and "manifested" by the outpouring of the Spirit. Thus, the Church appears to be an essentially new reality in the world. She shares some features in common with the people of Israel in the old covenant, but she is fundamentally discontinuous with it.⁸ The goal of the divine plan, conceived "before time began," is the establishment of the Church, and God's dealings with the people of Israel in the Old Covenant were all ordered to prepare for that goal.

This view of "old covenant Israel" is reiterated and developed in *LG* 9—the document's primary treatment of this theme. The paragraph introduces the motif of the Church as the people of God. It begins by describing God's corporate purpose for humanity, and how that purpose leads to the election of the people of Israel and the establishment of God's covenant with them:

At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right. God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness. He therefore chose the race of Israel as a people unto Himself. With it He set up a covenant. Step by step He taught and prepared this people, making known in its history both Himself and the decree of His will and making it holy unto Himself.

The ultimate purpose of this election, however, does not have to do with Israel itself as a particular community, but with the new universal reality that is the Church:

All these things, however, were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant, which was to be ratified in Christ, and of that fuller revelation which was to be given through the Word of God Himself made flesh. "Behold

8. Thus, Torrance goes too far in characterizing *Lumen Gentium's* Israel-ecclesiology as portraying the Church as "the one messianic people which in living continuity with historical Israel was reborn in Christ." I will propose that the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* can be strengthened by bringing it into line with what Torrance thought it was already saying.

the days shall come saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the house of Judah. . . . I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . For all of them shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, saith the Lord.” Christ instituted this new covenant, the new testament, that is to say, in His Blood, calling together a people made up of Jew and gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God. For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God, not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit, are finally established as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God.”

The covenant with Israel, which establishes Israel as a nation, is but a “preparation” and “figure” of a new and better covenant that will establish “the new people of God.” This new people—whose membership is determined not by physical but spiritual birth—is the Israel mentioned by Jeremiah 31 as the recipient of the “new covenant.” Thus, *Lumen Gentium* implies that the Church is a new reality, patterned in some ways on the people of Israel and marvelously prepared for by it, but essentially discontinuous with it. One might infer from this characterization of the Church that “the race of Israel” no longer has a particular divine vocation in the world (beyond that of other ethnic groups), and that Jews who enter the Church have no particular divine vocation—specifically as Jews—within the ecclesial sphere.

After further description of the Church as a “messianic people” called to be “an instrument for the redemption of all,” *LG* 9 proceeds to speak of it as a true people possessing all “those means which befit it as a visible and social union.”

Israel according to the flesh, which wandered as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God. So likewise the new Israel which while living in this present age goes in search of a future and abiding city is called the Church of Christ. . . . While it transcends all limits of time and confines of race, the Church is destined to extend to all regions of the earth and so enters into the history of mankind . . .

The document here draws language from the Apostle Paul, who refers to “Israel according to the flesh” (1 Cor 10:18). It then goes beyond the language of Paul and the New Testament, by referring to the Church as “the new

Israel.” Such terminology, combined with the preparatory nature of Israel’s calling, could suggest that fleshly Israel no longer retains a unique and positive vocation in the world. At the same time, by noting that “Israel according to the flesh . . . was already called the Church of God,” *Lumen Gentium* hints that the historical discontinuity between the two Israels—the one in the old covenant, the other in the new—might not be as radical as first appeared.

Only one paragraph of *Lumen Gentium* (LG 16) explicitly addresses the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people after the coming of Christ.

Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues.

By citing Romans 11:28–29 *Lumen Gentium* decisively rejects the notion that genealogical-Israel has forfeited its election and no longer holds a distinctive divine vocation in the world beyond that of other ethnicities. This unambiguous affirmation of the special status of the Jewish people anticipates what I have referred to as the “third proposition” of *Nostra Aetate*. *Lumen Gentium* thus explicitly counters the supersessionist inferences one might make on the basis of other statements in the same document.

However, to a certain extent the context of this rejection of supersessionism undermines its positive message. The Jewish people are presented as the first of many groups “who have not yet received the Gospel”—they are part of a broader category of adherents of “non-Christian religions.” Such adherents, we learn, “are related in various ways to the people of God.” The Jewish people, therefore, are not *part of* the people of God, i.e., the Church, but are—like all human beings—*related to it* because of the Church’s universal vocation. Thus, at the very point at which *Lumen Gentium* issues an unequivocal positive statement about the Jewish people, it implicitly distances Israel from its own original status as the people of God, and implicitly treats Israel’s religious tradition, rooted in divine revelation, as merely the first among many non-Christian traditions.⁹

9. Of course, this also is an issue in *Nostra Aetate*, which has as its formal title “Declaration on Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions,” and which deals with Judaism in the same context as it deals with Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. To see how Pope John Paul II interprets this feature of *Nostra Aetate*, see chapter 1, pages 6–7. The relationship between Judaism and Christian faith is better captured by John Howard Yoder in his assertion that Judaism is a “non-non-Christian religion” (*Schism*,

Lumen Gentium thus presents an Israel-ecclesiology that leaves room for the Jewish people. The Church is a “new Israel” which resembles the people of the old covenant in many ways, and therefore one must learn from old covenant Israel in order to discover the mystery that is the Church. At the same time, genealogical-Israel retains a special status in the plan of God as the heir of promises and gifts that have not been recalled. *Lumen Gentium* affirms both propositions, while offering little insight into how the two statements are related. A gap remains between the two “Israels,” and it is unclear how or whether it can be filled.

Eschatological Newness

In contrast to the view of Thomas Torrance, I would argue that *Lumen Gentium*'s overall perspective on the Jewish people—both before and after the coming of Christ—displays an inadequate appreciation for the Church's “living continuity with historical Israel.”¹⁰ This is demonstrated by the “gap” in *Lumen Gentium* between the “two Israels,” as noted above. It is further displayed in the document's use of the term “new.” *Lumen Gentium* speaks of the “New People of God” and the “New Israel.” It likewise speaks of the Church as first “constituted” in our era, apparently by the death and resurrection of Christ. This suggests that the adjective “new” should be understood as referring to the appearance of a reality that did not in any sense exist before. The new people, the new Israel, was *foreshadowed* by the old, and thus shares certain of its features by way of analogy, but the two realities are not intrinsically interconnected.

In many biblical texts the underlying Hebrew and Greek words rendered here as “new” would be more suitably translated as “eschatologically renewed.” One is dealing with an “old” or existing reality that is eschatologically transformed by the sovereign action of God. Thus, the new heavens and new earth of Isaiah (65:17; 66:22) and Revelation (21:1) are glorified forms of what existed before. The “new human” that is “put on” in baptism

147, 156). This relationship is also expressed practically in the Vatican decision to relate to Judaism through an organ concerned with intra-Christian dialogue, as noted by Richard John Neuhaus: “From the Jewish side, when after the council the Catholic Church was formalizing its conversations with non-Christians, the Jewish interlocutors insisted that they not be grouped with the Vatican dycastery designed to deal with other religions but be included under the secretariat for promoting Christian unity. There were political reasons for that insistence, not least having to do with the politics of the Middle East, but that arrangement has, I believe, much more profound implications than were perhaps realized at the time” (Neuhaus, “Salvation,” 68).

10. See the second paragraph of this chapter.

(Eph 4:24; Col 3:10)—i.e., Jesus—is but the old human (i.e., a true descendant of Adam and Eve), raised from the dead and eschatologically transformed. The continuity—and discontinuity—of Jesus’ own life serves as the basic paradigm of eschatological newness. The risen Jesus is new, different, yet also the same human being as the one who was born of Mary. He is unrecognized by his disciples until he makes himself known (Luke 24:13–32), yet his hands and feet still show the marks of his violent death (Luke 24:40; see John 20:24–28).

In keeping with this pattern, the Church should be viewed as a *renewed* Israel, a renewed people of God. It is an eschatological form of Israel, anticipating the life of the world to come through the gift of the Spirit. As an eschatological reality, it is also an expanded and reconfigured Israel, including within its ranks people from all the nations of the world. However, in the apostolic period it still maintained continuity with genealogical-Israel—founded and led by Torah-observant Jews (i.e., the apostles and elders), centered in the holy city of Jerusalem, and containing at its heart a visible corporate expression of Jewish life (i.e., the Jerusalem congregation of disciples of Jesus). This continuity also found expression in the early Church’s relationship to the wider Jewish world, which had not accepted her claim to be an expanded eschatological Israel. For Peter, Paul, and James, the leaders of the Jewish people were still *their* leaders, and the Jewish people were still *their* people—the people of God (e.g., Acts 23:1–5).

Likewise, Jeremiah 31 directs the eschatological promise of the “new covenant” to genealogical-Israel itself and not to the Church as a separate reality only prefigured by genealogical-Israel. According to Jeremiah, God promises *Israel* the renewal of the covenant made with them when they came out of Egypt. Wolfhart Pannenberg describes this dimension of the new covenant with admirable precision:

Jeremiah 31:31–32 and Isaiah in 59:21 promise the new covenant not to another people but to Israel as the eschatological renewal and fulfillment of its covenant relationship with its God. When at the Last Supper that he held with his disciples on the night of his arrest Jesus related the promise of the new covenant to the table fellowship with his disciples that he sealed with his self-offering, he was not snapping the link of this promise to the people of Israel. Instead, he was showing that fellowship with himself is for the whole Jewish people the future of salvation that breaks in already in the fellowship of the band of disciples. The later inclusion of non-Jews in the Christian community on

the basis of the confession of Jesus that is sealed by their baptism does nothing to change this.¹¹

To this point in time, only a small portion of genealogical-Israel has entered fully into this renewed covenant, but the promise extends to Israel as a whole, and the promise will be fulfilled. In this sense, genealogical-Israel remains the people to whom that new or renewed covenant uniquely belongs as a heritage.

The Catechism and *Lumen Gentium*

The revised *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), officially approved in 1992, interprets the material in *Lumen Gentium* related to the Jewish people in light of *Nostra Aetate* and the teaching of Pope John Paul II. In the process, it clarifies certain expressions whose meaning could have been construed in a supersessionist manner. Thus, when speaking of genealogical-Israel's priestly status, the Catechism employs the present rather than the past tense: "Israel is the priestly people of God, 'called by the name of the Lord,' and 'the first to hear the word of God,' the people of 'elder brethren' in the faith of Abraham" (CCC 63). The Catechism leaves no ambiguity as to the referent of these words—it is the Jewish people. This is shown by the phrase "the first to hear the word of God," which derives from the Good Friday prayer for the Jewish people introduced in the 1970 edition of the Roman Missal:

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. Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to your Church as we pray that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption.¹²

Furthermore, the phrase "elder brethren" derives from the words of Pope John Paul II addressed to the Jewish community of Rome when he visited their synagogue in 1986. Thus, the Catechism affirms the enduring priestly status of the Jewish people while also following *Lumen Gentium* in emphasizing the priestly identity of the Church.

The Catechism later affirms explicitly the irrevocable character of God's gifts to genealogical-Israel. The form which this affirmation takes is

11. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 477.

12. Emphasis added. The phrase, "the first to hear the word of God," also appears as a title for the Jewish people in CCC 839.

itself instructive: it appears as a commentary on the problematic opening line of *Lumen Gentium* 16—“Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways.” The commentary proceeds to interpret this line—and the teaching concerning the Jewish people that follows it—in light of the all-important introductory sentence of *Nostra Aetate* 4:

The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People. When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People, “the first to hear the Word of God.” The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God’s revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews “belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ,” “for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.” (CCC 839)

And when one considers the future, God’s People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend toward similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. (CCC 840)

While the opening line of *Lumen Gentium* 16 might be taken to imply a merely external relationship between the Church and the Jewish people, the Catechism makes clear on the basis of *Nostra Aetate* that the relationship is actually an internal one. While the opening line of *Lumen Gentium* 16 might be taken to imply a difference *in kind* between the Christian faith and all other religions and merely a difference *in degree* between Judaism and those other religions, the Catechism makes clear that “The Jewish faith” is “unlike other non-Christian religions,” for it “is already a response to God’s revelation.” While the opening line of *Lumen Gentium* 16 might be taken to imply that genealogical-Israel was no longer “the People of God” but only “related to the People of God,” the Catechism makes clear that the Jews remain “God’s People of the Old Covenant.” The use of this phrase by the Catechism accords with Pope John Paul II’s 1980 gloss: “the people of God of the Old Covenant, *never revoked by God*.”¹³

While *Lumen Gentium* identifies the Church as the “New Israel,” in that document her assumption of this title requires and involves no intrinsic connection to the Jewish people. The *Catechism*, on the other hand, makes

13. John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, 15. Emphasis added. The Pope’s gloss was then taken by Norbert Lohfink as the starting point for his book, *The Covenant Never Revoked*.

clear that the entry of gentiles into the Church—and their new identity as participants in the life of Israel—involves a “turning toward the Jews”:

The magi’s coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations. Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning toward the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament. The Epiphany shows that “the full number of the nations” now takes its “place in the family of the patriarchs,” and acquires *Israelitica dignitas* (is made “worthy of the heritage of Israel”). (CCC 528)

The coming of the magi to Jerusalem prefigures the response of the gentiles to the message of the Jewish apostles of the Jewish Messiah, and the latter enables gentiles to take their “place in the family of the patriarchs”—but only through a new bond that is established between them and the flesh and blood “family of the patriarchs.”

The Catechism thus provides an authoritative commentary on those ambiguous sections of *Lumen Gentium* that relate to the Jewish people. There is now no danger that the two propositions of *Lumen Gentium*—the identity of the Church as the People of God and the identity of genealogical-Israel as the recipient of irrevocable gifts—might be seen as in conflict with one another. Moreover, by stressing the opening line of *Nostra Aetate* 4 the Catechism asserts that these two propositions are in fact closely intertwined. However, the Catechism makes no attempt to explain the nature of the link, nor does it give any prominence to the Jewish people when presenting its teaching about the Church (CCC 748–975). The Catechism makes much progress, but it leaves for another day the task of articulating the full implications of *Nostra Aetate* for ecclesiology.

Developing the Teaching of *Lumen Gentium*

While *Lumen Gentium* fails to establish a connection between the identity of the Church and the identity of the Jewish people, it does provide us with some of the conceptual tools required to fulfill that task. Reading *Lumen Gentium* in the light of *Nostra Aetate*, the Catechism, and the teaching of Pope John Paul II and of Cardinal Lustiger, I would highlight four major points from the document which, with some development, have the potential to open new doors in our understanding of the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people.

People of God, Body of Christ

The first concerns the relationship between the two primary biblical concepts employed by *Lumen Gentium*: the people of God and the Body of Christ. While *Lumen Gentium* emphasizes these two ecclesiological concepts, it nowhere discusses the connection between them. Happily, the Catechism sheds new light on this connection: “The images taken from the Old Testament [to speak of the Church] are variations on a profound theme: the People of God. In the New Testament, all these images find a new center because Christ has become the head of this people, which henceforth is his Body” (CCC 753). Here we find hints of what I have called Israel-Christology. Jesus “has become the head of this people”—he sums up the people of Israel in himself and fulfills (now and in the eschaton) Israel’s mission in the world. As he becomes Israel’s head, so Israel becomes his Body. This means that Jesus effects an eschatological renewal of covenantal identity for those Jews who are united to him in baptism, while enabling gentiles who believe in him to participate for the first time in Israel’s blessings. But what does this mean for those who are already members of “the people of God” but who remain unbaptized? Cardinal Lustiger points us in the right direction:

As messianic subject, Christ is composed of all those who belong to him through baptism and faith. And *in a certain way*—I repeat, *in a certain way*—the Jewish people are a part of him In their particularity, the Jewish people carry the heart of the revelation. And *in a certain way*, they also bear the image of the Messiah, of Christ.¹⁴

Drawing upon a phrase from an oft-quoted statement in the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*), Cardinal Lustiger implies that “*in a certain way*” all those who are part of genealogical-Israel receive a new status as members of his Body.¹⁵ Those Jews who receive the good news affirm their new status as members of his Body, and enter into the eschatologically renewed and expanded Israel. Those who do not receive the good news are put in an anomalous and precarious situation—yet Jesus remains their sovereign and head, whether

14. Lustiger, *On Christians and Jews*, 74, 66. Emphasis added.

15. “For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has *in a certain way* united himself with each man” (*Gaudium et Spes* 22; emphasis added). Through this allusion, Cardinal Lustiger implicitly distinguishes between three modes of union with “the Son of God”: (1) his union with humanity and every human being by virtue of his incarnation as a human being; (2) his union with the Jewish people and individual Jews by virtue of his incarnation as the Messiah of Israel; (3) his union with those who confess him in faith, are baptized into his death, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

they acknowledge the fact or not. He was born “the King of the Jews” (Matt 2:2), he was crucified under the same title (Matt 27:11, 29, 37), and he will bear it for all eternity. Thus, for Jews, participation in the life of the people points them toward membership in the Body of their appointed messianic king. For gentiles, on the other hand, the situation is reversed. All gentiles who are joined to the Body of Christ through faith and baptism thereby become part of an expanded people of Israel. For them, membership in the Body leads to citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel.

As for how membership in Messiah’s Body leads to citizenship in Israel, we must reflect on the fact that Jesus was born a Jew, was circumcised on the eighth day, and lived as a faithful Jew throughout the course of his earthly life. When he was raised from the dead, his Jewish identity carried over into his glorified existence, just as did his masculine gender. To say that Jesus *was* a Jew is a fact of history. To say that Jesus *is* a Jew is a fact of explosive theological consequence. The Son of God does not assume a generic human nature, but the humanity descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. When gentiles become part of that body, they become part of a Jewish body. They do not themselves become Jews, but they become part of the Jewish commonwealth. In this way Israel-Christology fills the “gap” separating genealogical-Israel from the people of God of the renewed covenant. Israel-Christology gives birth to an Israel-ecclesiology that confirms rather than undermines the enduring election of genealogical-Israel, and that clarifies the bond joining the *ekklesia* to the original heir of the promises.

Priest, Prophet, and King

A second central motif of *Lumen Gentium* likewise takes on new significance when viewed in the context of Israel-Christology. This motif is the threefold office of priest/prophet/king that Christ shares with his Body. While *Lumen Gentium* introduces the threefold office of Christ in its section on the Church as the people of God (LG 10–16), it nowhere relates this theme to the life of genealogical-Israel. Yet that is its source.¹⁶ The Torah

16. According to Matthew Levering, Thomas Aquinas describes the salvific work of Jesus in terms of the threefold office in a way that properly situates the Savior within the life and history of the people of Israel: “Christ’s life uniquely engages the central roles of the divinely constituted society of ancient Israel. By this means, Aquinas shows how each aspect of Jesus’ ministry has an intelligible place in God’s plan for human salvation through the words and deeds of Christ Jesus, who fulfills the purposes of divine Wisdom for Israel, as these purposes have been revealed in Israel’s Torah” (Levering, *Fulfillment*, 50).

defines Israel's institutions of leadership according to the offices of priest, prophet, and king (Deut 16:18—18:22). The English theologian Colin Gunton renders explicit the relationship that *Lumen Gentium* leaves implicit:

Like all societies, Israel had religious, moral and political dimensions to her life, and it can be said that the offices corresponding to them were those of priest, prophet and king. . . . All of them . . . are equally oriented at once to Israel's relation to God and to the social order consequent upon that. They were called in order to maintain Israel's faithfulness to the covenant.¹⁷

To describe Jesus as priest, prophet, and king is to affirm that God has appointed him the definitive ruler of Israel, the one called “to maintain Israel's faithfulness to the covenant,” and that the entire line of Israel's national leadership is summed up in him.

In what he does and teaches, this Spirit-inspired prophet concentrates in himself the work of the lawgivers, prophets, kings, priests, and indeed wisdom teachers of Israel. Their work comes to a head in him. . . . In his person, and through the various acts and phases of his historic career, Jesus fills the offices and institutions of Israel with distinctive and definitive meaning¹⁸

In this way, the life of the people of Israel goes beyond preparing for and foreshadowing the Church; even more, Israel “provides the logic of Christology.”¹⁹

What are the practical consequences of this connection between the threefold office of Christ and the national life of the people of Israel? It leads to the same conclusions as those suggested above in discussing the relationship between the people of God and the Body of Christ. Jesus' divine appointment to these national offices puts him in relationship with the Jewish people as a whole, and with every Jew. He is the priest, prophet, and king from whom the priestly, prophetic, and royal aspects of Jewish life derive. Jews enter into a relationship with him by virtue of being part of the people—whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not. This relationship does not guarantee all Jews a place in the world to come—but, in a mysterious way, it founds and constitutes their covenantal identity in this world.²⁰ When Jews acknowledge Jesus as Israel's priest, prophet, and king,

17. Gunton, *Christian Faith*, 69.

18. *Ibid.*, 106, 72.

19. *Ibid.*, 80.

20. Catholic teaching recognizes that baptism likewise provides no guarantee to Christians that they will receive a place of blessedness in the world to come.

they confirm their own identity as members of the eschatologically renewed people of Israel. Thus, participation in the people of God orients Jews to a relationship with Christ (though most Jews do not yet discern the meaning of the signs). For gentiles, on the other hand, the process takes place in reverse order: relationship with Christ initiates them into the people of God. Israel-Christology again gives birth to an Israel-ecclesiology that affirms the covenantal status of genealogical-Israel.

These two central motifs of *Lumen Gentium*—the Church as the people of God and Body of Christ, and as participant in Christ’s threefold office—can thus be seen as variations on a common theme of Israel-Christology. Jesus sums up not only the line of Israel’s leaders, but Israel’s life as a whole. He is the one-man Israel, who carries the entire people in himself even more than did his ancestor Jacob. If the elect status of genealogical-Israel endures, as asserted by *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate*, that election must be rooted in the elect Son of God who became the Son of David. We should not resist the natural conclusion: all Jewish identity “comes to a head in him.” *Lumen Gentium* recognizes that this is true for Christ’s relationship with the Church. We should take this further, and affirm it also of his relationship with the Jewish people.

Mary, Daughter of Zion

What we have found in these two themes has an exact parallel in a third central theme of *Lumen Gentium*: the Virgin Mary as “type” of the Church. The document concludes with teaching on Mary because it seeks to properly contextualize her important role. Rather than viewing her as an independent object of devotion, Catholics are encouraged to see her as an individual embodiment of what the Church should be as a whole:

Wherefore she is hailed as a pre-eminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. (*LG* 53)

By reason of the gift and role of divine maternity, by which she is united with her Son . . . , the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church. As St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar both of virgin and mother. (*LG* 63)

Seeking after the glory of Christ, the Church becomes more like her exalted Type, and continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things. Hence the Church, in her apostolic work also, justly looks to her, who, conceived of the Holy Spirit, brought forth Christ, who was born of the Virgin that through the Church He may be born and may increase in the hearts of the faithful also. The Virgin in her own life lived an example of that maternal love, by which it behooves that all should be animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church for the regeneration of men. (LG 65)

The Virgin becomes a model for individual Catholics in her virtue, and for the Church as a whole in her maternal love. In that love the Church gives birth to her children through the waters of baptism, and nurtures them in the teaching of Christ.

But what of Mary's relationship to the people of Israel? Only once does *Lumen Gentium* allude to that relationship, calling her "the exalted Daughter of Zion" (55). This singular reference deserves far more attention than it receives. When Scripture presents the people of Israel as a corporate reality, it normally speaks of the community using masculine language. The community is Jacob, God's son and representative in the world. However, when it speaks of the capital city of Jerusalem, the language is feminine. The city represents the corporate reality of the community in relationship to God, her spouse, and the people themselves are her children. Just as Jesus embodies Israel as priest, prophet, and king, so Mary embodies Zion, mother of all the faithful.

Mary is a type of the Church, but she becomes that type through her role as the individual personal representation of the holy city, and of the Temple that resided at its center. By neglecting this dimension of Mary's identity, *Lumen Gentium* again accentuates discontinuity at the expense of continuity. As the Church is seen as a radically new reality, prefigured by, but discontinuous with, the old, so the imagery of Zion appears as merely figurative prophetic foreshadowing of a new multinational community in which Jews are but another redeemed ethnicity.

But is not Mary still a Jewish mother, just as Jesus is still a Jewish Messiah? In giving birth to the Messiah, was she not an expression of Israel's entire history and life, the sum of humble and faithful Jews through the centuries—a history that was as necessary to Jesus' conception as Mary's own fiat? If indeed Mary has a special place in the heavenly courts and if indeed she watches over her children on earth—do not her people according to the flesh have a special place in her heart among those beloved children?

The *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*

The fourth and final element of *Lumen Gentium* to be noted here is of a different order. It is not a theme of the document, but a fragment of a paragraph within it; and the development of this paragraph that I am offering may not express the conscious intentions of those who framed the original document. But, like the authors of Scripture, the authors of conciliar documents do not always understand the full meaning of what they write. The unit to which I refer is drawn from *LG* 9:

Christ instituted this new covenant, the new testament, that is to say, in His Blood, calling together *a people made up of Jew and gentile*, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God. For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God, not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit, are finally established as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God.”²¹

This text recognizes that the Church is “a people made up of Jew and gentile,” united according to the Spirit. In its immediate context—apart from *Nostra Aetate* 4, the teaching of Pope John Paul II, and the revised Catechism—this expression could mean simply that membership in the Church is independent of restrictions based on ethnicity. The unity of this people is “not according to the flesh,” and membership within her does not originate with birth “from the flesh.” In this regard, the “new People of God” differs from the “Israel according to the flesh” which preceded her, even though she inherits many of its privileges (e.g., the new covenant) and titles (e.g., chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, people of God).

However, once we take account of the fact that “Israel according to the flesh” not only remains “the priestly people of God” (*CCC* 63) but is encountered within the Church’s own mystery (*Nostra Aetate* 4), this text appears in a different light. Its potential meaning becomes even more distinct when we consider Cardinal Lustiger’s teaching that the Church’s catholicity refers specifically to her being “composed of both Jews and pagans,” and that this originally meant that she consisted of two corporate environments—“the *Ecclesia ex circumcisione* (the Church born from circumcision) and the *Ecclesia ex gentibus* (the Church born from the pagan nations).”²² If

21. Emphasis added.

22. Lustiger, *Promise*, 6, 125.

the Body of Christ is an eschatologically renewed and expanded form of genealogical-Israel, rather than a separate entity created by God *ex nihilo* and only prefigured by the Israel of the old covenant, then one would expect that the presence of Jews in her midst would be *an essential component of her identity*. Along with Mary the daughter of Zion, and the apostles, these Jews would serve as an extension of the Jewish identity of the risen Jesus in the heart of the Church, assuring her legitimacy as a partaker of the divine promises (such as that of the new covenant itself) given to genealogical-Israel. The Jewish members of the Church are a prophetic sign of the Church's historical continuity with "the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God."

The presence of genealogical-Israel within the Body of Christ also constitutes a prophetic sign pointing *forward* to the eschatological fullness of the people of God. Interpreting Paul's teaching on the eschaton in Romans 11, the Catechism asserts that corporate recognition of Jesus as Messiah by the Jewish people will precede his return in glory:

The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel," for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus [Rom 11:20–26]. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" [Acts 3:19–21]. St. Paul echoes him: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" [Rom 11:15] The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles" [Rom 11:12, 25], will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" [Eph 4:13], in which "God may be all in all" [1 Cor 15:28]. (CCC 674)

The "people of God" will not reach their destined fullness till the Jewish people—as a corporate reality—and the *ecclesia* come together as one flock with one Shepherd, to celebrate the glory of God through Israel's Messiah in the power of the Holy Spirit. Before that day arrives, is the Church of Jesus Christ only an *ecclesia ex gentibus*? Or, to the contrary, are the Jews in her midst called to be an essential sign of the catholic fullness yet to come?

In light of the developments in Catholic teaching after 1964, *Lumen Gentium* 9 assumes a different visage: "Christ instituted this new covenant

. . . calling together a people made up of Jew and gentile.” The presence of gentiles in this people is essential to its universal vocation; however, the presence of Jews is just as essential to its claim to be a transformed and renewed expression of Israel, anticipating in its corporate life the eschatological “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” This conclusion leads to even more challenging questions. Is it sufficient for these Jewish members of the Church to be hidden like leaven in her universally expanding dough? Should their identity as Jews not be treasured, celebrated, and visibly expressed? And is it sufficient for these Jewish members of the Church to live dispersed among their gentile brothers and sisters, isolated from one another and without any distinctive corporate identity among themselves? Is the *ecclesia ex circumcisione* an invisible community of unrelated individuals, or is it called to be a manifest social reality, like the universal *ecclesia* of which it is part? These are questions that must be addressed in any twenty-first-century interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* in light of *Nostra Aetate*.

Two Complementary Perspectives

Comparing *Lumen Gentium* 16 with *Nostra Aetate* 4, Johannes Cardinal Willebrands has suggested that they offer two complementary perspectives on one reality.²³ The first takes the Church as its point of reference, and speaks of the way the Jewish people are related to her. The second takes the Jewish people as its point of reference, and speaks of the way the Church is related to them. Using the language we have explored in this chapter, we might say that *Lumen Gentium* focuses on the Church as the Body of Christ to which the Jewish people are oriented through their messianic king, whereas *Nostra Aetate* focuses on genealogical-Israel as the people of God within whose expanded tent-pegs Christians now also reside through baptism into Christ.

This reading of *Lumen Gentium* 16 adheres to a hermeneutic of continuity, and there is a long and venerable Catholic tradition of employing such a hermeneutic in the interpretation of official documents. In this case, reading one document in light of another yields genuine insight. We see how these two documents belong together and need each other. Catholics cannot adequately approach the mystery of their own identity if they treat genealogical-Israel and its religious way of life only as a non-Christian religion related externally to the Church. However, Catholics also cannot adequately approach the mystery of Jewish identity if they treat it as something unrelated to the mystery of Christ.

23. Willebrands, *Church and Jewish People*, 43.

My fundamental thesis should now be clear. I am proposing that Israel-ecclesiology derives from Israel-Christology and the mediation of the *ecclesia ex circumcissione*, and that the Church is joined to the mystery of genealogical-Israel through these same realities. I am also proposing that Christ is as much the inner mystery of the Jewish people as he is the mystery of the Church. In this way the links between *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate* which were formerly shrouded in darkness enter into the light of day.

It now remains for us to test this thesis by examining the biblical basis for the central sacraments of the Church's life. If we are on the right track, we should discover a connection to the Jewish people where it was never expected—in holy orders, in baptism, and in the Eucharist. Moreover, if in fact the risen Christ rightly holds the title “King of the Jews,” then we should also expect to find a sacramental dimension in the midst of the religious life of the Jewish people by means of which his hidden presence imparts grace to his flesh and blood family. For Christ is not only the “light of the gentiles”—he is also the “glory of Israel” (Luke 2:32).