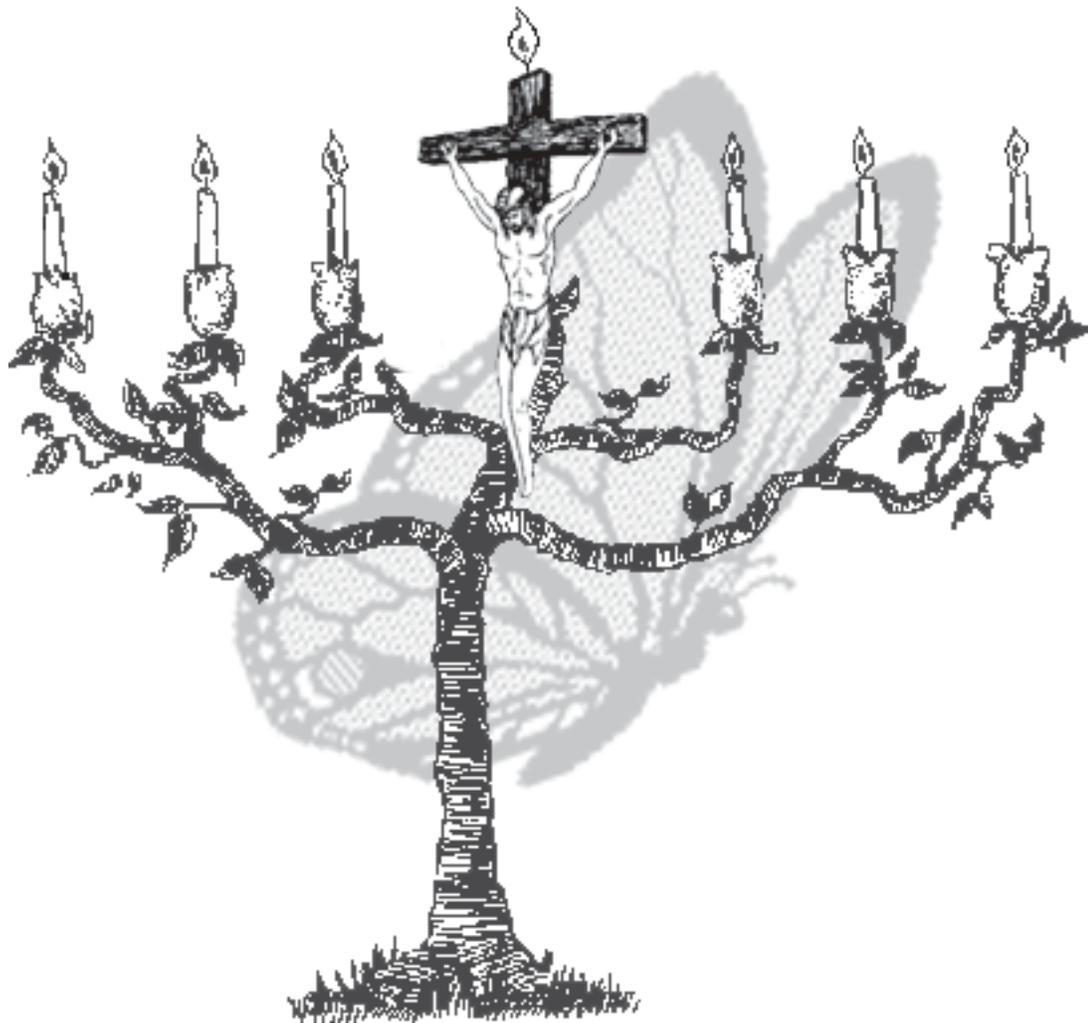




# The Hebrew Catholic

*"And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26)*



## *"Reflections on Covenant and Mission"*

*A Hebrew Catholic Response: Oy vey!*

**Association of Hebrew Catholics ~ International**

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Elias Friedman, O.C.D., 1916-1999

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The AHC has received the approbation and blessing of Bishop Carl Mengeling, Diocese of Lansing, Michigan.

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The views expressed in the published articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the AHC.

The Association of Hebrew Catholics aims at ending the alienation of Catholics of Jewish origin and background from their historical heritage, by the formation of a Hebrew Catholic Community juridically approved by the Holy See.

The *kerygma* of the AHC announces that the divine plan of salvation has entered the phase of the *Apostasy of the Gentiles*, prophesied by Our Lord and St. Paul, and of which the *Return of the Jews to the Holy Land* is a corollary.

*“Consider the primary aim of the group to be,  
not the conversion of the Jews  
but the creation of  
a new Hebrew Catholic community life and spirit,  
an alternative society to the old.”*  
A counsel from Elias Friedman, O.C.D.

The Association of Hebrew Catholics is under the patronage of  
*Our Lady of the Miracle*

(who in the Church of St. Andrea della Fratte in Rome,  
on 20 January 1842, converted Alphonse Ratisbonne)

and

*Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)*

***Miriam, Our Lady of the Miracle, pray for us!***

***Saint Edith Stein, pray for us!***

***What They Have Said***

*“If religion is not only a question of conscience, but also of free adherence to the truth, which may or may not be accepted, its content cannot be compromised. This is why it is necessary to illustrate it, without neglecting the elements contained in revealed facts.”*

(Pope John Paul II, Zenit.org, ZE0209306, Sept 30, 2002)

**ברוך הבא בשם יהוה**

(*Baruch haba b'Shem Adonai*)

*Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord*

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# News and Notes

## **About This Issue**

Once again, I must apologize for the lateness of this issue. The furor surrounding the August release of *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* has consumed much of my time. The *Reflections* document was issued by a sub-committee of the Bishop's Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Committee (BEIAC).

Although this document has no binding authority and has not been approved by the Bishops or even the BEIAC, it was treated by the media as a change in Church teaching. Many Catholics have believed, as well, that the document had the implicit support of the Holy See; they argued that Cardinal Keeler was the Catholic moderator, Cardinal Kasper's thoughts were represented, and the document appeared on the Bishop's web site.

Sadly, I have noted the surfacing of a lot of anti-Jewish sentiment on the internet, including Catholic discussion groups, in the wake of this document.

It is also sad to note the growth in anti-semitism in Europe and the U.S. Most bitter of all is the resurgence of old anti-semitic slanders regarding "blood-libels" and the distribution of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in the Arab world.

With the production of this issue, hopefully we will not have to spend any more time concerning ourselves with *Reflections*.

On the positive side, we begin a series on the *Eucharist and Jewish Mystical Theology* along with the first of a two part article on *Jewish influences in Catholic literature*.

## **Fr. Francis Martin**

We spent the weekend of August 10 with Fr. Francis Martin and I was able to talk with him about *Jewish Identity* and the work of the AHC. We say a few more words about this meeting in the *President's Memo*. Please note that Fr. Martin also contributed to the *National Catholic Register Symposium* included in this issue.

## **St. Edith Stein Playwriting Competition**

In the interests of promoting knowledge of and devotion to our patron, Kathleen is coordinating a playwriting endeavor amongst the students of Ave Maria. The event is being jointly sponsored by the AHC and Ave Maria College.

Two distinguished Catholic playwrights, Arthur Giron and Buzz McLaughlin, gave a public presentation on *Playwriting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and St. Edith Stein* on Oct. 18, and an all-day playwriting seminar to the participating students the following day.

Buzz McLaughlin, Drew University Theater Arts Department, was the 1997 winner of the National Play Award for his play, *Sister Calling My Name*. Arthur Giron is the former head of the MFA Playwriting program at Carnegie-Mellon in Pittsburgh and founding member of the Ensemble Studio Theater in New York. Arthur is also an award-winning playwright and his play *Edith Stein* has won honors and broken box-office records.

The student whose play is judged best (by Buzz, Arthur and three Ave Maria faculty) will possibly have their play produced at the College, with the possibility of publication in the *St. Austin Review*. There will also be a small monetary prize.

Both Buzz and Arthur have an intense interest in reviving the Catholic contribution to the theater arts. We are most grateful to be able to participate in this worthy cause, with the hope of spreading awareness of St. Edith and of Hebrew Catholic issues.

## **Our new quarters**

The heating, plumbing and electrical systems have been completed in our new quarters. According to the latest information we have, we are hoping to move in within 3 months.

## **Our new web site – [www.hebrewcatholic.org](http://www.hebrewcatholic.org)**

Over the last few months, when I could find some time, I have continued to do the research necessary to begin developing our new web site. I expect to begin development right after this issue is mailed.

In the meantime, we have reserved our new web site address. You can check it out at [www.hebrewcatholic.org](http://www.hebrewcatholic.org).

Our web site will enable people all around the world to learn about the aims and work of the AHC. It will make possible a substantial increase in support of our work and enable many people to make contact with us.

While I have begun to identify some of the items and services our web site can provide, I am most interested in the items and services you think are important and that you would like to see.

**Therefore, I ask for your help by responding to the enclosed form. As always, your thoughts and suggestions are most welcome.**

## **Congratulations Andrew ...**

... on the publication of your book. As many of you know, Andrew Sholl helped Fr. Friedman in the founding of the AHC. Andrew launched our newsletter, with the first issue appearing May 1980.

We recently received from Australia a small shipment of his newly published autobiography, *Completed Jew*. Please see page 38 for a description of his book along with ordering information.

# Letters

*This is your column, your means to express your thoughts and to communicate with our readers. We invite your comments and views. We will attempt to publish all letters as received. However, we reserve the right to edit letters because of excessive length, personal comments, or inappropriate matter.*

*We honor all requests to not publish the letter writer's name. We will also withhold the writer's name if we feel the contents warrant it.*

## **Thank you Arnold**

... Thank you for entrusting me with the task of translating an article from "Hamichtav" ("The Letter")...

After a long hesitation, I thought the article about Rina Geftman, a member of our Hebrew Catholic community in Israel, might be of interest to our Hebrew Catholic community.

Being trained by my former profession as a teacher of foreign languages (a profession I exercised for 46 years in 5 countries), I am inclined to hunt for mistakes. On top of page 13 the word "moledet" ("homeland" in Hebrew) is misspelt and there are small errors in the Bible references.

It was also a subjective choice since I knew most of those dear Jewish Christians... when I lived in Israel: Fr. Bruno Hussar, the founder of "Neve Shalom", a village where children from all horizons – Jewish, Christian and Muslim – were educated and lived together. English was taught alongside with Hebrew and Arabic; Daniel Rufeisen – Father Daniel from the Carmel – whose extraordinary life story should be published in "The Hebrew Catholic", Jean Roger, Sophie Grunberg, the godmother of my eldest son, who was born in Rehovot (Israel) in 1962. The author of the article did not mention Fr. Alfred Delmee; he died several years ago. We spent all together Easter 1963 in Ain Kerem, near Jerusalem, in a retreat, an unforgettable experience....

Thank you for the latest issue of *The Hebrew Catholic* and the particularly interesting document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. I am glad that you have settled in your new environment and everything seems o.k.

*God bless you,  
Arnold Linker, France*

## **Need for AHC not 'seen'**

The latest newsletter is GREAT. I find the email comments fascinating... lots of different opinions. One of my Carmelite "sisters" who is Jewish by birth sees NO NEED for AHC. She met Father Elias when in Haifa a few years ago. I sent information to another Hebrew Catholic who has a Ph.D. and teaches at a Catholic College. I never received an acknowledgment.

I tried to get two priests to put a notice re AHC in their

bulletins..no luck! One never commented. The other wasn't sure he went along with the idea.

I finally got *In the Lion's Den* from Oxford U. Press. Did you know that Fr. Daniel Rufeisen had died on July 30, 1998? I had written to him back in March (I think) and received one answer in May from a Br. Fernandez with info on how to obtain the book as well as when Fr. Daniel died (in a Haifa Hospital).

I'm almost 1/4 thru the monograph by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. It seems pretty objective so far.

Back to reaction of some priests to AHC: Several priests I know are so deeply involved in interreligious affairs (Catholics and practicing Jews) that they might find getting involved in AHC a contradiction. They probably think it involved proseletizing and that is a "No No".

I'm enjoying our small Mansfield group altho' I've had to miss 2 meetings – one because I was sick & the other because it was in the evening. It is very difficult to get people to commit to meetings.

I'm really enjoying Br. Opisso's book [Ed. *Revelation of the Son of Man*]. Have never read anything like it. It has helped me understand some of the readings in the Liturgy of the Hours in a different way.

I really appreciate the effort you two put into the AHC. Wish I could help more financially. Whenever I think I'm on top of things, something happens to set me back.

My thoughts and prayers are with you in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

*Francoise Morimoto, United States*

## **Need for AHC 'seen'**

... Unto the Supernal Lord of glory, who gives the birds of the sky song, the beasts of the forests their cry, water to moisten the earth and the sun to brighten our lives, to Him who declares man his thought and gives wisdom to the simple, let us ascribe all honor, worship and laud, for He is good!

Thank you for the books, for which you will find enclosed the checks ... May God reward you for being able to supply this literature to us. I am beginning to have a serious problem with books regarding Jewish topics ... the more I read, the hungrier I become to read more. I only pray (with much prayer) that this becomes a *living* reality, not just one on paper. Judeo-Christian parishes with their own patriarch, what a blessing that would be to the Church. It would be its very crown! I know you are probably good Christians and therefore humble, but I believe the work you are doing is one of the most important things going on in the church today. Not only to open up the eyes of the Chosen People to the Light of the Messiah and give them an atmosphere to express themselves as Hebrews, but to give us who are not of Abraham's seed according to the flesh a further encouragement to take up our spiritu-

ally Semitic soul and rejoice that we have come unto this faith.

... I probably have nothing new to tell you, but I just write for my own sake ... Well, I don't want to bog you down here, because I am working on an article to help explain my enthusiasm for the Jewish faith and the good work you are doing there. "What it means to have an older brother" is what I call it. Writing abilities I may not have, but it is from the heart, and I will share it with you when I finish.

... (David) mentioned to me that in an upcoming issue you would be talking about the Eucharist and Jewish Mysticism. I just finished reading "The Meaning of Sacred Scripture" by Fr. Louis Bouyer of the Oratory, a profound book where after giving so many illuminating insights to the Jewish faith states, "...the fact that the profound drive of the religion of Israel is, as we have maintained, essentially mystical, and that it is so without borrowing anything from outside..." I hope you are familiar with this book, which I hold so high. As a hermit, my main motivation for opening the unlimited treasure box of our parent religion is the spiritual richness I find there. (How selfish! If St. Paul would be cut off from Christ for the sake of Israel, so should that be my first desire also.) Fr. Bouyer has brought out this aspect in exceeding brilliance. For Hebrew Catholics like yourselves, I only pray that a true community of Hebrew Catholics emerges to be a bright beacon of Semitic sunshine to the Gentile Church.

Seven times a day, and at Holy Mass, you are in my prayers. May the Mother of the Messiah give you strength and good health to carry on your all too good work there. One final request. Do you know any learned Hebrew Catholics ...in the Twin Cities area here, who would be able to come and give a presentation to the brothers here about the roots (which draw the life-giving water) of our Christian faith. I would like to see more brothers get excited about your work and their Jewish roots. God reward you for your help and all you are doing for the Church.

I look forward to your next issue. Our sisters next door share theirs with us, so please, never let their subscription run out!

*Shalom,*

*Br. Elijah, O.Carm., United States*

### ***Thanks to our contributors!***

I am a cloistered Dominican contemplative nun who keeps you in prayer. I am very grateful to continue to receive *The Hebrew Catholic* 'gratis.' God bless you now and forever!

*Sr. (Name Withheld), United States*

### ***Thank you for prayers and condolences***

...I received my copy of *The Hebrew Catholic* yesterday. There are some very good articles in it that I will be reading in the near future.

I wanted to extend my condolences and prayers to you

on the death of your [Kathleen's] mother this past May. I will pray for the repose of her soul as well as your [Kathleen's] brother who died last August.

I lost my own mother way back in 1974. One does not really "lose" anyone. As I believe in the Communion of Saints, if their souls are in Heaven how glorious not only for them, but for all of us on earth. If their souls are in purgatory, their sufferings help to convert us slowly but surely into the deeper mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please let us keep one another and our family members in prayer.

*Sincerely in Yeshua and Blessed Miriam,*

*Michelle Iaccino, United States*

### ***Commendation to Rosalind***

Thank you for this issue of AHC. You must have killed yourself getting out all that work. We need you here on Capitol Hill.

The material you provide is interesting but more important, it is instructive and helpful.

Please extend our commendation to your wonderful sister for her excellent article on page 21 in issue #76 and for the great asset she is on the Eternal Word Television Network.

*Best wishes,*

*William P. Guiler, United States*

### ***Interested in promoting understanding and peace***

I have been Catholic for 2 years. Was Protestant with Presbyterian background. Also have fellowshiped with Protestant Messianic groups. I am very interested in promoting gentile Catholic understanding of our Hebrew and Judaic roots, also in promoting Catholic/Jewish dialogue and peace in the Middle East.

Other [interests] include music (piano & violin). I work PT as a registered nurse.

*Elizabeth Fritsch, United States*

### ***How can we fail?***

AHC has been in my daily prayers since I first heard about it over two years ago.

*George Frascione, United States*

### ***Miraculous multiplication - we can hope!***

Enclosed is donation in the amount of.... You the AHC are in my prayers as well. May the Lord miraculously multiply the AHC ministry as he miraculously multiplied the loaves and fishes. I look forward to the next issue of *The Hebrew Catholic*.

As we look forward to "the blessed hope of His Glorious Appearing,"

*In Yeshua and Miriam,*

*Paul Donovan, United States*

# President's Memo

*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has visited and redeemed his people  
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
in the house of his servant David"* (Luke.1:68-69)

Shalom Chaverim (Friends):

As always, it is so good (and such a relief) to get another issue of *The Hebrew Catholic* into the mail to you. Only our Lord knows when the help will come to enable a more timely production and distribution of our publication. For now, we can only thank Him for all that we are able to do.

Kathleen and I were able to take a couple of brief vacation breaks this summer. The first was on Washington Island, Wisconsin over the weekend of July 26-29. Then we were able to enjoy the very next weekend at the home of Nick and Jane Healy in New Hampshire. For both of us, these were the pauses that refreshed.

Also visiting the Healy's was Fr. Francis Martin, who has recently taken on a research assignment at the John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington DC. Fr. Martin also appears in the *National Catholic Register Symposium* of this issue.

Fr. Martin and I spent much of the weekend discussing Fr. Friedman's thesis and the work of the AHC. While the theology regarding Israel is undergoing development within the Church, Fr. Martin strongly recommended that we work at *gathering the people* and daily entrust our work to Mary.

Interestingly, about a month later, Kathleen went on a weekend retreat and, to her great surprise, met Fr. Jerome Treacy, SJ. Fr. Treacy has been a long time supporter of the AHC. In their discussions, Father made a similar recommendation to *gather the people*.

Fr. Friedman, in our many conversations, repeatedly told me to shout our message "*from the rooftops*." When I asked him to explain, he told me God would show me what to do.

Well, till now, I have not understood how to follow Father's counsel. Due to limited resources, our *shouting* has taken form through this publication along with interviews for radio, TV and the print media.

No one can accuse us of high power campaigns, marketing blitzes, or any of the other Madison Avenue techniques used by organizations and businesses to make people aware of their product, service or message.

Yet, we note an increase in the number of people who are aware of our work, who call on us to respond to various issues and who discover our materials in places we never sent it.

So, although we are still not *shouting*, it appears that our Blessed Mother and St. Edith Stein magnify our paltry efforts and the message spreads.

With the counsels of "*shout from the rooftops*" and "*gather the people*," I have been re-evaluating our resources, what we have been able to accomplish, and what we have not.

It has become increasingly clear that both of these counsels can be more readily advanced, especially given our resources, over the internet.

While we will continue to respond to all opportunities to spread our message, we will now undertake the development of our internet web site. This will help *shout* our message to people throughout the world. With the ability to publish our materials on the web site, we will provide a variety of source materials to explain and develop our work. And, through the contacts and interactions that a web site enables, we hope that the *gathering of the people* will begin to take shape.

Opportunities come and go – but it seems they always present a challenge to discern the *quiet voice* of the Holy Spirit. If we believe we are called to respond, we do so in faith, knowing that they strain the number of hours in the day and the funds in our bank account.

Such recent opportunities include:

- Our St. Edith Stein playwriting initiative with Ave Maria College (see *News and Notes*). This ongoing project has been enthusiastically received by faculty and students.

- This issue, #77, will be sent to every bishop in the U.S. along with selected members of the hierarchy overseas. The *Reflections* document has provided the window to offer our response and introduce them to the AHC at the same time.

- Finally, we undertake the challenge of *shouting* and *gathering* as we begin the development of our web site.

Kathleen and I are completely committed to this work for Israel and the Church. But we cannot do it without you. We rely on your prayers, your talents and your financial support.

I wish to again thank all those who pray regularly for this work as well as those who send in their monthly, quarterly and annual *widow's mite*. We remember you all in our daily prayers.

Wishing you all a place in the *Book of Life*, and a joyful, healthful and blessed Channukah, Advent and Christmas season, I am yours

In the hearts of Yeshua, Miriam and St. Edith Stein,

David

# Stories From Eretz Yisrael

Ed. The following article was taken from The Letter, #23, of the Hebrew Catholic community, *Miriam, Daughter of Zion*, in Paris, France. Translated by Dr. Arnold Linker.

## In memoriam: Rina Geftman

The text of the homily preached by Father Marcel Dubois at the Funeral Mass on October 18, 2001 at 'The Solitude' at Ain Karem in Jerusalem:

The Lord has called to Himself our sister and friend, Rina Geftman. So she went to Heaven leaving behind the community of the Hebrew Church in Israel. She was one of its most faithful and radiant witnesses.

Last time Rina received the Eucharist was in her bedroom on September 15<sup>th</sup>. She participated in the Eucharist in her sick-bed surrounded by her friends on September 15<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. We have chosen this day because the mystery celebrated on that day was in keeping with the painful trial Rina had to undergo because of her state of health she had been suffering from for a certain time.

At the end of this celebration, the brothers and sisters that surrounded her pledged and promised her to gather at her place to celebrate Mass on her birthday on October 11<sup>th</sup>, the day when the church used to commemorate Mary's motherhood, a providential coincidence as Rina used to point out.

As a matter of fact, the course of events has, to a certain extent, changed our plans. She left us on October 15<sup>th</sup>, her real '*dies natalis*', her real birthday, was the day when she was born for eternity. It was Saint Theresa of Avila's Day, a mysterious confirmation of a deep affinity with the founder of the Carmel, a feeling that filled Rina's heart all her life. Now she is reunited with our brothers and sisters who are in that invisible Jerusalem, that heavenly "Qehilah" (congregation), and whose faces we recall with joy because they will always be present in our minds like those living stones of the building of our Church. First and foremost our Brother Bruno of course, but also all those who belong to our congregation, those who followed in his footsteps: our dear Jean Roger, Fr. Daniel, brother Eliyahu, brother Alain d'Abou-Gosh, Isaac Jacob, our old Abouna Shmuelof, and all those saint ladies around them: Elsa, Marion Reich, Jeanne-Marie de Montalembert, Rahel, Sophie Grunberg, Soeur Marie-Madeleine, our poetess, and not to forget our brother Joshua Salomon who had been baptised here and his two sons Avi and Moshe, whom death had torn from us too soon. Rina's going home to our Lord offers us the opportunity to remember our roots, the foundations of our congregation. They are the witnesses of the accomplishment of our Isra-

elite faith in Jesus Christ. At the present moment, it is us, as Rina used to be, the living stones of the building which wraps us up with her spirit.

In her book *Watchmen Looking Out for Dawn*, Rina told us her itinerary herself. I feel free to mention a detail which will enable us to perceive Rina's discreet radiance. It was through Cardinal Descour (a Polish prelate, one of the Holy Father's close friends, who, for years now, has been paralyzed and living in the Vatican) that I learnt that our Pope John Paul II, the one who canonized Edith Stein, studied and meditated on this book with particular interest during his journey on a pastoral visit to Australia. He was struck by the confidences of that daughter of Israel who had discovered Christ.

It is quite a typical story. Born in 1974 in the Jewish community of Odessa, Rina discovered very early in her life the mystery of the Jewish fate through the exile of her People and the wandering of her family. Having escaped from Russia after the October Revolution, at the end of a long migration throughout Europe, the Geftmans ended up in Paris in the early twentieth.

From the very start and all during the recollections of that young Jewess in quest of truth, we are immediately struck by that continuous desire expressed by a feeling of nostalgia for the presence of her Christian friends mixed with a discreet feeling of jealousy, a real hunger for the Eucharist. It was during that search that she met the man who became her real spiritual guide, Father Jean-Pierre Alterman, a priest of Jewish origin. This man very quickly realized the ardor and depth of the expectation in the heart of this daughter of her People. He perceived the remarkable nature of her contemplative calling. It was this priest who led her to Baptism, in the silence and discretion of an approach which, owing to the circumstances, had to remain hidden. Her new birth took place far from Paris on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1932 at Sainte Baume, this important place that Rina used to call and rightly so "*the cavity of the rock*", the place where the Dominicans keep the memory of Mary-Magdalene alive. Like her, henceforth, Rina devoted her life to bear witness, an accomplishment that finds its source in unveiling a Face, the One of Jesus Christ, recognizing in Him, her Master and Savior: "*Rabbouni*" (Hebrew for "my Teacher and Spiritual Guide", translator's note). From now on, she feels very tight links to the community of Anania's Home, a Foundation of Fr. Alterman, where she meets a lot of monks and nuns and members of the Christian intelligentsia who will become her friends and whose belief and prayer she shares.

In spite of her deep awareness of her Jewish identity, constantly renewed by her untiring reading of the Bible,

Rina immigrated to Israel only in 1966, at the age of 55. It was Fr. Bruno Hussar, founder and Superior of the Home of Saint Isaias in Jerusalem, who brought her from Paris, as he was on his way back from the Second Vatican Council filled with hope and joy. The ship that brought them to Israel had in fact a predestined name: “MOLEDET” – Fatherland. At that time she had just one desire and that was – to return to the soil of the Bible and to share the life of her People in Israel, “to pray and receive her brethren” as she wrote in those days.

We had the pleasure to receive her in our home of Saint Isaias where she shared our life of prayer and collective meditation, Bible reading and finding in this country the vitality of her roots. There is a wonderful sentence about that discovery in her book: “*The Words of the Gospel drew their sap in the soil of Israel and they ripened in the sun of Jerusalem, under the Eyes of Christ*”.

It was in those days that Rina heard the appeal inviting her to participate, in Jerusalem, in activities which she certainly had not anticipated, to which she gave her best. There was first the inspiration and the ripening of the plan for “Neve Shalom”, the village of peace. It was the beginning of a dream that came true, a genial and generous intuition, an idea conceived by Brother Bruno. Rina was the first witness of that birth.

Then followed, in a more profound and silent way, without noise and publicity, her prayerful and studious testimony of the “*Mambre Center*”. We all remember her apartment on the Prophets Street that accommodated for a certain period of time, the office of the “*Neve Shalom*” secretary. That was the place where Rina received all those who were captivated and attracted by the mystery of Jerusalem, as she was.

Located at the junction of the two parts of the city, it was neither a checkpoint nor a border post. It was a kind of oasis, a meeting place of dialogue and communication. Jews, Christians and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, kibbitzniks and academics, local Christians and Pilgrims all together discovered the spirit that united them beyond and above all oppositions and conflicts. Rina used to be the guardian of this place of prayer and peace.

In spite of that, for a long time, she was a fulltime professional worker, a job she carried out with competence and reliability. Rina did not enjoy good health and was often threatened by fatigue and illness. Her forces were wearing out and this fact overshadowed her last years. I was comforted by the fact that, several months ago, I administered her the last sacraments – the Unction of the Sick – in the Chapel of the Community of the Beatitudes. In spite of her fatigue, she remained at that moment quite clear-thinking. She received that unction in the same spirit as the unction of the stones of any church on the day of the celebration of its consecration. Living stone of the church, she perfectly understood that it was that unction

that marked her and strengthened her in her calling of a suffering member of a living community. On her sick-bed she continued to bear witness to her faith and hope that shone in her eyes.

Of course, considering her state of exhaustion and inevitable slackening off due to her old age, in her loneliness, she was sometimes overcome by a feeling of uselessness and inefficiency. Being confined to this silent retirement, Rina never complained, nor did she show any bitterness. We would say “*I want to see the Lord*”, putting these words in her mouth, applying to her the outcry of her great friend Saint Theresa. That was her impatient search: “I want to see the resemblance of the Father as it is reflected on the Face of Christ”. All her life she was faithful to the fascination of that Face, the certainty of that presence.

The texts that we read during that celebration reminded us of all that.

*“It is the same God that said: ‘Let there be light shining out of darkness’ who has shone in our minds to radiate the light of the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory of the face of Christ.”*(2 Cor. 4,6)

*“And we, with our unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect; this is the work of the Lord who is Spirit.”*(2 Cor. 3:18)

And above all, the wonderful text in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians:

*“All I want is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and to share His sufferings by reproducing the pattern of His death.”* (Phil 3:10,11)

I thought of that verse when I was at the Shaharei Tzedek Hospital, a few days before her death, contemplating her poor and strained face, her looks marred and spoiled by suffering, veiled by an oxygen mask: “*To know Him, to be recreated, transformed into the same image*”.

Renee, Renata, Rina. “*If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches: to those who prove victorious, I will give the hidden manna and a white stone, a stone with a new name written on it, known only to the man who receives it.*” (Rev 2: 17)

Rina, at present you unveil on the “white stone” the secret name by which the Lord calls you to eternity. It appears now in full light. That is the meaning of the psalm verse that we repeated with you: “*Those who sow in tears, reap in joy.*” Rina, our sister, looking forward to our happy resurrection, intercede for us that we may participate at the secret of your joy.

Fr. Marcel Dubois O.P.

# AHC E-mail Discussion Group

*This group was formed to discuss the various themes and issues of Fr. Friedman's thesis, the various pastoral needs of Hebrew Catholics and any other matters of related interest. Dissent from the Magisterium, political discussions or attempts to challenge the faith of Catholics are not permitted.*

## **Two ways to participate**

1. Send a blank email message to:  
**AssocHebrewCatholics-help@yahoo.com**
2. (a) Go to the group's site at:  
**http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AssocHebrewCatholics**  
(b) There you must first join Yahoo (no cost or obligation) and then join the discussion group. You can then indicate whether you wish to go to the web site to read the messages and/or have the messages sent to your email address.

*This option enables access to all past discussions.*

*To respect everyone's privacy, we include only the first few letters of each writer's first name.*

Legend: < italics > indicates a quote from a previous message.

## **On the Kabbalah**

*Ed. In the new series, "The Eucharist and the Jewish Mystical Tradition, Athol Bloomer draws from the Kabbalah. The following exchange is of related interest.*

I studied Kabbala years ago; it is a gnostic corruption of Judaism. Could you explain to me your position on this, because I'm confused at your reference to it. **H.**

Dear **H.**

Hi. In regards to the Kabbalah being gnostic this is a rather complex topic. It is more that Gnostics took elements of the Jewish and Christian Mystical traditions and distorted them to their own ends. Also some Gnostic elements have come into the Jewish Kabbalah via certain schools and I am very discerning when reading the interpretations of Kabbalah by the Lurianic Kabbalists. At times the wheat is mixed with the chaff. When we stand on the Rock of our Faith in Yeshuah and his Kehilla we are able to discern what is part of the authentic Kabbalah and what has been introduced as a distortion.

I believe Rabbi Akiva was deceived by the evil one when he made the spiritual ascent and certain teachings of his and some of his disciples are deceptions such as the concepts surrounding reincarnation etc. Much of the revelations of our Catholic Mystics parallel the authentic Kabbalah. The Divine Mercy revelations to St. Faustina are very similiar to some Kabbalistic traditions. Even the Devotion to the Sacred Heart is found in Jewish Kabbalah. Read *Bahir* 62, 63, 98. I am writing something on this called Adoration of the Heart- A Hebrew Catholic Spiritual Path/Way.

For me one of the important things for the Hebrew Catholic movement is to develop an authentic Hebrew Catholic theology and spirituality which is Eucharistic centred. If we are just going to be Hellenistic-Roman Gentile Catholics who just happen to have once been Jewish, I think we should just shut up shop and admit the regime of assimilation has triumphed. **Athol**

## **Athol in Israel**

I have arrived safely in Jerusalem. Everyone has been lovely so far but I lost one suitcase on the way. We are starting Perpetual Adoration here on August 15. Please pray for us. We are the Missionary Society of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. Cheers **Athol**

I went to the Hebrew Mass today and it was celebrated by a Hebrew Catholic Jesuit priest. It was a lovely experience. We also had Vespers. This morning we also visited the Sisters of Sion and then met another one at the Hebrew Mass. Not far away from the Mass someone blew themselves up. We are living in the Old City so it is a strange experience. It is stinking hot at the moment here. Cheers, **Athol**

Thanks everyone for your best wishes. I live in the Moslem quarter of the Old City at the Armenian Catholic Church on the Via Dolorosa between the third and fourth stations of the Cross. The Egyptian and Ethiopian monks had a big fight the other day at the Holy Sepulchre and 11 of them were taken off to hospital. [The fight was] all over a monk moving his chair out of the sun into the shade. I am off to the English Mass tonight at the Holy Sepulchre in the Chapel of the Sorrowful Mother so I will lift you all up in the Mass. Cheers, **Athol**

Thanks for your prayers. My suitcase did turn up after a few days so I am very happy.

I just came from giving a lecture on the descent of the European Royal Families from the Babylonian Exilarchs to an all-Orthodox Jewish group, with me the lone Catholic as the guest speaker. There is some celebration today in the Ben Yehuda Mall with heaps of people wearing Rally for Israel tee shirts. Security is everywhere.

Thanks **T.** I am going to start praying to Father Herman Cohen everyday. We have had all day and all night adoration here at the 3rd and 4th stations at the Armenian Catholic Church for the last month here in Jerusalem. We are doing it with 5 people so please pray for us as this city needs all the adoration and we come under intense spiritual

attack. We are also doing a Divine Mercy Novena for the intention of starting Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in Bethlehem. Please pray for us Athol (Australian), Robert (American), Craig (American), Patricio (Argentinian) and Sister Paracleta (Nigerian).

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Please pray for me and my community, the Missionary Society of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, as we have had shock news that the Armenian Catholic Patriarch in Lebanon has ordered the Armenian Bishop here to get rid of us and our mission of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration even though we had paid a year ahead. The Bishop is really upset as we get on very well. No reason was given, but I think we all know as Pope Paul VI said that the smoke of Satan has entered in to the very heart of the Church. However we have to move out by November 1st. So pray we can find somewhere to Adore Jesus perpetually.

We are the only ones doing this in Israel and the Churches and communities here have no room for our Eucharistic Lord to be adored perpetually just as there was no room for him in Jerusalem. Of course Satan is behind this so please pray pray pray that Jesus may be adored perpetually here in Israel.

The Eucharistic Lord has been rejected and we with him.

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Thanks for your response to my message and thank you for your prayers. They are much appreciated. We are trusting that Yeshuah will open the right door for us. **Ar.**, I won't even try to tell you about the churches here but will just say I pray for unity and a transformation in the Spirit.

It is no wonder that the statues of Mary are weeping all over the world. It seems that the Mystery of the Eucharist is not even comprehended by most Catholics. The Apostasy of the Gentiles is very great and I long for the time of the ingrafting and the Eucharistic Reign of Yeshuah.

Father Elias really was a prophet in many ways. I am praying to him as well as to Herman Cohen and the Ratisbonne brothers. We are joining our sufferings here with the Popes in this very dark hour in the Church's history which will lead to a great time of Light. We are adoring with Miriam (Bitter Sea) at the 4th station as she weeps with Yeshuah for the Church and the World. I will offer you both up in my holy hours today for a blessing for your generosity of heart towards Our Eucharistic Lord who is so rejected and abandoned in all the locked Churches throughout the world. Cheers, **Athol**

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### **Jews and Evangelization**

*Ed. This exchange took place last July, 2002.*

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Why does the Church no longer proselytize Jews? How is it explained?

Thanks for any help. **S.**

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Hi, **S.**: We do and we don't. If you take "proselytize" to mean unwanted pressure on Jews to convert, then, no, we don't. But if you mean, looking for tactful ways to introduce Jews to their Messiah and His Church, largely through friendship and dialogue, then, yes, we do.

It seems to me to say that we should not evangelize Jews is to say that Yeshua is not Lord of all, and that the redemption He offers is not meant for all.

The word "proselytize" has come to mean an aggressive, tactless buttonholing of people, whether they want to listen or not.

We are not in the same situation that Peter and Paul were. Our witness to fellow-Jews, it seems to me, needs to be brief, humble, and on invitation. Shalom! **M.**

---

Dear **S.**, Your question is interestingly phrased. If your question asks about methods, then one can admit that the approach of the Church to the Jews has definitely changed. If, on the other hand, your question asks whether the Church still believes that Jesus and the Church are for the Jews, then that can be simply answered, YES!

As a general response, I would say that the Church no longer institutionally targets any people. By "institutionally", I mean missions created for the express purpose of converting a specific people. Targeting a people puts them on the defensive and has traditionally or mostly not taken into account their culture and circumstances.

Today, the Church preaches the Gospel to all peoples without distinction. Simultaneously, she is beginning to address the issues of inculturation, which enables the Gospel to take root in a host culture, preserving all that is not at odds with the Gospel.

These same considerations apply to the Jews, but even more so. The theologians and pastors of the Church, including our Holy Father, have also taken into account: the experiences of 1700 years of hostile relations between the Jews and the Church; anti-semitism and other failures of her children to respond with charity to the people from whom their Saviour came; the Shoah which took place on soil that had been cultivated for a millennium and a half by the Catholic Church; God's obvious preservation of this people for the two millennia since the time of Christ, now including their return to the land of Israel and the apparent "miraculous" survival of the new state of Israel.

Note also, at the institutional level, the dialogue between Catholic leaders and the leaders of the various Christian denominations. Dialogue is not an attempt to convert but to discuss differences in faith and the expressions of faith, hopefully coming to an understanding that the partners can agree to.

Again, on the institutional level, the program of the Church with regard to the Jewish people is one of dialogue.

However, dialogue is not opposed to evangelization. If

the partners in the dialogue are men of good will, and God is invited into the dialogue, then hearts and minds can change.

As members of the People of God, both clergy and laity, we are all called to evangelize, give witness to our faith in the conduct of our lives and provide the reasons for the faith that we hold. Of course, there are also the paramount questions of method and initiative. **D.**

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Thanks very much **D.** and **M.** for your answers.

I have just read *Dominus Iesus* online which has helped clarify things. I had been confused by the ecumenical angle which seems to be concerned with conciliation and diplomacy but not about salvation. I was wondering to what degree salvation can be said to exist outside the Church, that according to the Gospels it cannot, but that at the same time there is no urgency to 'save' or convert Jews.

I understand now that whatever is pleasing to God in Jewish faith or love of God is the work of the Holy Spirit, not the full story and not complete, but Christ's work going in the one direction. It means in the people around me, their love for God in the context of Torah is a grace, if I am understanding correctly:

"The Church is the 'universal sacrament of salvation' since, united always in a mysterious way to the Saviour Jesus Christ, her Head, and subordinated to him, she has, in God's plan, an indispensable relationship with the salvation of every human being. For those who are not formally and visibly members of the Church, 'salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit'; it has a relationship with the Church, which 'according to the plan of the Father, has her origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. With respect to the way in which the salvific grace of God, which is always given by means of Christ in the Spirit and has a mysterious relationship to the Church, comes to individual non-Christians, the Second Vatican Council limited itself to the statement that God bestows it "in ways known to himself."

*< Again, on the institutional level, the program of the Church with regard to the Jewish people is one of dialogue. However, dialogue is not opposed to evangelization. If the partners in the dialogue are men of good will, and God is invited into the dialogue, then hearts and minds can change. >*

I think there is very little productive dialogue outside of academic circles here in ... By avoiding evangelization, and Jews simply would not go to any meeting where there is even the slightest whiff of evangelism, matters central to Christians are sensitively avoided.

The ecumenical movement has created a climate for interfaith dialogue and good political relations between Catholics and Jews, but it is ambiguous, or at least I find it ambiguous as a convert.

This week there is a meeting of the council of Christians and Jews at my local parish. A lady came round to invite me. She invited me as a Jew as no-one in the parish knows I am a Catholic. I can't suddenly go as a Christian but then ironically I can't go as a Jew either because the meeting is in the church hall which is 'part of the church' to Orthodox Jews and therefore halachically out of bounds.

She was at great pains to reassure me the Council has no intention of converting me or any other Jew but only meets to discuss non-confrontational subjects of mutual interest. I was left thinking, what goes on psychologically within a Hebrew Catholic is quite another world from the same combination outside in the world. **S.**

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*< The ecumenical movement has created a climate for interfaith dialogue and good political relations between Catholics and Jews, but it is ambiguous, or at least I find it ambiguous as a convert. >*

Dear **S.**, I think your observations are right on target. Not only in ..., but everywhere else as well, there is much ambiguity regarding the Jewish people and their relation to the Church and salvation, especially when it comes to the primary mission of the Church, which is evangelization.

I recall conversations with a number of evangelistic and apologetic groups regarding evangelization and the Jewish people. Many are quite unsure as to how to proceed. And there are those, including Jewish converts, who have very harsh things to say about this new state of affairs.

I don't think that one can deny the good that has come out of dialogue and good political relations. As **M.** noted in his response, we are in a different period of history, a very different situation, than that represented by Saints Peter and Paul.

One very important fact is that the drama we witness in the New Testament is played out primarily amongst Mosaic Jews - those that believed in Jesus and those that didn't. After the third or fourth century, the actors in the drama change to Rabbinical Jews and Gentile Christians. Today, the Church, composed predominantly of people of Gentile origin carries the burden of the last 1700 years - much of which witnesses to difficult if not outright hostility between these two peoples.

So, perhaps, the period of ambiguity that we are living in now represents the time that God has provided for trust, respect, dialogue - not monologue, and in general, reconciliation to develop.

Yet, what about the Church's mission of evangelization? - what about the salvation of others? what about Jewish recognition of their Messiah and the resultant blessings to the world that such recognition promises?

With all the good that I believe comes out of the dialogue, the answers to these questions are, for me - for you - and for many - to be polite, confusing and/or ambiguous. I would add that I believe some of the answers are variously wrong-headed, wrong-hearted, preposterous, lacking faith or heretical. And it was these types of messages coming out of the dialogue that prompted, so I understand, *Dominus Iesus*.

*< I was left thinking, what goes on psychologically within a Hebrew Catholic is quite another world from the same combination outside in the world.>*

Yes, I absolutely agree with this statement. In the Hebrew Catholic, two distinct identities are merged whereas in the dialogue they are kept separate.

With regard to evangelization, the AHC is a "silent" witness to the truths of the Faith, to the unique identity of the Jew with respect to the Gentile Church, and to the fulfilled identity of the Jew with respect to the Jewish people.

By "silent" I refer to active evangelization. Our very existence speaks volumes – without words – to Catholics, to Jews, and to those in the dialogue. Which, of course, is why we are a hot potato (or, as some have expressed it, anathema) to the dialogue.

Within the promise of the AHC, the potential exists to develop that reconciliation between Jew and Gentile in Christ, that does not dispossess or deny the gifts and the calling of either – where Christ may be all in all – promulgated and lived out in accord with His designs and in harmony with the great diversity of peoples and cultures. **D.**

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This group has opened my eyes in that aspect also. The mere mention of the NAME of the Association of Hebrew Catholics has set off a few diatribes from some strong Catholics that I know. They quote Popes, and Councils, etc saying that the Jews lost their status when they rejected Christ. They have NO idea what the association is about, and say that just because a Bishop has recognized it means nothing and point to the scandals as evidence. They see only the Church in the 'Gentile' state as having any authority or being valid, and continually tell me that 'you can't be Jewish and Catholic.

Sigh.... how can you NOT be what you are? **Ma.**

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*< I recall conversations with a number of evangelistic and apologetic groups regarding evangelization and the Jewish people. Many are quite unsure as to how to proceed.>*

**D.**, It is understandable they don't know how to proceed, the Jewish message is very clear: 'If you want to learn anything from the Holocaust, learn to leave us alone.'

As an evangelist (meaning someone who brings Jews into the Catholic Church) my success rate is nil. The bounds are very definite, beyond them discussion becomes counter-productive. But even keeping within those bounds Jesus' message is very powerful and faith in God grows out of it.

There are lots of lessons in the Gospels of how Jesus restricted His Own message by not going beyond what His followers could bear to hear at a particular time or by speaking in parables publicly and only explicitly privately. It is always the receivers who determine where the bounds go, not by setting down rules but because of the frailty of faith, and there is always the risk of provoking a worse rejection of Jesus than before.

*< the AHC is a "silent" witness to the truths of the Faith, to the unique identity of the Jew with respect to the Gentile Church, and to the fulfilled identity of the Jew with respect to the Jewish people. By "silent" I refer to active evangelization. Our very existence speaks volumes - without words - to Catholics, to Jews, and to those in the dialogue.>*

The fact that the AHC exists is a miracle. **S.**

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*< this is the meaning of the saying about throwing pearls to swine (no perjorative intended at all). It also cuts both ways in terms of teaching Torah to gentiles who are not truly receptive to it (from a traditional Jewish perspective). Hence the restrictions in Judaism of teaching Torah to gentiles. Indeed, both the teacher and the pearl of wisdom may be trampled. T.>*

Dear **T.**, It is such a shame that the dialogue does not take place within the vast and spiritually life-giving area common to both Catholicism and Judaism together.

SHIVIM PANIM LATORAH: "there are seventy faces to Torah" is the key to any Rabbi or learned Jew's understanding of Torah. The Torah is not a history book, neither is it a book of laws. In Judaism it is the revealed wisdom of God and therefore every single mark, space, word, tense or deviation of letters carries lessons and so there is never an end to the study and analysis of it. The Torah is copied meticulously, scroll to scroll, for this reason.

I had chance to talk with a sofer (scribe) recently, I had a question and his answer was inconclusive but that's okay, "We don't know why (we copy these particular marks), some in Talmud say this reason, others say that reason."

An example which I think is printed in Chumash (Torah in book form) is Gen.33:4 "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." The word for "and he kissed him" is dotted over each letter, meaning special exposition is required for this word. There are many opinions (seventy faces), some say they are teeth-marks because Esau bit rather than kissed Jacob, or maybe in his heart he did so. The Judas kiss.

Torah was expounded in this way in the first century at the time of Jesus' earthly life, in the synagogues and schools, to derive ethical precepts and messianic expectations. This searching is demonstrated in the Jewish literature called Midrash (meaning: search/enquiry/exposition). The New Testament is midrash in this sense as the many references to prophecies, not always traditionally messianic, are an outpouring of midrashic understanding; more importantly Jesus' words could be called midrash and His

actions “midrash in action” because there is nothing He says or does which is not an intended exposition or an expanded understanding of Torah.

Because of the nature of the Hebrew scriptures the most inspiring messages are often implicit, not necessarily in context with the verse or obvious in a superficial reading and it is only by mining the text as the scholars do that these deeper meanings and allusions are revealed. So as a Christian would expect, there are lessons and reflections of Jesus throughout the Hebrew scriptures and they are inexhaustible, in addition to what is noted in the NT.

In this way a rabbinic pearl is also a Christian pearl.

I have the picture that Christians think rabbinic interpretations are going to be anti-Christian so best avoid them, as rabbis think Christian interpretations are going to be antisemitic so likewise, best avoid them. But I'm sure I'm not the only person using shiurim and divrei Torah (rabbinic lessons and sermons) to help my faith as a Christian. But then with seventy faces it is inevitable.

It seems strange to me that when we can at last have Jews and Christians, priests and rabbis, together in the same room they waste their time discussing Prague Architecture! Kol tuv. **S.**

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### More Thoughts on Judaism and the Church

*<The Mosaic form of the Abrahamic covenant came to an end in 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple. Some Israelites then became (or already were) Hebrew Catholics. Most became Rabbinic Jews, a form of life that was created by the rabbis of Jamnia around 80-90 AD. Although their form of life is man-made, they are still sons of the covenant with Abraham. They are still Israelites. M.>*

I wouldn't agree with you that Judaism has been man-made since the destruction of the temple as its practice has always relied upon human interpretation of how the laws are to be applied, both when there has been a temple and when there has not, not forgetting there was a questioning Diaspora in Biblical times also.

Within the Hebrew Catholic person, the Catholic faith transcends the Jewish faith even when the Jewish faith is practiced to the letter and with the whole heart, as is the norm in the Hasidic community here. Why? Because the Mosaic law does not have the power to forgive sins, which is the immediacy of the Incarnation.

I see a stratification rather than a chronology, the Hebrew religion one strata and the Faith the strata above that. To emphasise a historic change in 70 AD, implying that prior to that date the Hebrew religion was valid and since that date it has not been, leads to a lot of problems, one of which is a two thousand year old meaninglessness and redundancy of the “Hebrew” in “Hebrew Catholic,” not solved just by avoiding the word “Jewish”, and some vagueness about the Abrahamic covenant. The strata idea makes more sense to me; by it the Hebrew religion has always a partial validity and it fits with the Church's litur-

gical distinctions: the Church is called fideles (believers,) Jews are called perfideles (half-believers) and unbelievers are called infideles. So in relation to Jesus who is always present tense, the Mosaic law is half-belief.

The story goes: Infideles > Abraham > Moses > Perfideles > Jesus > Fideles. **S.**

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Perfideles: I read that the theological category of *perfideles* of the ancient liturgy was originally free of the harsh meaning of its translation, “perfidious,” and that the latter meaning grew by association through the tradition of hatred of Jews. Vatican II replaced it with this:

*“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.”*

It's this phrase, “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,” which so beautifully places Israel into the half-believers category and out of the paradox. ...

*<... individual Jews could be Jews in the diaspora, but could the entire Jewish people be Jews (i.e. practice Mosaic Judaism) without a Temple or any possibility of a Temple?>*

The universal answer to this is that Jewish liturgical prayer replaces temple worship, hence the three services daily: some movements say temporarily, some say permanently.

*<I guess I do stress the destruction of the Temple quite a bit. I'm basing that in the fact that the destruction of the Temple was predicted by Our Lord as the vindication of His claims and of the rightness of the Church.>*

I am only adding to this with the perspective that our Lord brought into the world something that had never, ever existed before in the whole history of Israel. Israel understands God one way and has done so since Abraham and continues to do so now.

From a Catholic point of view it is a limited knowledge or a half-belief, for all its profundity. But a Catholic can wake up in the morning enfolded in His compassion and can go through an ordinary day, in a state of His grace, consecrated to Him, united with Him in His work and in His will. An instrument. And no-one is excluded from this.

What I'm saying is that in comparison to this the temple was always, at least in the metaphorical sense, in a state of destruction. It was never the whole story.

As I see it the line of division between the first and second covenant is a lateral one, or maybe a “dimensional” one is a better way to put it, rather than a cutting off point in 70 AD. The story of Israel remains fundamental and if it were not so then it would be as though God Himself were divided, which would certainly be a paradox and an absurdity. **S.**

# *The Light Shines in the Darkness*

## *Part 1 – Fr. Ed Fride*

*Ed. Fr. Fride is pastor of Christ the King Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

One of the most popular book series of all times, the *Lord of the Rings*, is fast becoming one of the most popular movies of all times. Would it surprise you to learn that part of that story, in fact the foundation of the whole world of the trilogy, may have its roots in an even older Jewish story? While there is no direct evidence that J.R.R. Tolkien knew of this particular Jewish story, when the parallels are explored between the two, to say that those parallels are simply coincidence stretches credulity. This article is the first in a two part series exploring the impact of Jewish literature on Christian literature. In this article, I will deal with what I personally believe to be the significant Jewish impact on this classic Christian story, the *Lord of the Rings*. The next article will deal with the impact of Jewish literature on the Christian Scripture, specifically, the impact of a section of *Pirke Aboth* on the Gospel of St. Matthew.

J.R.R. Tolkien was a very devout Roman Catholic, and his Catholic faith permeates his worldview. That worldview is expressed in five major books that comprise his essential story of Middle Earth: the *Silmarillion*, the *Hobbit*, the *Fellowship of the Ring*, the *Two Towers*, and the *Return of the King*. It is primarily in the *Silmarillion* that we find what I believe to be the clear echoes of this ancient Jewish story.

### ***Tzohar***

First, as to the Jewish story, it is the story of the *Tzohar*. According to the Jewish understanding, the first creative words spoken by God in the creating of the world were: “Let there be light.” And, in response to the Divine Command, there was light. But what was that light? The light of the First Day was not the light of the sun, moon, or stars, since they were created later. According to the Jewish perspective, this was a special light, a supernatural light, and it shone by the act of God. That light was shining at the creation of Adam and Eve. According to Jewish stories, that light continued to shine until the moment of Adam’s sin, when, at the tragic moment of his fall, that wondrous light of the First Day was extinguished, in consequence of the tragic sin that had now entered the world. But, according to the legend of the *Tzohar*, God, in order to provide a concrete witness of hope and comfort to Adam and Eve, took some of the light of the First Day, and before it was extinguished encased it in a white crystal jewel, where it continued to shine. He gave that jewel, called the *Tzohar*, to them as they were being expelled from Eden. Subsequent Jewish stories trace the *Tzohar*’s history: it was passed down to Noah and so was aboard the Ark; it

came to Abraham and was given to his son Isaac; it eventually came to Solomon, and was placed by him in the great Temple he built. After the fall of the Temple, the *Tzohar* was lost to history.

### ***Silmarillion***

What is the story in the *Silmarillion* that I believe runs so parallel to this story of the *Tzohar*? The story is the one from which the work itself takes its name—the story of the creation of the *Silmarills*. In the creation narrative of the *Silmarillion*, the angels (called *Valar* in the book) are sent by the One God to actively participate in the work of creation, that it might be adorned with great beauty and splendor as a fitting home for the two races of beings that were to share it with the *Valar*: the race of elves and the race of men. In this work of creation, there was a constant struggle between the *Valar* and one of their members, who had rebelled and wanted to make creation in his image and not according to the great vision that the One God had given all the angels in the beginning. The first way that the *Valar* had chosen to light this new creation was through the erection of two giant lamps, whose radiance touched all the world. This fallen angel, *Melkor*, succeeded in casting down these two lamps, and much was lost in the cataclysm of that fall. The *Valar* then created a special paradise, *Valinor*, surrounded by high mountains, which was to be their home. In the center of that paradise there was a garden of great beauty. At the center of that garden was a holy mound on which grew two great Trees. The wondrous gift of these Trees was that each shown with a radiant light: *Laurelin*, that shone with a light of gold, and *Telperion*, that shone with the light of silver; this light fell in luminous drops from their leaves, and was the source of great wonder and beauty.

The race of elves eventually awakens in the outer darkness and is conducted by the *Valar* to this paradise where they are invited to live, to learn the wisdom of the *Valar*, and grow in wisdom in this place of great beauty, rejoicing in the wondrous light of the Two Trees. One of these elves, *Feanor*, a craftsman of great skill, captures the light of the Two Trees in three crystal jewels, which he names the *Silmarills*. They blaze with the blended light of the Two Trees that shines from the heart of these jewels. Later, *Melkor*, and an evil spider beast in his service attack the Two Trees and kill them, and all the land is plunged into darkness. Before the Trees completely die, two of the mighty of the *Valar* coax from them one more fruit each, a burning golden one, which is made into the Sun, and a lesser burning silver one, which is made into the Moon.

*Continued on page 18*

# *The Eucharist and The Jewish Mystical Tradition*

## *Athol Bloomer*

*Ed. Athol is a lay missionary with the Missionary Society of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. He is now in Israel working to establish Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This series reflects talks that Athol gave in the early 1990s. (Also see 'AHC E-mail Discussion Group')*

In the Middle Ages there were a number of Jewish converts to the Church who had become convinced Christians by studying and practicing the Jewish Mystical Tradition. These Jewish converts wrote a number of books which explored the Kabbalah or Jewish Mystical traditions in the light of Catholic belief. Pope Sixtus IV along with some other Popes approved of this movement and ordered the Kabbalah to be translated into Latin and to be studied by all Divinity students. This was the pre-Lurainic Kabbalah. However with the rise of a more rationalistic generation this field of research was neglected by Catholic scholars.

### ***Shekinah***

*Shekinah* is the central concept of this mysticism. Father Elias Friedman in his writings mentions this understanding of *Shekinah* in regards to the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus in the Tabernacles of the Catholic Church. Just as the *Shekinah* dwelt in the Temple of Solomon so the *Shekinah* in the flesh was Yeshuah and now dwells in the tabernacles of the world. Thus the central concept of both Jewish and Catholic mysticism is the Divine Presence (*Shekinah*). A study of the Jewish Mystical tradition in the light of the Eucharist is, in my opinion, essential in the future development of a Hebrew Catholic spirituality that would enrich the whole Church. Adoration of the *Shekinah* is the central activity of the Jewish mystics just as Eucharistic Adoration is the central activity of the Catholic mystics. These adorers in the Jewish traditions are called the Reapers of the Field or Comrades. The present Pope is calling all of us to grow in our personal relationship with Yeshuah through Eucharistic Adoration. On 13 June 1993 at the Eucharistic Congress in Seville, Spain the Pope called on all parishes and Christian communities to establish Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration. The Church in the U.S. has responded generously to this call with over 1000 parishes now having Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration.

It is significant that it was in Spain, where the population is very Jewish in ancestry, due to the mass conversions of Jews in 1391 and 1492, that the Pope expressed this desire. It is in Spain that many Catholics believe that a future Eucharistic miracle in connection with the *Shekinah* Presence of God will occur at Garabandal.

The Old Testament speaks of a similar event to happen on the mountain where Moses died in the last days. In the

Second Book of Maccabees (2:4-12), it describes how the Prophet Jeremiah hid the Ark of the Covenant in a cave. He prophesied that the Ark of the Covenant would remain hidden until the time of the return of the Jews and their receiving of God's mercy. Then the Ark will be revealed and the *Shekinah* Presence of God will manifest himself just as he did in the time of Moses and Solomon. In this passage of Scripture our attention is drawn to the two figures of importance in a reflection on the Jewish origins of the Eucharist. They are Moses (*Moshe*) and Solomon (*Shlomo*). This short passage is like a capsule hiding many interesting treasures. The figures of Jeremiah, Moses and Solomon represent the role of Yeshuah as prophet (Jeremiah), priest (Moses), and king (Solomon) as well as the three sections of the Old Testament – the Torah (Moses), the Prophets (Jeremiah) and the writings (Solomon).

Verse 8 of this chapter links us to the Manna of the Old Covenant in Exodus as a type of the Eucharistic bread, and verses 10-11 with the institution of the Old covenant sacrificial priesthood (Leviticus 9). This passage also draws our attention to the Tabernacle (Exodus 40) and the Temple (1 Kings 8) showing the connection between the *Shekinah* and the sacrificial system.

### ***What is Kabbalah?***

As mentioned above, an understanding of the Eucharist as the *Shekinah* Presence dwelling in the tabernacles of the Church is helped with a knowledge of the Jewish mystical traditions called Kabbalah. Some Kabbalah is a part of the Jewish Oral Tradition which first started to be written down from the second century onwards, as were the other oral traditions found in the Talmud. Certain aspects of this tradition were also found in written form such as the Books of Enoch. I Enoch was found written in Aramaic in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In Jewish tradition both Enoch and Elijah are associated with the Kabbalah, and aspects are found in Scripture in Ezekiel, Isaiah and Daniel. However, the Jewish mystical tradition as recorded in the *Zohar* (an important work of Kabbalah written by Moses de Leon), relates that all Scripture has a hidden mystical meaning as well as the literal historical meaning. The earthly meaning is only a shadow of the true heavenly or mystical reality.

### ***Blurred Cloudy Lens***

It is through the use of the earthly language of symbols that man can get a glimpse of the heavenly reality as through what the Rabbinic tradition calls a blurred, cloudy lens (as also mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12). Thus in one sense we could say that the Eucharistic spe-

cies is that blurred, cloudy lens through which we see the Real Presence of the Divinity. Paul states that one day the full glory of the Eucharist will be revealed when we see God face to face. This dwelling of God's Presence in time and space is called in Judaism the Miniature Presence or Shekinah. The Jewish Artscroll *Siddur-Sefard* (p.391) states in the commentary:

*"Although God's Presence is everywhere, it is not readily discernable on earth where events can be understood as a result of natural causes rather than emanating from Him. The lack of clarity in our perception of His Presence is as if we observed an event through 'me-iy-rah is-pak-lar-ya she-ey-nah', a blurred, cloudy lens. The result is that we have a diminished appreciation of God's greatness. This is the unclear lens through which we attempt to perceive His influence and is referred to as the miniature Presence of God."*

### **The Miniature Presence**

The Shekinah or Miniature Presence of God is also called in Kabbalah the *Holy Apple Orchard* or the *Field of the Sacred Apples*. This terminology comes from the Song of Songs where the Bridegroom (in Hebrew, *Hatan*) is associated with the Apple Tree (*Song of Songs* 2:3;8:5). The fruit of the apple tree is associated by the Rabbis with the Torah. They interpret *Song* 8:5 as:

*"How worthy she is who rises from the desert bearing Torah and His Presence, clinging to her beloved."*

### **The Bride and the Bridegroom**

In this interpretation the Bride (*Kallah*) is called the *Kahal* (the Community, Church, Assembly, Synagogue, Ekklesia) and is the bearer to mankind of the Torah and the Divine Presence. Thus the Jewish tradition proclaims that the Torah which is the Word of God (*Dabar*), and the Divine Presence are the possession of the Community (*Kahal* or *Kehilla*) of God's People. In the Catholic sense this is the bride of St. Paul's writings – the Church – which is the bearer of the Word of God and the Sacraments that make the Divine Presence really present in the life of the believer. That the *Song of Songs* is a mystical writing is proclaimed by both the Jewish Tradition and the Church Fathers. The Mystery of the Church (or Body of Christ) is explained in symbols through the love of the Bridegroom (*Hatan*) for his Bride (*Kallah*).

Jesus himself drew on this imagery and referred to himself as the Bridegroom and His disciples as the children of the Huppah (the Marriage Canopy). This is why the Blessed Sacrament, when it is processed, is covered by the Huppah of the New Covenant. Paul also explains the mystery of the Church in this mystical language drawn from the Jewish tradition. As the Jewish bride circles round the bridegroom, so the Church revolves around Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

### **The Shekinah Presence**

St. John the Beloved also uses this tradition. John links the Incarnation of the Divine Word (*Dabar* in Hebrew, *Memra* in Aramaic and *Logos* in Greek) in John 1:14 with the Shekinah in the Tabernacle (or Tent) and Temple of the Old Covenant. John 1:14 states literally that *"the Word was made flesh and pitched his tent among us."* This can be translated also as *"the Word was made man and tabernacled or shekinah-ed amongst us."* Thus Yeshuah is the 'Miniature' Presence of God which in the Old Covenant was veiled by the cloud but in the New Covenant was veiled by Yeshuah's human flesh and also by the veil of the Eucharistic species of the bread and wine.

John 1:14 continues in the second part: *"and we saw his glory (Kavod in Hebrew closely associated with the concept of Shekinah), the glory (Kavod) that is his as the only begotten Son of the Father, full of Grace (Hesed) and Truth (Emet)."* The Jerusalem Bible commentary on this states that:

*"The 'glory' is the manifestation of God's Presence (Ex 24:16+), but the human nature of the Word now screens this glory as the cloud once did. Yet at times it pierces the veil, at the transfiguration, for instance, cf Lk 9:32,35 (alluded to in Jn 1:14?) and when Jesus works miracles – 'signs' that God is active in him ... The Resurrection will reveal the glory fully (cf Jn 17:5+)."*

The Kavod or Glory of God is closely associated with the concept of Shekinah, as it is Shekinah that allows the Kavod to manifest in time and space through the power of the Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*) in a veiled form that man can perceive as through a blurred cloudy lens. It is the Kavod or Dabar (Word), also known as Wisdom or Primordial Torah, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that manifests himself in time and space. This process is what Shekinah is. Thus the Shekinah came to be seen in the Jewish tradition as a simile for the Divine Presence itself.

The Shekinah is often referred to in the feminine form because in the Jewish traditions the Holy Spirit and wisdom are at times referred to in the feminine gender. Understanding (*Binah*) which is closely linked to Wisdom (*Hokmah*) is also referred to in feminine terminology. Yeshuah also gives himself feminine imagery when he describes himself as a mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wings – this is a direct allusion to the concept of the 'wings of Shekinah' found in Rabbinic literature.

### **The Heavenly Portal**

The Kabbalah states that the portal or gateway to the mystical realm of the Heavens is through the Holy Apple Orchard or Shekinah. Thus we can say that the Eucharistic Presence in the Tabernacle is the portal or gateway to ascending to the Heavens and the mysteries of the Holy Trinity. The following prayer-praise is recited during the Jewish Sabbath evening meal.

*“Prepare the feast of perfect faith, the joy of the Holy King. Prepare the feast of the King. This is the feast of the Field of Sacred Apples. And the Miniature Presence and the Holy Ancient One come to feast with it. I will cut away (the accusers) with praises, bringing them up through the portals that are in the Apple Orchard, for they are holy. Let us now invite (the Shekinah) with a newly laid table...”*

This links the earthly Sabbath meal with the Heavenly Wedding Feast. The Sabbath itself is called the Sabbath Bride or Queen in the Jewish liturgy for the Sabbath. Thus we see that the Sabbath meal is associated with the Heavenly banquet or Wedding Feast in connection with the Shekinah as the kingly bridegroom and the Sabbath as the queenly bride – the linking the Sabbath meal with the *Song of Songs*. In the New Covenant the Sabbath meal along with all the festival meals is transformed into the Mass as the Wedding Feast of the Eucharistic King. Thus the Jewish Sabbath Meal is a type of the Mass and Eucharist.

All the festival meals of Judaism including the Passover have their roots in the weekly Sabbath Evening Meal. These meals all find their fulfillment or culmination in the meal of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which we call the Holy Mass.

### ***The Sabbath Queen***

The Sabbath Bride or Queen is an image or type of Our Lady and the Church. Our Lady is the Sabbath Queen for whom Catholics honour each Saturday as a feast day of Our Lady, and the Jews unknowingly invoke her in song as the Sabbath Queen. The Orthodox Jews sing the song *Lechah Dodi (Come my Beloved)* each Sabbath to welcome the Sabbath Queen. The title alone links in to the *Song of Songs*. It concludes with:

*“Enter, O bride! Enter, O bride, enter O bride, the Sabbath Queen, Come my Beloved to greet the bride – the Sabbath Presence, let us welcome!”.*

### ***The Sefirot***

In the Jewish mystical tradition the *Sefirot* are the ten Attributes of the Divinity or Godhead. The Sefirot are seen in Kabbalah as the garments or crowns of the King and as aspects of the Divine Personality which are united ‘like a flame joined to a coal’. The Kabbalah uses the image of a tree or a body to explain the Sefirot. They call this Body the Primordial Adam (Adam *Kadmon*) and this can be linked to St Paul’s concepts of the Second Adam and the Body of Christ. The Shekinah is also *Malkut* (Kingdom) as the tenth Sefirah of the Jewish mystical understanding of the Godhead. It is through Malkut/Shekinah that one enters the heavenly realm or palaces of the Divine Sefirot (or Attributes of the Divinity). Besides this tenth Sefirah through which one has to enter as a portal or gateway, the Sefirot are grouped into three triads of Attributes. These nine Sefirot within the God head are in complete unity –

God is not divided into separate parts but is a unity (*Echad*). The ten Sefirot are further seen as three forces within the Godhead. One commentary on the Jewish Kabbalistic book *Bahir* states that “the ten sefirot are indeed three, and they represent three celestial forces.” The Kabbalah (in the teaching of Rabbi Isaac the Blind of Provence) states that the power that unifies these three forces within the Godhead is the power of Hesed (Divine Mercy/Love/Grace). Thus we can say the dynamics of the Trinity is that of Love or Mercy. Hesed can also be translated as lovingkindness.

### ***The Head Triad***

The first three sefirot of the Godhead make up the Sacred Head of the Divine Body. The Infinite God beyond all images or aspects or sefirah is called *Ein Sof*. Ein Sof in Catholic thought is the Father. The first Sefirah of the first Triad of the Head is called *Keter* (Crown) and is co-eternal with Ein Sof, and Keter is also called *Razon* (Divine Will) and *Ayin* (Nothingness). It is also the Sefirah of Divine Knowledge. It is from this Sefirah that all the others emanate or proceed. The other two Sefirot of the Head Triad are *Hokmah* (Wisdom) and *Binah* (Understanding). Keter, Hokmah and Binah are the three highest sefirot and represent the head of the Divine or Mystical Body and are the most hidden of the Sefirot.

### ***The Triad of the Sacred Heart***

The second or middle triad of the Primordial Adam is the arms and torso of the Divine Body. In Catholic devotion this is called the Sacred Heart. The White Right Arm is the Sefirah of *Hesed* (Mercy/Love) and the Red left Arm is the Sefirah of *Din* (Judgment/Justice/Power). The torso or heart of the divine body is the Sefirah of *Rahamim* (Compassion/Beauty). The Sefirah of Hesed (Mercy/Love) is the Attribute that unifies the Godhead - and Hesed is described in the Jewish traditions as having 13 Attributes which are recorded in Exodus 34:6-7. The invocation of these thirteen attributes of Mercy saved Israel from Divine Destruction or Judgement. Kabbalah teaches that, when the Sefirah of Judgement (Din) reacts with the Sefirah of Mercy (Hesed) it brings forth the Sirah of Compassion (Rahamim). These three Sefirot of Din, Hesed and Rachamim are the second or middle triad of the Sefirot.

The first three attributes of Mercy invoked before Moses was YHVH, YHVH, El – this is linked to the three mentions of God in the Shema as YHVH, Elohaynu (Our God), YHVH echad (echad = one unity). The Kabbalistic tradition also associates the thirteen attributes of Mercy with the three Kadoshim of “Holy, Holy, Holy” of Isaiah 6 and of the Jewish liturgy. The Jewish Prayer Book calls God the thrice- Holy God. Thus in the authentic Jewish mystical tradition is found a preparation for the Trinitarian and Eucharistic revelation of the New Covenant. This is one of the reasons that traditionally the Rabbinic Jews forbade anyone not over 50 from studying the Kabbalah, as it was

considered potentially dangerous to Orthodox Jewish Faith.

The Sefirah of Hesed is also called *Gedullah* (Greatness) and the Sefirah of Din is also called *Gevurah* (Power). Mercy is the greatest of God's Attributes. Hesed and Din are the right and left hands or arms of God. As mentioned above Hesed is the White Right Arm and Din the Red Left Arm. The concept of White as a colour of Mercy and red as a colour of Judgement/Justice reminds the Catholic of the divine Mercy Picture of the white and red rays streaming out from the torso or chest of Jesus in the region of the heart. The reaction between Hesed and Din produces the Sefirah of Compassion (Rahamim) which is seen as the torso or heart of the Divine Body and is also known as *Tif'eret* (Beauty) and Blessed Holy One. The Messiah is also seen as the Beauty of Israel and the Blessed Holy One. Thus this Sefirah is associated with the concept of the compassionate coming Messiah. *Tif'eret* (Beauty) is also called Heaven, Sun, and King as well as being considered the son of Hokmah (Wisdom) and the son of Binah (Understanding). Evil in this Jewish tradition is called *Sitra Ahra* –the Other Side- and comes when Judgement (Din) is not softened by Love/Mercy (Hesed).

### ***The Lower Triad***

The lower or third triad is made up of the two sefirot of *Netzach* (Endurance/Victory) and *Hod* (Majesty/Glory) which produce *Yesod* (Foundation) as the third Sefirah of this triad. *Netzach* and *Hod* are seen as the right and left legs of God and are considered the source of prophecy. *Yesod* is the foundation of the world and the axis mundi or cosmic pillar as the phallus of the divine Body. *Yesod* is also called *Tsaddik* (righteous) and is thus associated with the title of *Tsaddik* given to the Messiah. Proverbs 10:25 states: “ *The Righteous One (Tsaddik) is the foundation (Yesod) of the world*”. The light and power of the Sefirot are channelled through *Yesod* to the last Sefirah (the 10th) of *Malkut/Shekinah*. *Tif'eret* and *Shekinah* are united by *Yesod*. *Shekinah* is seen as the Bride and in this context can be associated with the Church (Community) as the Bride of the Messiah. Kabbalah sees that the human marriage symbolises the Heavenly or Divine Marriage. As we have seen above the Sabbath Eve is seen as the weekly celebration of the Sacred Wedding.

*To be continued*

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### ***The Light Shines ... Continued from page 14***

Much of the rest of the *Silmarillion* is concerned with the attempts by certain of the elves to regain those jewels. Eventually one of the jewels is lost in the sea, one is lost in a lava flow, and one finds its way into the heavens,

where it forms the bright star, the star of Earendil, whose light is captured in Galadriel's Mirror, some of which she gives to Frodo, as recounted in the Fellowship of the Ring.

### ***Parallels between Silmarillion and Tzohar***

What are the parallels that I see between this story in the *Silmarillion* and the Jewish story of the *Tzohar*? First, the light that they are both made from: the *Tzohar* is made by the Holy One from the very light of the First Day. The *Silmarills* are made from the light of the Two Trees, i.e. light made to fill the earth, light that, like the light of the First Day, preceded the sun itself. Second, how that original light dies: the Light of the First Day dies when sin is born in the world, with Adam's fall. The light of the Two Trees dies when they are struck by the fallen angel and poisoned by his spider companion. In both cases, the purity and beauty of that initial light are extinguished by evil. Third, that that light is contained in a jewel: this is, of course, the most striking parallel, that both the light of the First Day and the light of the Two Trees should be placed in the heart of a gem, from which it would continue to shine forth. Fourth, that the light of both jewels is connected to a promise of hope for the bearer. God gives Adam the *Tzohar* as a sign of hope and a promise of God's continued presence in his life. The ultimate recipient of the light of the *Silmarills* is Frodo himself, who is given that light from that jewel, captured in a flask. The same notion of hope is given by Galadriel to Frodo as she gives him the flask: “In this phial is caught the light of Earendil's star ...it will shine still brighter when night is upon you. May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out.” So, in both cases, a holy jewel, containing the Light before the sun, and ultimately shining as a sign of hope.

So, what is the possibility that Tolkien knew of the story of the *Tzohar* and used it as a basis for the *Silmarills*? It is hard to say. He was extremely well versed in myths and legends of various peoples. He also leans heavily upon the Biblical narrative for the basis of his stories, e.g. Valinor, i.e. paradise, having at its heart a beautiful garden with two great trees at its center is simply lifted out of the creation narrative in Genesis, so he was clearly familiar with the most fundamental of Jewish stories, the Creation narrative itself. What is the likelihood that he simply created out of whole cloth the story of a gem that contains the First Light, which was destroyed by evil, and which continues to shine as a sign of hope? An accident, perhaps? Or, if he did not directly know the story of the *Tzohar*, was he simply inspired by the One Who may well have inspired that very story? A question to put to him, perhaps when we are taking a break, as we worship the Holy One, standing in the blazing glory of the Light that truly shines in the darkness.

***Part 2 – to be continued***

# On the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

*Ed. We include the following "Letter to the Editor" in the hope that it will be helpful to those who don't know the background to this anti-Semitic publication.*

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In the Sept 9th issue of *Credo*, there was a letter entitled "On Media Exaggeration." The author's point was well taken. Those in the media with anti-Christian sentiments repeatedly focus on and exaggerate the sins of a relatively few clergy, to the detriment of the overwhelming majority of faithful clergy and the Church.

Unfortunately, to make his point, the author quotes from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a proven fraud and the major anti-Semitic source book for the twentieth and, now, twenty-first century. This publication and the ideas it contains have been repeatedly and widely circulated to the great harm and detriment of the Jewish People.

The *Protocols* tells of a plot by a handful of Jewish elders to take over the world. A brief history of its development is recounted below.

In 1864, the French satirist, Maurice Joly, published a pamphlet entitled *Dialogues in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*, intended as a political satire attacking the political ambitions of the emperor Napoleon III.

Later, a German anti-Semite named Hermann Goedsche adapted Joly's pamphlet and produced a mythical tale of a Jewish conspiracy. Writing under the pen name of Sir John Retcliffe, this conspiracy was included as part of a series of novels entitled *Biarritz* and was published in 1868.

These novels soon arrived in Russia and were translated into Russian in 1872. Then, during the Dreyfus case of 1893-1895, the Russian secret police redacted the earlier works of Joly and Goedsche into a new edition called the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

In 1905, the mystic priest Sergius Nilus first produced the *Protocols* in a public edition. Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russian emigrants brought the *Protocols* to Western Europe where they gained wide circulation.

In 1921, in a series of articles by London Times correspondent, Philip Graves, the *Protocols* were exposed as a forgery and a fraud. In that same year, Herman Bernstein's book, *The Truth about the Protocols* was published documenting the forgery.

Nevertheless, the *Protocols* continued to circulate widely, even being sponsored by Henry Ford in his *Dearborn Independent*. Eventually, they served as an important part of the Nazi justification of genocide of the Jews in World War II.

On November 28, 1993, a Russian court ruled that the *Protocols* was an anti-Semitic forgery – the first such verdict in the land where the fraud originated 90 years earlier.

What is missing from this recounting of history is the devastating persecution and slaughter of multitudes of Jewish people due to the fear and hate inspired by the *Protocols*.

The *Protocols* take their place amongst many other anti-Semitic fabrications such as the libel that Jews used the blood of Christian children for the Feast of Passover or that Jews poisoned wells and spread plagues.

Today, these lies continue to circulate inciting hatred in Arab lands, other countries and on the internet. Occasionally, they even show up in *Letters to the Editor*.

David Moss, President  
Association of Hebrew Catholics

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## **Egyptian TV to air *Protocols*-based series**

On Oct.26,2002, the *New York Times* internet edition (nytimes.com) reported that Egyptian television will broadcast a series of 41 episodes entitled *Horse Without a Horseman*. The series "traces the history of the Middle East from 1855 to 1917 through the eyes of an Egyptian who fought British occupiers and the Zionist movement."

Based upon the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the series will be shown nightly throughout the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, beginning in mid-November. Broadcast on other Arab channels as well, the potential audience is expected to number in the tens of millions.

David I. Kertzer, professor of anthropology at Brown University "noted an increase in anti-Semitic imagery more typical of Western societies cropping up in the Arab world since the Sept. 11 attacks, along with the canard that Jews were warned of the attacks."

The article noted that while *Protocols* appears to be gaining more attention in Arab media and space on bookshelves, "most people in this country of limited literacy have not heard of the book ... Once it goes on television it enters everyone's living room, and that's where the danger is."

The creator and star of this series, Muhammad Sobhi, "told Al Jazeera television that whether or not the *Protocols* was authentic, 'Zionism exists and it has controlled the world since the dawn of history.'"

The Associated Press account of this story, noted that Sobhi "has been criticized for his close relations with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his support of Islamic militant groups, including Lebanon's Hesbollah."

# O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . .

*From the heart of a Jewish convert:*

*An open letter to William Cardinal Keeler*

*in response to “Reflections on Covenant and Mission”*

*Editor’s Note: Cardinal Keeler is the U.S. Catholic bishops’ moderator for Jewish relations.*

Dear Cardinal Keeler:

I am grateful, your Eminence, that by issuing *Reflections On Covenant and Mission* (August 12) you have encouraged serious reflection by Jews and Catholics throughout the United States, and I beg you to bear with me as I try to convey to you the things so heavy on my heart. (All quotes below are from the document unless otherwise indicated.)

Having been born and raised in a Conservative Jewish home, I have a deep love and respect for the Jewish people, many of whom see me as a traitor now that I’m a Christian (or, more specifically, a Hebrew Catholic). While I fall far short of the depth of Paul’s heart for his kinsmen according to the flesh, wishing himself accursed and cut off from Christ for their sake (Rom. 9:3), I anguish yet at Israel’s unbelief in the Messiah who came for them, through them. One of the most heartrending statements to me in all of Scripture is that of our Lord as he wept over Jerusalem: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . . How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not” (Matt. 23:37).

Yet Israel’s lack of belief is not so great a mystery to me as my *belief*. That we are born in original sin, which plunged us into darkness, is a fact, however sorrowful. That, in addition to our fallen condition, “a hardening has come upon part of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles come in” (Rom. 11:25) is another. But that the love and grace of God should have penetrated *my* heart and drawn *me* to him is a mystery for which I will sing God’s praises through all eternity.

Though the document was “meant to spur reflection,” it caused me considerable distress. I agree with much of what it says, and I am grateful for the love of the Jewish people that is at its core, but I believe the conclusions it reaches are opposed to the temporal and spiritual welfare of this people. I beg your forgiveness if, in stating my thoughts so forthrightly, I offend you in any way. That is not my intention.

To begin with, it seems to me that the main point of *Reflections* is stated in the third paragraph of the preface: “The Roman Catholic reflections describe the growing respect for the Jewish tradition that has unfolded since the

Second Vatican Council. A deepening Catholic appreciation of the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people, together with a recognition of a divinely given mission to Jews to witness to God’s faithful love, lead to the conclusion that campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church.”

I could not agree more, nor should attempts to “target” *any* people be the mode of operation in our missionary endeavors. I’ve taken Peter’s words as the model for all evangelization: “Sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ in your hearts always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you for the hope that is within you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Toward that end, I applaud all efforts to build mutual respect through a dialogue that dispels the ignorance and caricatures that have been the cause of untold persecution through the years and that strives toward the understanding of each others’ beliefs. And I am grateful for the documents—from *Nostra Aetate* to the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*—that have sought to understand the depth and extent of God’s eternal, irrevocable covenant with Israel, not only in light of the new covenant but also in reference to that part of Israel yet outside the Church.

But I am at a loss to understand how anyone can conclude, with Walter Cardinal Kasper, that “the *Church* believes that Judaism, i.e., the faithful response of the Jewish people to God’s irrevocable covenant, *is salvific for them*, because God is faithful to his promises” (emphasis mine).

It is this statement above all that has created in me, and in many others, such turmoil. *Why* then, if Israel is already in a saving covenant with God and if his coming was for the “nations other than Israel” (see comment in *Reflections* re Matthew 28:19) did Jesus weep over Jerusalem? *Why* then did the apostle Paul wish himself accursed for the sake of his kinsmen if their covenant was salvific?

There are so many confusing statements in *Reflections* that, if I took each sentence or even each paragraph at a time, this letter would become a small volume. The above is one instance. Who among us would deny that every individual’s freedom of religion and freedom of conscience should be respected? But to deny that it is Christ alone who saves, that the old covenant was, as Paul says, “our

schoolmaster to lead us to Christ” (Gal. 3:24, NASB), the one mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), is to deny Christ for ourselves. If he is not the Messiah of Israel—God come in the flesh (1 John 4:2)—then he is *no one’s* Messiah.

The document quotes Cardinal Kasper in saying, “The term *mission*, in its proper sense, refers to conversion from false gods and idols to the true and one God, who revealed himself in the salvation history with his elected people. Thus *mission*, in this strict sense, cannot be used with regard to Jews, who believe in the true and one God.”

Since no source is given for Cardinal Kasper’s definition of mission “in its proper sense,” it is difficult to comment on its context. Certainly mission *includes* the proclamation of a message that would lead people from false gods and idols to the true and one God. But to define *mission* in so limited a sense and then conclude that such a definition “cannot be used with regard to Jews, who believe in the true and one God,” is misleading. Is it our *mission* to reduce the gospel message to that of monotheism alone, conversion to the true and one God? Nothing of the Incarnation? Nothing of the death and resurrection of the One who died and rose again that we might have life? Nothing of baptism, the sacraments, the Eucharist, the Church that the true and one God founded in his Son?

Did not Jesus say to Nicodemus—a Jew who already believed in the “true and one God”—“Unless a man is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3)? And did not our Lord say to the Jews who believed in the God of Abraham, “You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he” (John 8:24)? Did not he tell them that *he himself* was God (John 10:30), that it was *him* of whom the prophets spoke (Luke 24:44), and that to reject him was to reject the One who sent him (Luke 10:16)?

Does not our mission involve the full knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who sent his Son to his own (John 1:11) that they might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10)? The Gospel reading of this past Sunday included the very words of our Lord who said to the Canaanite woman, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). Why did he come to them who already believed in the true God, and in what sense were they lost if the covenant under which Israel existed prior to Christ was salvific?

The *Catechism’s* definition of mission seems to be quite different. Quoting John Paul II, it states, “The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love” (CCC 850).

I don’t imagine, your Eminence, that I could cite a Scripture passage or quote a Church document that you and your committee have not dealt with in the past twenty-plus years of Catholic-Jewish dialogue. This makes it all the more difficult for me to understand how you are able

to conclude that Israel does not need to believe in the Messiah, the Christ, for its salvation.

The document describes the Pharisee Gamaliel in Acts 5:33–39 as declaring that “*only undertakings of divine origin can endure*” and concludes therefore that “Rabbinic Judaism . . . must also be of God.” But such a conclusion does not follow.

To begin with, Gamaliel’s message was that “if [this undertaking] is of God, you will not be able to overthrow [its supporters]” and further, “You might even be found opposing God!” (v. 39). That’s not quite the same as saying—and more, describing as a “New Testament principle”—that “only undertakings of divine origin can endure.” Under such a “principle,” how would we not conclude that Buddhism, for example, which existed before Christ, is from God as well?

That is not to say that God does not *permit* certain undertakings, as, for example, Rabbinic Judaism, as a means of preserving his people and accomplishing his purposes. But to conclude that it therefore is of divine origin on a par with the old covenant does not follow.

The *Catechism* says, “In the history of salvation God was not content to deliver Israel ‘out of the house of bondage’ by bringing them out of Egypt. He also saves them from their sin. Because sin is always an offense against God, only he can forgive it. For this reason Israel, becoming more and more aware of the universality of sin, will no longer be able to seek salvation except by invoking the name of the Redeemer God.

“The name ‘Jesus’ signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation, so that ‘there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’” (CCC 431–432).

In the section titled “The Mission of the Church: Evangelization,” the document reads, “Such reflections on and experiences of the Jewish people’s eternal covenantal life with God raise questions about the Christian task of bearing witness to the gifts of salvation that the Church receives through *her* ‘new covenant’ in Jesus Christ” (emphasis mine).

How is it that the “new covenant” in Jesus Christ is *her* “new covenant”? Does the document mean that the “new covenant” is the *Church’s* new covenant *apart from Israel*? Is the Church not born from the root that is Israel (Rom. 11:17–27)? Did not our Lord institute the new covenant at the Last Supper with the twelve apostles, all sons of Israel, the people for whom he came and through whom he would bring life to the world (Luke 22:19–20, Jer. 31:31–32, Heb. 8:7–9)?

A similar statement indicating that the gospel is for all

nations except Israel is made later in the document in reference to Matthew 28:19. The argument is made that the Hebrew word *goyim*, a translation of the Greek word *ethne*, excludes Israel. The *Catechism*, however, applies Matthew 28:19 to “all men” (CCC 849). What sense would it make for our Lord to commission twelve Israelites to preach to every nation a gospel of salvation that did not apply to them? And why then did he charge the Twelve at the beginning of their mission to “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5–6)?

The last paragraph of this same section states, “Thus Catholics participating in interreligious dialogue, a mutually enriching sharing of gifts *devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism*, are nonetheless witnessing to their own faith in the kingdom of God embodied in Christ” (emphasis mine).

I agree that when we engage in interreligious dialogue with Jews, we, through our conversation and the witness of our lives—even apart from inviting them to baptism or from sharing any part of the gospel message—are yet giving witness to God in Christ, particularly since, in this case, our dialogue partners know we are Christians. But to say we may witness to God without speaking of Christ or the necessity of baptism (CCC 1256) is not to say that the Jewish people do not *need* to come to faith in Christ and be baptized. Why then did Peter say to the 3,000 Jews at Pentecost, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38)?

Growing up in a Conservative Jewish home in Brooklyn, New York, I experienced considerable amounts of anti-Semitism, often from Catholics through whom, though I did not understand so at the time, the face of Christ was disfigured. It is not difficult for me to understand the reluctance—or, perhaps more accurately, the *aversion*—that most Jews have to hearing the gospel.

Yet God, in his infinite grace and mercy, reached out to each member of my immediate family, my parents included, and not only brought us through those experiences but into the Church—and thereby into communion with the very people, though few, whose anti-Semitism had caused us such travail.

Here is a remarkable irony: In a day past when hatred, distrust, and misunderstanding prevailed between Catholics and Jews, the Church “targeted” Jews for conversion. Now, in a time when—thanks to good fruits of Vatican II and the tireless efforts of dialogue—new attitudes of trust and understanding are being built, Catholics speak of *withdrawing* the gospel message?

Sadly, much of the wording of *Reflections* can be found in an article, dated July 14, 2001, by Eugene Fisher entitled, *Why convert the saved?* ([www.thetablet.co.uk/cgi-](http://www.thetablet.co.uk/cgi-bin/archive_db.cgi?tablet-00544)

[bin/archive\\_db.cgi?tablet-00544](http://www.thetablet.co.uk/cgi-bin/archive_db.cgi?tablet-00544)). The title, referring to the Jewish people as “the saved,” is as problematic as its contents. The article states that “the Church believes that Judaism is salvific for Jews” and that “the Church needs today to concentrate on what might be its mission ‘with’ the Jews, not ‘to’ the Jews.” Sympathetic to the “centuries of collective mistreatment of Jews by Christians,” Dr. Fisher anticipates a certain amount of skepticism from the Jewish people and poses this question:

“But, many Jews would say, though the Church has abandoned any formal attempts to convert Jews, and understands itself to be ‘with’ and not ‘over against’ the Jews, don’t Catholics still in their hearts long for their conversion? Might not that longing, frustrated, pop out again one day as it has so often over the centuries?”

Dr. Fisher responds with an evaluation of the official prayer for the Jews in the liturgy of the Church and concludes, “So, no, the Church does not wish the conversion of the Jews as a people to Christianity. Otherwise Catholics would at least pray for it.”

But we do. We pray in that liturgical prayer “that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption.” Dr. Fisher states that “the phrase ‘fullness of redemption’ here is not historical but looks to the Last Things.” However, the “fullness of redemption” is to be found only in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12), and unless we embrace him in *this* life we cannot presume to be happy with him in the next.

Can the people of Israel be saved *apart* from faith in Christ? The *Catechism* says they can be. Not that they *will* be saved or that they *are* already saved, but that they and those who, “through no fault of their own, do not know the gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation” (CCC 847). But such an end is not ours to presume. Rather it is given to us to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15) and, Paul would add, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

As stated in *Dominus Jesus*, “There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, actualized with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe. No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit” (12).

It is *because* God is faithful to his promises and to his irrevocable covenant with Israel that he sent his Son to do what the Law could not do—not to abolish, and certainly not to leave them in their sins, but to fulfill (Matt. 5:17), to bring about a new and everlasting covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:8–13, 13:20).

I say “Amen” to the document’s statement that “this evangelizing task no longer includes the wish to absorb the Jewish faith into Christianity and so end the distinctive witness of Jews to God in human history.” In becoming a Christian, my Jewish faith was not absorbed into Christianity. It was *transformed* into the fullness of what was promised to the Jews by the One who promised. Often, as I travel and teach our glorious faith, I tell people that the most Jewish thing a person can do is to become Catholic.

I have no doubt, your Eminence, that the Jewish people will be pleased with this document, relieved perhaps to feel that they are no longer the target of the Christian agenda. But one day they *will* know (Zech. 12:10). One day they *will* see him (Rev. 1:7). One day they *will* bow before him (Phil. 2:9-11). And in that day, we will hang our heads in shame, before them and before the God who gave his Son for them.

“You *knew*?” they will say to us. “You *knew* that we did not know the Messiah, that we did not recognize him at his first coming? And you did *nothing*? Were you afraid of our rejection of you? Did you not care more for our souls? Should we not have known the new birth and the graces that flow from the Messiah who came from our loins? Should we not have tasted of his body and blood?”

Cardinal Keeler, I have spent the last week reading hundreds of pages spanning 37 years of documents since *Nosstra Aetate* was published in 1965. I am grateful for the Church’s confirmation of God’s eternal covenant with Israel as a people. Yet I am troubled with the apparent conclusions of those involved in the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. To say that we can work together in a common cause with the Jewish people is not to say that we should not speak to the Jews about their own Messiah (cf. Rom. 10:1–17).

Please accept my gratitude, your Eminence, for bearing with me through this letter, which a communicator more apt than I probably could have accomplished in half the space. I pray for you daily.

“May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20–21).

In the love of our Messiah and his Blessed Mother,  
Rosalind Moss

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## ***Catholic Teaching on Evangelizing Jews*** ***by Marty Barrack***

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Delegates of the Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA) recently set off a firestorm in the Hebrew Catholic community, and in the larger community of faithful Catholics, by asserting, in *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*, that “campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church.” The idea is that Jews already live in a separate saving covenant apart from Jesus and therefore do not need baptism.

### ***Campaigns That Target Jews***

The word campaign suggests a bombarding with unwanted messages. Nobody likes to be targeted. Catholics should not be doing campaigns that offend many and win few. Let us remember the words of St. Peter, “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.” (1 Pet 3:15)

### ***Catholic Teaching on Evangelization***

The theological assertion that Jews live in a separate saving covenant may be swiftly demolished. Jesus, during His entire public ministry, evangelized only Jews. “Go

nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mt 10:5) “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mt 15:24)

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit’s miracle highlighting the universality of the Catholic Church was an evangelization of Jews. “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.” (Acts 2:5) “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them . . . be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth . . . there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:8f)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1226, states: “The apostles and their collaborators offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus: Jews, the God-fearing, pagans.”

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (Jn 3:5) He was speaking to Nicodemus, a devout Jew and member of the Sanhedrin. The *Catechism of the*

*Catholic Church*, 1257, says, “The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit.’” It adds, at 1260, “Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity.”

Vatican II’s *Ad Gentes, the Decree of the Missionary Activity of the Church*, begins, “Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them a universal sacrament of salvation, the Church, driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity, and obeying the mandate of her Founder (cf. Mark 16:16), strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men.” All men.

Pope Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, 14, says: “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church ... Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.” The Church exists to evangelize. St. Paul told us, “Preaching the Gospel is not a reason for me to boast; it is a necessity laid on me: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16)

*Reflections on Covenant and Mission* quoted from the *1985 Notes*, 11, “Attentive to the same God who has spoken, hanging on the same Word, we have to witness to one same memory and one common hope in Him who is the master of history. We must also accept our responsibility to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah by working together for social justice, respect for the rights of persons and nations and for social and international reconciliation. To this we are driven, Jews and Christians, by the command to love our neighbor, by a common hope for the Kingdom of God and by the great heritage of the Prophets.” It did not quote from the same document, 7, “Jesus affirms that there shall be ‘one flock and one shepherd’ (Jn. 10:16). The Church and Judaism cannot, then, be seen as two parallel ways of salvation and the Church must witness to Christ as the Redeemer for all.”

*Reflections* was signed only by delegates of the Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the USCCB. However, the issue of whether Jews live in a separate saving covenant, the heart of the controversy, is a matter of doctrine, not diplomacy. It belongs not to a subcommittee of the Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, nor to Cardinal Kasper’s Pon-

tifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, but to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has not supported this separate saving covenant.

### ***Jews and Catholics in God’s Providence***

But Cardinal Ratzinger did make a most remarkable statement less than two years ago, that has not received the attention it deserved. His article, “*L’eredità di Abramo*” (*The Heritage of Abraham*), appeared in *L’Osservatore Romano*, on December 29, 2000: “It is evident that dialogue of us Christians with the Jews stands on a different level with regard to the dialogue with the other religions. The faith witnessed in the Bible of the Jews, the Old Testament of Christians, is for us not a different religion but the foundation of our own faith.”

Focus on that again: is for us not a different religion but the foundation of our own faith.

Let us look at the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 839, in the light of Cardinal Ratzinger’s observation: “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,’ (Rom 9:4) for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.”

### ***Nostra Aetate #4***

Pope Paul VI’s *Nostra Aetate*, 4, 1965, states: “Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God’s saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ – Abraham’s sons according to faith – are included in the same Patriarch’s call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people’s exodus from the land of bondage.” Mysteriously foreshadowed. In this we see again that the faith witnessed in the Old Testament is for us not a different religion but the foundation of our own faith.

*Nostra Aetate* continues, “Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.” To work toward this mutual understanding and respect, *Nostra Aetate* continues, “Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in

catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.” In this we see the Church preparing her children for a time when the Jewish people at long last embrace their Messiah.

### ***The 1974 Guidelines***

The then-new Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews issued a statement, *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate* n. 4 in 1974. We find at its conclusion, “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 to the question: the very return of Christians to the sources and origins of their faith, grafted on to the earlier Covenant, helps the search for unity in Christ, the cornerstone.” This identification of the Church’s mystery with the mystery of Israel signals that the Catholic Church regards them as different stages of the same mystery.

### ***The 1985 Notes***

Let us now turn to *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church, 1985*, also published by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Its key point is, 10, “We shall reach a greater awareness that the people of God of the Old and the New Testament are tending towards a like end in the future: the coming or return of the Messiah – even if they start from two different points of view. It is more clearly understood that the person of the Messiah is not only a point of division for the people of God but also a point of convergence.”

### ***The Most Jewish Jew of All***

Holy Mother Church is revealing to us more clearly than ever before that Rabbi Y’shua was the most Jewish Jew of

all. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 578, tells us, “Jesus, Israel’s Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfill the Law by keeping it in its all-embracing detail ... He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly.” Of the 613 Torah mitzvot, 102, more than on any other subject, address Sacrifices and Offerings. That does not count the 30 mitzvot on Priests and Levites or the 33 on Temple, Sanctuary and Sacred Offerings. Sacrifice was the highest form of Jewish worship, the only one for which a priest was required, the only one for which the priest entered the Holy of Holies. Rabbi Y’shua fulfilled the Torah mitzvot on sacrifices through His Final Sacrifice, after which the Temple sacrifices ceased forever. His followers, through the Church that He instituted, have re-presented His Final Sacrifice ever since, and will until the end of time.

The Jews of today retain the election, which calls them to witness to their Messiah. Since they have not witnessed through the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist, they have been called to witness to Him in their lives. It is often remarked that the Jewish people during the past two thousand years have walked a long *via dolorosa*, and were in a sense crucified at Auschwitz. The great Russian Jewish artist Marc Chagall has painted the Jew crucified, in *White Crucifixion* and *Exodus*. For Christians, too, the twentieth has been a century of martyrdom.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 674, says,

“*The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition of all Israel, for a hardening has come upon part of Israel.*”

We have been crucified together. Perhaps, in God’s time, we will enter the resurrection together.

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*Marty Barrack is the author of Second Exodus, the book most used by inquiring Jews to learn about the Catholic Church, as well as numerous magazine articles. His web site is at [www.secondexodus.com](http://www.secondexodus.com). Second Exodus is available from the Association of Hebrew Catholics, \$14.95 + \$2.50 shipping.*

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## ***Should Catholic Evangelization Target Jews?***

### ***A National Catholic Register Symposium***

#### ***Edited by John Zmirak***

*An abridged version of the full text was published in the Oct. 6-12, 2002 edition of the National Catholic Register. This alternate abridgment is printed with permission of the National Catholic Register. The full text may be viewed on the web at: [http://www.ncregister.com/Register\\_News/093002jew.htm](http://www.ncregister.com/Register_News/093002jew.htm)*

WASHINGTON — The Catholic dialogue with Jewish believers has been fraught with difficulty since the Church’s earliest days. And when the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. bishops’ office

recently released a preliminary statement, *Reflections on Covenant & Mission* it generated a storm of controversy over issues that lie at the very heart of the Christian mystery. Said the bishops’ committee document: “[C]ampaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church.”

The scholars contacted by the Register for this symposium were eager to respond in depth. The Register published a sampling from their comments, the full texts of which follow.

## The Bishops' View

by Dr. Eugene Fisher

Associate Director, Secretariat for Ecumenical and  
Interreligious Affairs,  
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Our Secretariat has received quite a number of letters and emails, and seen critiques and appreciations on a number of websites and in the media. It is gratifying to see the interest and concern expressed by Catholics in the efforts of a well-qualified dialogue team which was asked to undertake the task of bringing together the various strands of Church teaching on Jews and Judaism, however well or poorly they feel that team accomplished what was asked of it.

Obviously, a brief note such as the Register asked me to prepare cannot do justice to all of the arguments presented, whether pro or con. There does seem, underneath the fractious rhetoric of some, to be emerging a pattern of critical response worth contemplating as we move forward together in our discernment of what is, after all, one of the sacred mysteries of the faith.

For as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated, it is when “pondering her own mystery” that the Church encounters the Mystery of Israel, a statement that can be made of no other non-Christian religion. First, few of the critiques attempt to grapple with the significant body of reflections of the Holy Father on Jews and Judaism over the past quarter of a century. This is odd, because by all accounts this area is one of the central concerns of the present pontificate. The Holy Father has called the Jewish witness to the Holocaust, for example, a “saving warning” to all humanity, including the Church, which reveals God’s people, the Jews, to be “still the heirs of that election to which God is faithful.” He has spoken, time and again, of how the Church’s basic posture to the Jewish People in our time must be one of respectful dialogue, as he himself has exemplified in his prayerful visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome (the first pontiff since St. Peter to pray with the Jews of Rome in their synagogue) and even more in Jerusalem. The pope’s words and deeds, I would argue, have not been mere publicity stunts but deeply significant statements of faith, the meaning of which Catholics are called to ponder as a “sign of the times.”

Second, few of the critiques have taken into account the progress in biblical studies since the Second Vatican Council in *Nostra Aetate* called for a reevaluation of the positive elements of the New Testament’s attitudes toward Jews and Judaism, especially in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, chapters 9-11. These studies have shed new light on ancient verses, as is the way of Catholic tradition, renewing them for our time and for future generations. Some of the more significant results of these Catholic studies are embodied today in the recent statement of the Pontifi-

cal Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*. This text has been available since November in French and Italian and since April in English.

Third, there does appear to be an overwhelming consensus, even among the critical, that for pastoral reasons stemming from the long, often tragic history of Christian mistreatment of Jews, there should be no aggressive, organized proselytizing of Jews under Church auspices. Any such efforts, given that history, would almost inevitably threaten the freedom of faith relationship between God and the Jews that Catholics cherish. The problem many have with “Reflections” lies in its assertion, based upon statements especially of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, that there may be theological as well as pastoral reasons for this restraint. These reasons, as adduced by “Reflections” flow from the respect Catholics give to Judaism—and Judaism alone among world religions—as a faith-response to God. This in itself is hardly an arguable theological affirmation, being firmly embedded in Church teaching as seen, for example, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 839). The controversy appears to flow from understanding the Covenant between God and the Jewish People, to use the word used by Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Commission, as in some meaningful sense “salvific.”

If the Covenant perdures and has not been replaced or superseded by the Christian Covenant, then what can it be called other than “salvific” for Jews? Is not God true to his word? Cannot the Jews rely on the truth of God’s word to them? Supersessionism, readers should recall, was declared a heresy by the Church in the second century when Marcion of Pontus first proposed it. It still is. So, if I may, I would challenge those who would criticize Cardinal Kasper, the Pontifical Commission, and *Reflections* to come up with better language, a better theological framework, if you will, by which we can affirm God’s truth to Israel and to us, for it has the same Source. I do not believe that an affirmation of the universal salvific validity of the Christ event and the consequent realization that in the Church one finds the fullness of the means of salvation necessarily leads us to hold that God has broken His word by rejecting the undying hope and faith His ineffable grace and inscrutable will have instilled in the people He chose for Himself so long ago. Granted, we deal here with mysteries of the faith, as Paul concludes in Romans 11, that are in the last analysis beyond our ken. But we have, as the People of God of the New Covenant, to wrestle to discern their meaning in a constructive and positive way, one which, just perhaps, articulates the theological vision behind our common pastoral instinct at the beginning of the Third Millennium of our most ancient, most vibrant dialogue of faith.

A number of the better critiques, in my opinion, go after what they feel is an ambiguous use of terminology in *Re-*

*flections* regarding key terms (evangelization, mission, fulfillment, etc.). But virtually all of the critiques have exactly the same problem with precision of language themselves, for example in failing to take into account the crucial distinction in *Dominus Iesus* between faith (a response to divine revelation, i.e., Judaism and Christianity) and belief (derived from human wisdom and insight, i.e., all other non-Christian religions).

I am more than happy to posit that there are terminological weaknesses in *Reflections*. But I think those weaknesses, and the presence of the same problem in those who would criticize them, illustrates the great need the Church has right now for the very best of our systematic theologians to begin to work on these issues with the seriousness they deserve. We are, in all of this, not aiming to “score points” over against one another, but to be able to articulate better, if only a little better, essential truths of the faith that we ignore, as history as shown, at the peril of our very souls.

Finally, I think all Catholics owe a debt of gratitude to the Catholic scholars commissioned in our dialogue with the National Council of Synagogues, who have served us so well in raising faithfully to our attention these crucial, theologically pregnant matters.

## A Man from Mars

by *Father James V. Schall, S. J.*,

professor at the Department of Government at Georgetown University, and author of many books, including *Does Catholicism Still Exist?* (Staten Island, N. Y.: Alba House, 1994) and *The Distinctiveness of Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982).

The Document *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* issued by the National Council of Synagogues and Delegates of the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs is fifteen single-spaced pages—three pages of introduction, the Catholics with five pages, the Jews with seven. Suppose I am someone from Mars who never heard either of Judaism or Catholicism. I am asked to give my impressions of the text. What would I conclude?

In the document, two evidently different groups explain that they have nothing to do with each other. The Jewish section logically makes no mention of Christ at all. The word “Christian” is mentioned about five times. The two groups might possibly be related in that they could conceivably have some common duties to reform the earth. But religiously, they both have separate ways.

The Jewish section tells us about the people chosen by Yahweh. They are to remain what they always were, but they have some universal mission to the whole world. This latter mission is generally described in this worldly terms. Nothing is said of dying or eternal life. The world is to be perfected into “the Kingdom of the Almighty,” though no

indication of when or how is evident.

The expression, “a world to come,” is used, but it is not clear that its reference is not to some perfected earthly society. Take this statement from the Jewish section:

“... Any mission of Christians to the Jews is in direct conflict with the Jewish notion that the covenant itself is that mission. At the same time, it is important to stress that notwithstanding the covenant, there is no need for the nations of the world to embrace Judaism. While there are logical verities such as belief in God's unity, and practical social virtues that lead to the creation of the good society that are possible and necessary for humanity at large to grasp, they do not require Judaism in order to redeem the individual or society. The pious of all the nations of the world have a place in the world to come.”

The word “redemption” is used in the document but no hint of a redeemer. “We live in an unredeemed world that longs for repair.”

The Roman Catholics think that they have something to do with the Old Testament, but affirm that the original covenant is not revoked. The Jewish covenant is the origin of Jewish spiritual vitality. The argument is made from Gamaliel that “only undertakings of divine origin can endure” as a justification for respect for Judaism. This same principle would justify also religions older than Christianity or even Judaism. This principle is in fact used by some theologians to leave the older religions unevangelized also.

There is a “new covenant.” Christians are supposed to bring the “good news” to all nations. However, “evangelization” does not necessarily mean baptism or coming into the Church. Interreligious dialogue is “devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism.” The Christians maintain that they have some “spiritual linkage” with the Jews. The Christians and Jews prepare “for the coming of the kingdom of God ... even if Jews do not conceive of this task christologically.”

Professor Tommaso Federici notes that “in the Church no organization of any kind (is) dedicated to the conversion of Jews.” This is as it should be. Walter Cardinal Kasper interprets the term “mission” to go forth to teach all “nations” to mean only to non-Jews. The Jews already have a covenant with God. The Jewish covenant is salvific for them. A twofold “mission” seems to exist within one “covenant.” Both Jews and Catholics have a mission to the whole world. The Jewish people alone can articulate their mission.

Evangelization “no longer includes the wish to absorb the Jewish faith into Christianity and so end the distinctive witness of Jews to God in human history.” The Jews already have a “saving covenant with God.” The Catholics do “witness” to their “faith in the presence of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ to Jews and to all peoples,” but with no violation of religious freedom or effort to convert.

The conclusion is that “Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God.” And finally, the Church “now recognizes that Jews are also called by God to prepare the world for God’s kingdom. Their witness to the kingdom, which did not originate with the Church’s experience of Christ crucified and raised, must not be curtailed by seeking the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity.”

Any common sense reading of this document indicates that the Jewish writers see no reason to deal with Christianity at all, except perhaps defensively. The Catholic writers, while they cannot avoid the fact that their religion had something to [do] with Judaism, are at pains to see no purpose in any further relationship. At least in these pages, both seem to conceive the “kingdom of God” as primarily “this worldly.” For both, this Kingdom itself may point to something else, but it is very difficult to see this in context.

This is what these particular Catholic and Jewish leaders have concluded after having talked to each other twice a year for “more than two decades.” For both groups, as far as I, as a man from Mars on reading the text, can judge, the being and figure of Christ, whether He is in fact the Messiah or Son of God, has little or nothing to do with the relation of these groups to one another.

## Their Joy is Boundless

by *Dr. Ronda Chervin,*

*Jewish convert, Professor of Philosophy, Our Lady of Corpus Christi College.*

**Editor of The Ingrafting: The Conversion Stories of Ten Hebrew-Catholics and Bread from Heaven: Stories of Jews who found the Messiah (New Hope, Kentucky: Remnant of Israel)**

I can think of no Jew who believes that Jesus is the Messiah who does not experience anti-Semitism and the Nazi Holocaust as a deep cause of suffering. I can think of no Hebrew-Catholic who has not rejoiced to see the attempts of the Church in the 20th century to heal wounds caused by atrocities against Jews of misguided and sinful Catholics. The tremendous efforts of Pope Pius XII to save Jewish people even at the risk of Catholic lives has been followed by innumerable efforts on the part of Catholics to overcome anti-Semitism. Which of us did not thrill to think of John Paul II sitting in the synagogue of Rome addressing affectionately his elder brothers?

On the other hand, when I read that the only response to those of the Jewish religion should be respect, I am flabbergasted. How can any Catholic of Jewish or other origins not yearn for all human persons to know the beauty, holiness and redemption of our Savior Jesus Christ? Over and over again in the Gospels we see the desire of Jesus to reach his own people. When Simeon holds the infant savior in his arms he proclaims “Mine eyes have seen thy

salvation which thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory of thy people Israel.” (Luke 2: 30-32)

Throughout the centuries after the death of Christ, misguided and sinful Catholics have thought it pious to persecute Jews of their times for the crucifixion, certainly plotted by some Jewish leaders of that time. Along with a holy desire on the part of Christians, burning in the heart of St. Paul, for the conversion of the people of the Old Testament, there was also sometimes the use of a form of evangelization now universally seen to be illegitimate - namely trying to force conversions on others through pressure. However, there were also efforts throughout the same centuries by saints and other Catholics to evangelize the Jewish people out of desire that they experience the joy of knowing God the Son. Why did he come and die for them if he thought that their knowledge of God the Father was enough without him?

When the present reflection document speaks about barring “campaigns that target the Jews” not being acceptable do they mean forcing conversions, in which case all would agree, or do they try to make it seem that any group that is designed to attract and inform Jewish people of the coming of Jesus, their Messiah, is illegitimate? The purport of the document is to persuade Catholics that true inter-faith dialogue means ceasing to try to attract and inform. But this is contrary to all the documents about evangelization of all peoples that have come from the Church in the 20th century including the Catechism and the recent document from the Vatican *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scripture in the Christian Bible* by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. All these documents carefully explain that while it is necessary to preach and teach on the New Testament accounts of the crucifixion in such a way as to avoid blaming all the Jewish people of that time or Jewish people of later times, just the same the Church cannot be true to itself without wishing the Jewish people could find the truth about Jesus as the Messiah.

I, myself, a Jewish person brought up as an atheist, would never have found Jesus had not zealous Catholics of the Dietrich Von Hildebrand circle reached out to me in love and brought me to Jesus. Most of my family followed me into the Church. If you read accounts of such famous Hebrew-Catholics as Edith Stein, Rabbi Zollig of Rome, Cardinal Lustiger, you will realize that the joy of the Jew who finds the Jewish Christ, the Jewish Mary, and the Jewish apostles is boundless.

The document for reflection suggests that the greatest fruit of inter-faith dialogue would be plans for working together for social justice. A wonderful goal in itself. Praise be to God for all the work for social justice accomplished by Jews and Christians together. An orthodox Jewish daughter of a rabbi carries a sign in front of abortion clinics “Hitler laughs in hell every time a Jewish woman has an abortion.” I don’t see so many reform and conservative

Jews working to stop the abortion Holocaust in spite of photographs of tortured babies as horrifying as any from Auschwitz. May the Holy Spirit open Catholic eyes to all forms of anti-semitism, from jokes to holocausts, and may the Holy Spirit open Jewish eyes to the love of Jesus for them, the loving motivation of most Catholics who long for the finding of Christ by his own people, and respect for life from womb to tomb.

## All Israel Will Be Saved

by *Fr. Francis Martin,*

*Scholar, John Paul II Intercultural Forum,*

*John Paul II Cultural Center, Washington, D.C.*

The latest joint statement of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the USCCB and the National Council of Synagogues has received much distorted attention in the media. Some of this was corrected by the remarks of Cardinal William H. Keeler to the effect that the statement was intended to encourage serious reflection on these matters by Jews and Catholics in the United States, and does not represent a formal position taken by the USCCB or the Bishops' Committee.

The imprecisions in the document and, to some extent, the confusion generated by the media reflect the present state of Catholic – Jewish dialogue stirred into motion as it is by the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* and the remarkable words and actions of John Paul II interpreting and giving flesh to that document. It must also be remembered that this dialogue, taking place in the shadow of the Shoah, and looking back over centuries of mutual antagonism, is still in its initial stages. There are good remarks concerning collaboration on ethical and humanitarian issues. Nevertheless, the lack of theological clarity, I refer particularly to the Catholic side of the *Reflections*, is unfortunate.

I would like to consider here only one point, that of the irrevocability of the Covenant between God and Israel. The teaching is undoubtedly that of the New Testament; one found clearly in Romans 11:28-29: "In regard to the Gospel, they [the Jews] are enemies for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved because of the Fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [literally "{are given} without regret")." This line teaches that there will always be an Israel, a people defined by a Covenant relation to God; the irrevocability of the gifts and the calling are due to God's love for his people (see also Rom 9:25). This calling, from a New Testament point of view, includes the call to the Gospel addressed to those who are always God's beloved people. As Paul goes on to explain, there will come a time, in God's inscrutable plan, when Israel "too may now be shown mercy as a result of the mercy shown to you [the Gentiles]." (Rom 11:31).

What is fulfilled, in the New Testament sense, is neither

absorbed nor superseded: it is perfected. Christ is the "goal" of the Law, not as its termination but as that toward which it moves (see Rom 10:4). One way to understand how the Ancient Covenant continues to exist in the Christian dispensation is to consider it to be "sublated," that is, taken up into a greater context which needs it. Here is how Bernard Lonergan describes sublation which, as can be seen, is far from the Hegelian notion: "What sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context." (Method in Theology, p. 241 italics added). It is in this sense that Christ fulfills the Covenant and "love (agape) is the fulfillment of the Law." (Rom 13:10).

Up to now, Israel, as a covenanted people still exists, but not as sublated into Christ. As God's plan has unfolded over the past two millennia we have always with us the actual, historical Jewish people, and this too is a sign that God's gifts and calling are irrevocable. The completion of God's plan as we Christians understand it has yet to take place, and this will somehow include both the perdurance of the Jewish people and their unique place within the Church. For, in the perspective of the New Testament, it is the Gentiles who are "co-heirs, co-bodied, co-sharers in the promise, in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (Eph 3:6). The word "somehow" above expresses our reverence toward the mystery of Israel. For our part, we Christians must witness in love to the fidelity of God to his people who has protected them from our sins against them, and we must strive to be worthy of bringing about that plan by which "all Israel will be saved." (Rom 11:26).

## The Church Must Proclaim Christ

by *Mark Drogin,*

*Executive Director, Remnant of Israel*

*Editor, Hear O Israel!*

Catholic-Jewish dialogue is a worthwhile effort, even though it is gravely obstructed by ignorance and confusion on both sides. The Holy Father and Vatican officials leading this dialogue have asked for an honest theological dialogue. The recent *Reflections* from the committee of Catholics and Jews has shed very little light on the theological discussion while greatly increasing the ignorance and confusion on both sides. It would help to keep in mind a few facts.

1. *Nostra Aetate* is a Vatican II document and must be interpreted and implemented in accord with all the other documents of Vatican II. Any interpretation or claim based on *Nostra Aetate* is in error if it contradicts other Vatican II documents.

2. Pope Paul VI established a Vatican Commission to implement *Nostra Aetate* and placed this Commission

under the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity—which is significant in itself. This Commission has issued three official documents providing the authentic Magisterial norms for implementing *Nostra Aetate*. These official documents have repeated emphatically that the Church, BY HER NATURE, must proclaim Christ. This is integral to the Church’s nature and cannot change.

3. All people are called by God to sincere conversion of heart: this was the theme of the Great Jubilee. No individual Catholic or group should be concerned with targeting anyone for conversion. Pope John Paul II made this very clear in the Great Jubilee: God’s call to personal conversion is universal. God converts people; the Church’s mission — and the mission of every individual Catholic — is to proclaim Christ.

4. Honest theological dialogue must be based on the true identity of those involved. The Church’s true identity is stated in #2 above.

5. Pope John Paul II issued an Encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*—25 years after *Nostra Aetate*—to clarify the Church’s mission to evangelize and the role of dialogue in this mission. Less than one year after the Encyclical was issued, a clarification was published jointly by the Pontifical Council for Evangelization and for Non-Christian Religions. Both the encyclical and the official clarification stated that dialogue is a form of evangelization and is included in the Church’s mission. In other words, the papal Encyclical and the clarifying document both affirmed that the Church’s mission is to proclaim Christ. Dialogue with Jews is an acceptable means of this mission when the Church’s true identity is evident. Any attempt to silence proclamation of the Gospel —whether in honest dialogue or otherwise —is contrary to all contemporary Magisterial Teaching.

6. Jews do not agree with each other on what it means to be Jewish. The Catholic Church is not clear about what it means by the term “Jew.” Neither Catholics nor Jews are clear about the meaning of the terms: “Jew,” “Jewish,” and “Judaism.” However, it is universally agreed that Jesus of Nazareth is Jewish. The Holy Family is Jewish. The Twelve Apostles were all Jewish. Jesus and His disciples practiced Judaism and their followers practiced Judaism for many years after Jesus was crucified.

7. Catholics AND Jews must enter again into the Jewish dialogue of the first century between the Jewish followers of Jesus and the Jews who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah of Israel. We must enter into this dialogue with wisdom and compassion born from 2000 years of hatred and violence (from the crucifixion of Jesus to the slaughter of millions by anti-Jewish Europeans). We must enter into an honest theological dialogue knowing that God calls every person to conversion.

8. We must ask: who is Jesus of Nazareth? Is He the Promised Messiah of Israel, the King of the Jews, or should

we look for another? Israel Zolli was the Chief Rabbi of Rome during WWII and he asked these questions. We must follow Zolli in openly seeking answers to the question: Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Zolli remained Jewish when he professed that Jesus of Nazareth is the Suffering Servant spoken of by Isaiah, the Jewish Lamb of God who takes away everyone’s sins.

9. When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, He quoted the Shema (from Deuteronomy): “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and might.” All are called to love God. Jesus proclaimed the Good News of Salvation; the Church, by Her nature, must proclaim the Good News of God’s boundless and eternal merciful love for all people.

## Intended Only for Gentiles?

by David Moss

*President, Association of Hebrew Catholics.*

In general, I would characterize my response to the document *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* as being embarrassed and irritated. I am embarrassed that Catholic leaders, who have been meeting for more than two decades, could produce a document that appears inconsistent with our Catholic faith and, it seems to me, to invite disrespect and division.

I am irritated that a document that should have been submitted to the Bishops, who have the authority to judge its contents, was instead released to the public, ignoring the negative effects on the faith of Catholics and the understanding of non-Catholics.

As a Hebrew Catholic, I am quite aware of the tragic history of Catholic Jewish relations and of the history of past abuses with regard to evangelizing the Jewish people. I am grateful beyond all telling that, since Vatican II, the Magisterium has been addressing the entire People of God to engender a new positive attitude and appreciation of the Jewish people.

I am also aware of the heroic struggles of many Jews who have journeyed to their Messiah and His Church, suffering the alienation of their people, their friends and their family; their entrance into the Church at times enabled only through the direct intervention of the Almighty.

Now, 2,000 years after the death and resurrection of our Lord, in the name of friendship, respect, solidarity on various social causes, and witness to the one God, this document suggests that the Jewish people do not need Yeshua for they have their own salvific covenant. Have we already “progressed” beyond the 1985 document which states: “Jesus affirms that ‘there shall be one flock and one shepherd. Church and Judaism cannot then be seen as two parallel ways of salvation.’”

Is the fact that Yeshua was born a Jew and restricted His

mission to His own people no longer relevant? Are we to believe that the New Covenant made with the Jewish people is now intended only for Gentiles? Are we now to heed the high priest in Acts and not teach about Jesus? How can we square this document with the New Testament and the teaching of the Church for two millennia? If Yeshua is not the Messiah of the Jewish people, then upon what basis can we believe that He is the Messiah of anyone?

So, is there any redeeming value of this document? I would say there is. The document states that the Church's mission of evangelization no longer wishes to end the distinctive witness of the Jewish people to God in human history.

Based upon the eternal election or calling of the Jewish people, the Association of Hebrew Catholics also wishes to see the identity and heritage, that is, the distinctive witness of the Jewish people, preserved within the Church. For approximately the last 1700-1800 years, Jewish entry into the Church has resulted in their and their offspring's assimilation into what had become a sociologically Gentile community. A Hebrew Catholic community within the Church would enable them to preserve their historic and God-given identity and witness. But note, the AHC proposal, unlike that of the document, does not deny them Jesus and all that Jesus offers through His Church.

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## America's Bishops: No Jews Invited

By J.P. Zmirak

*Ed. John Zmirak, the editor of this symposium, contacted the AHC telling us of his own article responding to the Reflections document. Having never had contact with John, we were delighted to find that he included the AHC in his response. We include some excerpts below. The full article may be read at [www.frontpagemag.com/articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=2496](http://www.frontpagemag.com/articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=2496)*

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... we should also recognize what they got right. In the document, [they do] a good job of recalling and deploring two millennia of anti-Semitic practice on the part of Christians — much of it restrained by Church authorities, but still partly inspired by a flawed, anti-Judaic theology, which the Church corrected finally at Vatican II. They mirror Pope John Paul's 1999 apology to Jews, in recognizing that social restrictions, discrimination, segregation and physical persecutions aimed by Christians against Jews over the centuries were not simply aberrations, but the natural outcome of the theory held by most Christians that the Church, as the New Israel, superseded the first Israel, nullifying its claims to divine blessing and protection — this despite the clear statement of St. Paul in Romans 11:25-33. (See page 34 for these verses)

This passage makes clear — as Cardinal Ratzinger explains in his new book, *Many Religions—One Covenant*, that Christians should not seek to dissolve the Jewish

people through conversion into the Church (as they spent the whole Middle Ages attempting to do through fair means and foul). St. Paul himself teaches that the ongoing existence of a separate Jewish people is part of God's will, a prophetic witness to His operation in history. And yet Christians are called to invite every soul into the Church. How to square this circle?

[The committee] attempt[s] to solve the question by writing off Jews as outside the Christian mission—radioactive, perhaps, too hot to touch, in the wake of the Holocaust. Their solution is well-meaning, but wrong. A better one is offered by ... a group of Jewish converts to Catholicism, who seek to keep their identity as Jews, the Association of Hebrew Catholics. As they explain:

*Until now, the admission of Jews into the Church has been governed by a regime of assimilation. Under this regime, ignoring their special theological status defined by Vatican Council II, as "secundum electionem" (Lumen Gentium, ¶ 16), converts enter a Gentile Catholic Community, where they are progressively alienated from participation in the destiny of their people. Their children, should there be any, grow up to be Gentiles, as daily experience goes to prove. The effects of the regime of assimilation on the families of converts and their brother-Jews are no less destructive. The converts are commonly regarded as traitors to their people, preparing its destruction. In particular, Jews observe with dismay the loss of the children of converts, for if all Jews were to convert only to be assimilated, then the people would, ipso facto, cease to exist. The lessons of history bear out their fears. In turn, Jews, both religious and non-religious, are prompted to make common cause in their opposition to the Christian Mission.*

These Jewish Catholics seek to end this unhappy situation, to end "the alienation of Catholics of Jewish origin from their heritage as Israelites. The AHC intends to petition the Holy See to approve the establishment of an Israelite Community in the Church, based on the special registration of converts at baptism and of their descendants. Once constituted, the Community will serve as a sign of the times." ...

In other words, the people with the best claim to speak about Jewish conversion — Jewish converts — are asking Rome not to abandon their fellow Jews, not to establish a "two-track," "separate but equal" plan of salvation that violates the New Testament and isolates Jews in an evangelical ghetto, but to create for Jewish converts a [community] ...

Centuries of coercive attempts to convert the Jews and dissolve them into the mass of Gentile Christendom should teach us to tread very lightly here. Whatever their motives, Christians from the early Middle Ages on demanded

*Continued on page 47*

# *The AHC Proposal to Preserve the Jewish Witness*

*David Moss*

## **1. Regarding the Catholic Jewish Dialogue**

Although the Catholic Jewish dialogue is itself one of the signs of the times, *The Hebrew Catholic* has not given much space to its activity and literature. This has been so, primarily, for two reasons:

1. The dialogue is not the reason for the existence and work of the Association of Hebrew Catholics (AHC).

While we can applaud the dialogue and all the good that can come from an increase in understanding, mutual respect, and joint endeavors, the existence and work of the AHC is focused *in* and *to* the Church.

Though the work of the dialogue and that of the AHC are not unrelated, the dialogue engages the Church in her relationship with the Jews outside of the Church. The AHC, on the other hand, is attempting to address important issues regarding the Jews who have entered the Church.

2. The dialogue is in its early stages.

In the interests of prudence, peace of mind, and fruitfulness, we are most interested in the teaching and guidance of the Magisterium.

Prior to authoritative teaching, we risk subjecting ourselves to unnecessary contention, divisiveness, doubts, and confusion when we listen in on a conversation, hearing words or a strain of argument that is in process but that may yet be significantly modified or ultimately abandoned.

## **2. Why Do We Respond to Reflections?**

So, why have we dedicated so many pages to this document which, Cardinal Keeler says, represents only the current “*state of thought*” of the subcommittee participants?

1. We do so, in part, because this subcommittee has placed their thoughts into the public domain, representing their novel ideas as the teaching of the Church, and ignoring the potential negative effects this could have on the faith of Catholics and the understanding of non-Catholics.

We recall here a quote from the Holy Father’s speech of March 6, 1982, which was included in the *1985 Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jewish Faith in Roman Catholic Preaching and Teaching*.

*“Finally, ‘work that is of poor quality and lacking in precision would be extremely detrimental’ to Judaeo-Christian dialogue. But it would be above all detrimental – since we are talking of teaching and education – to Christian identity.*”

One need only read the newspapers and magazines, along with the debates on the internet to see the confusion, frustration and concerns that have been raised. I have also been personally responding to a wealth of communications regarding this document.

To ensure the quality and precision the Holy Father speaks of, the committee should have submitted their *Reflections* to a wider audience of theologians and bishops for evaluation before putting them into the public domain.

2. We also dedicate these pages, in part, because the subject matter does relate to how we understand our faith and ourselves (Catholics, Jews and Hebrew Catholics) and what the AHC is trying to accomplish.

*Reflections* states that

*“...while the Catholic Church regards the saving act of Christ as central to the process of human salvation for all, it also acknowledges that Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God.”*

Thus, one may conclude, the Church is intended for the Gentiles; that He who was Israel’s Messiah, in truth, came only for the Gentiles because the “*Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God.*”

But the *1985 Notes*, one of the source documents used by *Reflections*, takes a different view. Because Jesus intends His covenant to include Israel as well as the nations, it states:

*“Jesus affirms that ‘there shall be one flock and one shepherd.’ Church and Judaism cannot then be seen as two parallel ways of salvation, and the Church must witness to Christ as the Redeemer for all ...”*

If Jesus is not the Messiah of Israel, then He is not the Messiah of the nations. There is no *new* covenant apart from Israel.

Having devoted a considerable part of this issue to some critiques of *Reflections*, let me offer some thoughts which I hope will be helpful.

## **3. Our identity**

### **Not only “closely related” ...**

*Reflections*, states:

*“Christianity has an utterly unique relationship with Judaism because ‘our two religious communities are connected and closely related at the very level of their respective identities.’*”

Of course we agree. But we note the following as well.

There are conservative estimates that, since the Second World War, more than a half million Jews have come to faith in Jesus. This reality, hinting at a new initiative of the Holy Spirit, arguably surpasses the number of Jews who followed Jesus and formed the early Church.

The most visible of these new Jewish believers are those who live their faith outside the Catholic Church as *Messianic Jews*. There are also large numbers, though mostly not visible, who have entered the Catholic Church.

While this committee has focused on the identities of the Jewish and Catholic communities, it needs to also address the reality of those in whom these identities converge, that is, Hebrew Catholics.

**... but converging as the Father wills.**

a. Many of the Jews, from Secular to Orthodox, who have journeyed to faith over the last two millennia have done so at great cost, materially and personally; many have been alienated from their family and their people. Consider, for example, the journey of Israel Zolli, Chief Rabbi of Rome, who entered the Church following the Second World War.

b. Due to the unique issues that attend the journey of Jews to their Messiah and His Church, many have been helped to complete that journey through the direct intervention of God.

c. We know of some who are at various stages of their journey or have entered into full communion with the Catholic Church and live a hidden Catholic life within their own Orthodox Jewish communities.

d. God has also directly intervened in the lives of many Jews who were not inquiring about the Christian faith. For example, Jesus intervened with Rabbi Saul of Tarsus and Mary with the anti-Catholic Alphonse Ratisbonne.

In the Gospel of St. John, Jesus states that “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*”

The committee should explain why the Father would draw any Jews to Jesus if they already dwelt in their own saving covenant.

#### **4. Covenant, Mission, Witness: Reflections**

*Reflections* describes the enduring relationship between God and the Jewish people as a covenant that is *eternal* and *irrevocable*.

Further, in a variety of statements, it describes the mission given by God to the Jewish people and states that the Church “*no longer includes the wish to absorb the Jewish faith into Christianity and so end the distinctive witness of Jews to God in human history.*”

Finally, *Reflections* concludes “*that Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God*” and that their witness “*must not be curtailed by seeking the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity.*”

The problem with this conclusion is that it does not conform to the biblical witness or to Church teaching. Moreover, it is not a conclusion that is necessary to satisfy the legitimate development called for by the Magisterial teaching and guidelines since Vatican II.

#### **5. Covenant, Mission, Witness: Cardinal Ratzinger**

Let us now look at the thinking of Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Cardinal’s writing assumes the same background information as *Reflections* but makes a different statement.

#### **God and the World**

Cardinal Ratzinger’s new book length interview, *God and the World* (Ignatius Press, 2002), was published about the same time as *Reflections*.

When asked if the “*Jews will have to recognize the Messiah, or ought to do so?*” the Cardinal replied:

*“That is what we believe. That does not mean that we have to force Christ upon them but that we should share in the patience of God. We also have to try to live our life together in Christ in such a way that it no longer stands in opposition to them or would be unacceptable to them but so that it facilitates their own approach to it. It is in fact still our belief as Christians that Christ is the Messiah of Israel. It is in God’s hands, of course, just in what way, when, and how the reuniting of Jews and Gentiles, the reunification of God’s people, will be achieved.”* (p. 150)

Thus, according to Cardinal Ratzinger, the Jews need to recognize the Messiah and we ought to live so as to facilitate that recognition.

#### **Many Religions – One Covenant**

Here, I include a few passages from the Cardinal’s *Many Religions – One Covenant* (Ignatius Press, 1999) which directly relate to the conclusion offered by *Reflections*. But to fully appreciate what Cardinal Ratzinger is saying, I strongly urge you to read and re-read this book.

Early in the book, the question is posed:

*Can Christian faith, retaining its inner power and dignity, not only tolerate Judaism but accept it in its historic mission? Or can it not? Can there be true reconciliation without abandoning the faith, or is reconciliation tied to such abandonment?* (p. 24)

The book proceeds to explore the notions of *covenant*, *testament*, the Hebrew word *b’rith* and notes:

*“... there is only one will of God for men, only one historical activity of God with and for men, though this activity employs interventions that are diverse and even in part contradictory – yet in truth they belong together.”* (p. 57)

Further on, in the light of *one will of God for men*, the Cardinal writes of *the inner continuity of salvation history*.

*“First of all we must remember that the fundamentally ‘new’ covenant – the covenant with Abraham – has a universalist orientation and looks toward the many sons who will be given to Abraham.”*

*“... right from the beginning, the promise to Abraham guarantees salvation history’s inner continuity from the Patriarchs of Israel down to Christ and to the Church of Jews and Gentiles.*

*“With regard to the Sinai Covenant ... It is strictly limited to the people of Israel; it gives this nation a legal and cultic order (the two are inseparable) that as such*

cannot simply be extended to all nations.”

“To that extent it is conditional, that is, temporal; within God’s providential rule it is a stage that has its own allotted period of time. (p. 68)

Now, Israel’s Torah must become universal, so that the one will of God for men can reach beyond Israel.

“The Torah of the Messiah is the Messiah, Jesus himself. ... In this way the ‘Law’ becomes universal; it is grace constituting a people which becomes such by hearing the word and undergoing conversion. 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. This is set forth in Philippians 2:5 as ‘the mind of Christ.’ To imitate him, to follow him in discipleship, is therefore to keep the Torah, which has been fulfilled in him once and for all.

“Thus the Sinai covenant is indeed superceded. But once what is provisional in it has been swept away, we see what is truly definitive in it. So the expectation of the New Covenant, which becomes clearer and clearer as the history of Israel unfolds, does not conflict with the Sinai covenant; rather, it fulfills the dynamic expectation found in that very covenant.” (p. 70-71)

Although the Torah has become universal and the Sinai covenant is now superceded in Jesus, God remains faithful to Israel.

“‘When Israel was young, I loved him’, God says, in the Prophet Hosea, of his manner of binding himself to his people. It follows that, even when the covenant is continually being broken, God, by his very nature cannot allow it to fall. ‘How could I abandon you, Ephraim; how could I give you up Israel? ... My heart turns against me, my compassion flames forth’ (Hos. 11:1,8)” (p.72)

And God’s faithfulness includes the irrevocable gift to Israel of their vocation.

“... even if Christians look for the day when Israel will recognize Christ as the Son of God and the rift that separates them will be healed, they should also acknowledge God’s providence, which has obviously given Israel a particular mission in this ‘time of the Gentiles.’ The Fathers say that the Jews, to whom Holy Scripture was first entrusted must remain alongside us as a witness to the world.” (p. 104)

Does God’s faithfulness and his gifts to Israel therefore imply that the Jewish people do not need Jesus?

“Does this mean that missionary activity should cease and be replaced by dialogue, where it is not a question of truth but of making one another better Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus or Buddhists? My answer is No. For this would be nothing other than total lack of conviction; under the pretext of affirming one another in our best points, we would in fact be failing to take

ourselves (or others) seriously; we would be finally renouncing truth. Rather, the answer must be that mission and dialogue should no longer be opposites but should mutually interpenetrate.

“Dialogue is not aimless conversation; it aims at conviction, at finding the truth; otherwise it is worthless. Conversely, missionary activity in the future cannot proceed as if it were simply a case of communicating to someone who has no knowledge at all of God what he has to believe.”

“There can be this kind of communication, of course, and perhaps it will become more widespread in certain places in a world that is becoming increasingly atheistic. But in the world of religions we meet people who have heard of God through their religion and try to live in relationship with him.

“In this way, proclamation of the gospel must be necessarily a dialogical process. We are not telling the other person something that is entirely unknown to him; rather, we are opening up the hidden depth of something with which, in his own religion, he is already in touch.” (pp. 111-112)

### An interpreted summary

We can consider the Abrahamic covenant to be the primary and eternal covenant established by God. All the subsequent covenants God made with Israel can then be understood as developments of that primary covenant, culminating with the final covenant in Jesus Christ. And it is through this new and final covenant that the nations, with Israel, find salvation.

The New Covenant in Jesus, therefore, does not revoke the prior covenants but, rather, fulfills and transforms them.

Analogously, the various stages in a caterpillar’s life eventually give way to its transformation into a butterfly. The caterpillar is not revoked - it is the same creature as the butterfly but in a different stage of its development.

Therefore, it follows that the Jewish people today remain “most dear” to God and retain their gifts and calling. They continue to live, not in their own saving covenant, but alongside Christians in that primary covenant established with Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus – though they remain in an earlier stage of covenant development.

Post-biblical Rabbinic Judaism, an adaptation of the Judaism of the Sinai Covenant, can then be understood as the temporary provision allowed by God to preserve the Jewish people, their faith in God, and their calling.

In the wisdom and timing of God, they will eventually be given the additional gifts of faith that will enable them to recognize their Messiah, Jesus. That recognition, in turn, will advance the Messiah’s return (cf. CCC 674).

### 6. Covenant, Mission, Witness: Fr. Friedman, OCD

Elias Friedman, OCD, born to a South African Jewish family, encountered Jesus while serving in the South Af-

rican Medical Corps during World War II. He entered the Church in 1943, was ordained a priest in France in 1953 and took up residence at Stella Maris Monastery, Haifa as a Carmelite friar in 1954. After 45 years in Eretz Israel, Father passed over on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - Friday, June 11, 1999.

With love for his people and his Catholic faith, Fr. Elias studied, consulted, meditated and prayed on most of the same issues that have occupied the Church and the dialogue since Vatican Council II. In 1979, he launched the Association of Hebrew Catholics and in 1987, his book *Jewish Identity* (The Miriam Press) was published.

Let us now consider some of Fr. Elias' thoughts as they relate to *Reflections*. We begin by considering the distinctive witness of the Jewish people, a concern which we share with *Reflections*.

### **The witness of the Jewish people ...**

But what is *distinctive* about the witness of the Jews?

For the purposes of this discussion, let us say first that it is the witness of a *people* rather than of individuals. Second, it is the witness of an *elect* people formed by God and irrevocably given certain gifts and a calling. Finally, within the plan of God, it is the witness of a calling to holiness and of being a blessing to all nations.

In *Jewish Identity*, Fr. Friedman notes that Israel's calling or vocation came, in the first instance, from their *election* by God, an *election* which the covenants then presuppose.

### **... disappears within the Church.**

*"It was an error widely accepted in Christian circles to believe that in preparing to receive its Messiah, Israel exhausted its vocation, the argument being that once Christ came, it was left without any 'raison d'être at all.'" (Jewish Identity, p. 86)*

*Supersessionism* was originally a term correctly signifying that the New Covenant had superseded the Sinai Covenant. Unfortunately, *supersessionism* soon took on the erroneous idea that Israel had exhausted its vocation once Christ came. This led to the notion that the Church had replaced or superseded Israel *according to the flesh*.

By the third or fourth centuries, due in part to these erroneous ideas, the Israelite communities within the Church disappeared. Henceforth, Jews who entered the Church would do so as individuals, assimilating to the growing Gentile cultures of the Church, their offspring effectively becoming Gentile. The distinctive Jewish witness within the Church had disappeared.

Fr. Friedman notes that the errors in the supersessionist tradition had prevailed for so long because, until Vatican Council II, there had been no official teaching on the theological status of post-Christic Jewry.

*Reflections* correctly, I believe, notes some of the factors that led to the Vatican II desire to reappraise this tradition. These factors include: the permanence of the people;

their fidelity, spiritual fecundity and witness to the one true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the history of anti-semitism and anti-Judaism culminating in the holocaust; and there are others.

### **The Proposal of Elias Friedman, OCD**

In *Jewish Identity*, Fr. Friedman addressed the deficiencies of the supersessionist tradition. He proposed the eschatological apostolate, whose

*"approach takes its point of departure from a reading of the signs of the times. It is oriented to the collectivity, not to individuals. It focuses attention on the status of the Jewish convert, who is envisaged as that part of Jewry which has accepted the Law of Christ. It accepts the transitional nature of Jewish identity in modern times. It is conscious of the overpowering influence of divine providence in the process of the admission of Jewry to the faith. It limits the human role to collaborating with the intentions of providence. It is aware that the action of the divine in history is source of an inexhaustible, messianic spirituality, ready to wait patiently on the sidelines, or to act with promptitude, as the occasion may require. It is, finally, sensitive to Jewish objections against the Christian mission, but also to the extent to which the Jew is responding to the pressure of a loving providence."* (p. 169)

The concrete form of the eschatological apostolate is, in its first phase, the work of the Association of Hebrew Catholics. Its purpose is to work towards the establishment of an Israelite community approved by the Church. The community, in turn, would preserve the identity and heritage of the Jewish people and their offspring within the Church. **Herein, we believe, lies the key to preserving the distinctive witness of the Jewish people.**

Once again, Jews who freely enter the Church would be able to corporately live out their calling, sharing in the destiny of their people. Once again, they would bring into visible focus the concrete witness of Jew and Gentile reconciled in Christ.

Finally:

*"The community, when it comes into being one day, will be seen for what it is: an eschatological sign of the times, raised up before a Church in crisis and for the encouragement of a jaded world."* (*Jewish Identity*, pg 173)

## **7. Evangelization**

It is inconceivable to me that anyone who has encountered our Lord, especially in the Eucharist, could want to refrain from sharing His mercy, His healing love, His joy, His peace and His promise of eternal life with others.

But the question is: How do we go about sharing this good news? *Reflections* was quite right to quote from Magisterial teaching regarding the self-defeating and harmful methods of evangelization used many times in the past.

Today, Vatican Council II and the Holy Father call for a

new attitude and a new appreciation of those whose very failure to believe, St. Paul tells us, brought about the blessing of salvation for the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:11).

Regarding methods, I believe that Cardinal Ratzinger offers us a wise guideline in sharing the Gospel with Jewish people. We should consider that we are opening up the hidden depth of something which, in their observance of Judaism, they are already in touch.

Regarding attitudes, the Holy Father, in speaking of the Jewish people as our elder brothers and sisters also provides a key: let us address the Jewish person as we would address a member of our own family - with love, gentleness and patience - for it is our Lord who lifts the veil and grants the gift of faith.

First, however, let us be converted, that we may be that transparent instrument through whom Jesus is revealed as *the way, the truth, and the life*.

## 8. Concluding thoughts

### Another view

The *Reflections* committee, on the Jewish side, included a Conservative and a Reform Rabbi as co-moderators. Let us look at the view of an Orthodox Rabbi, Dr. David Berger, abstracted from his response to *Dominus Iesus*. ([http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/research/cjl/articles/berger.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/research/cjl/articles/berger.htm))

*“Cardinal Ratzinger, then, who has also declared that despite Israel’s special mission at this stage of history, ‘we wait for the instant in which Israel will say yes to Christ,’ is a supersessionist.*

*“At this point, we need to confront the real question, to wit, is there anything objectionable about this position? In a dialogical environment in which the term ‘supersessionism’ has been turned into an epithet by both Jews and Christians, this may appear to be a puzzling question. We need to distinguish, however, between two forms of supersessionism, and in my view Jews have absolutely no right to object to the form endorsed by Cardinal Ratzinger. There is nothing in the core beliefs of Christianity that requires the sort of supersessionism that sees Judaism as spiritually arid, as an expression of narrow, petty legalism pursued in the service of a vengeful God and eventually replaced by a vital religion of universal love. Such a depiction is anti-Jewish, even antisemitic. But Cardinal Ratzinger never describes Judaism in such a fashion. On the contrary, he sees believing Jews as witnesses through their observance of Torah to their commitment to God’s will, to the establishment of his kingdom even in the pre-messianic world, and to faith in a wholly just world after the ultimate redemption.”*

It is interesting to note that Dr. Berger believes that *“Jews have absolutely no right to object to the form [of supersessionism] endorsed by Cardinal Ratzinger.”*

## Understanding Israel in terms of covenant

To review, the Catholic contributors to *Reflections* conclude *“that Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God”* and that their witness *“must not be curtailed by seeking the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity.”*

Then, in the *National Catholic Register Symposium*, reprinted in this issue, Dr. Eugene Fisher rhetorically asks:

*“If the Covenant perdures and has not been replaced or superseded by the Christian Covenant, then what can it be called other than “salvific” for Jews? Is not God true to his word? Cannot the Jews rely on the truth of God’s word to them?”*

I believe these questions are answered in the *Catechism* and in this article. But in considering *Reflections’* conclusions and Dr. Fisher’s questions, it appears that they both hinge on an understanding of the covenant made with Israel as being *apart* from the covenant which includes the Gentiles. Yet a Scriptural- and Magisterial-based rationale for positing two salvific covenants – one Jewish and one Christian – is not provided by *Reflections*.

Nor is it easy to see how such a rationale would fit with Cardinal Ratzinger’s understanding of the *one will of God for men* in the *inner continuity of salvation history*.

Underlying *Reflections’* concerns and Dr. Fisher’s questions is, I believe, the enduring relationship that God has with the Jewish people. And we are all in agreement that the essential note of that relationship is God’s fidelity to Israel. The question may then be put: Can we account for and honor that relationship, given the history of the last two millennia, within the context of the covenant established with Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus?

I believe the answer is yes! Both Cardinal Ratzinger and Fr. Friedman respond to the development called for by the Magisterium, and neither of them proposes a two-covenant theory of salvation history.

### Understanding Israel in terms of election

Through no merit of their own, the People of Israel were chosen by God in Abraham. This choice or *election* was a call to collective sanctity and to be a blessing to the nations. Corporately, they were to prepare for and witness to the coming of the Messiah. The manner in which that call would work out was defined by God in the covenants He made with His people.

The *election* did not end with the institution of the *New Covenant*. Rather, it was now reflected in two branches of the People Israel. There was the branch that did not believe in Jesus and which we identify as Jewish Israelites. Then there was the branch that did believe and which we identify as Christian Israelites.

The Christian Israelites continued in their calling through the formation of the early Church and in the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the Mediterranean world. Corporately, they witnessed to the fulfillment in Christ of their ancient covenant in Abraham.

However, by the third or fourth centuries, that corporate witness disappeared with the last of the Israelite communities within the Church.

Yet, we know by the witness of both the Jewish people and of the Church that the Jewish people have an important role to play in the *end of days*.

We are here confronted by two mysteries: one is the failure of the majority of the Jewish people to believe; the second is the disappearance of this people from within the Church.

St. Paul gives a clue to approaching the first mystery. Speaking to the Gentile Christians in *Romans*, he links the unbelief of the majority of Israel to Providence.

“<sup>7</sup>... Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, <sup>8</sup>as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day.’” (Rom. 11:7-8)

He then explains this linkage in the unfolding drama of salvation history.

“<sup>25</sup>Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon **part** of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, <sup>26</sup>and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

“‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob’; <sup>27</sup>‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’”

“<sup>28</sup>As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards **election** they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. <sup>29</sup>For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. <sup>32</sup>For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.

“<sup>33</sup>O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:25-33)

What is important to note here is God’s continuing care of His people, even to the *end of days*.

With regard to the second mystery, we can now see after two millennia that God’s fidelity to His people has enabled them to survive outside of the Church, though not without suffering their own *way of the cross*.

### Dialogue and Exploration

The Second Vatican Council launched the Church into a *dialogue of reconciliation* with the Jewish people and, in fact, with all peoples. This dialogue aims, as Cardinal Ratzinger explains, “*at conviction, at finding the truth.*” But this *dialogue* employs new understandings and new methods of engaging people. It engenders respect and ap-

preciation, recognizing the God-given dignity of the other. And it is a process from which we can benefit alongside those with whom we share the Gospel.

The dialogue is also accompanied by the Church’s exploration of the mystery of Israel, an exploration which has highlighted the enduring relationship between God and the Jewish people.

### Restoration: A new vision

What is now needed is a new vision, a vision that will honor this relationship while preserving the deposit of faith. This vision is needed not only for the Jewish people, but for the Church as well. For the last 1700-1800 years, the Church has become sociologically Gentile. In fact, the terms *Christian* or *Catholic* have become synonymous with the term *Gentile*. This development has obscured the Israelite origins and reality of the Church. The conclusion offered by *Reflections* would, on the practical level, institutionalize this development.

Consider, instead, this view of Fr. Louis Bouyer: (*The Hebrew Catholic*, #73, p.13)

“Judeo Christianity cannot be considered a transitory phase of abolished Christianity, forever surpassed by pagano-Christianity, which would have triumphed over it. The Christian synthesis must always be renewed by renewing its contact with the primary and, in a sense, definitive expression of the Gospel, in the categories and forms of Judaism.

“Judeo-Christianity, as Paul and Peter recognized and proclaimed, remains forever the mother form of Christianity, to which all other forms must always have recourse. It is therefore a weakness for the Church that Judeo-Christianity, from which it was born and from which it cannot free itself, no longer subsists in her except in tracings. It can be believed that she will not reach the ultimate stage of her development except by rediscovering it – fully living in her.”

Consider also this view of Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the papal household: (*The Hebrew Catholic*, #72, p.12)

“What is required is that the Israel according to the flesh enter into and become part of the Israel according to the spirit, without for this having to cease being Israel also according to the flesh which is its only prerogative.”

### Towards a new springtime

Awakened by the same Spirit that animated the Second Vatican Council, the AHC seeks the restoration and renewal within the Church of that from which the Church was born – a visible and dynamic Israelite community. In the restored community, the People Israel will once again be able to live out their distinctive witness and their calling – to be a blessing – within the Church. The blessing, in turn, will hasten the day when *all Israel* shall proclaim

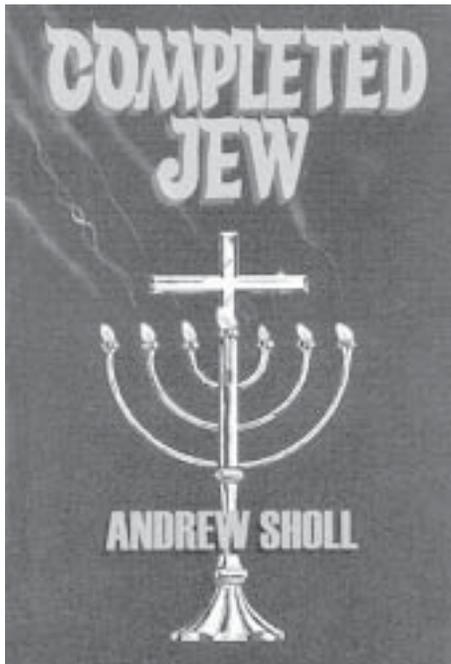
“*Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.*”

## From our book shelves

In this column, we bring to your attention items that have recently been published or that have recently come to our attention. Most likely, we have not reviewed the items presented. We quickly examine each item to assess whether it is related to the themes of our work.

As always, your comments are welcome. We are always looking for people to review books that are related to our work. If you are willing to write a review, please let us know.

All items are available from The Miriam Press for the price indicated plus shipping.



Comsoda Communications, East Keilor, Victoria  
©2002; 148 pgs, \$12.50

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We have imported a quantity of these books from Australia and they are available from AHC for \$12.50 + \$2.50 shipping.

### **From the back cover**



### **About the author**

Andrew Sholl, born from a Jewish family, and baptised as a Catholic, providentially escaped from the Nazi holocaust. With his parents and brother, he left Yugoslavia and arrived in Australia, via Israel, and went on to be a teacher and solicitor. With wife Penny and two daughters he has settled in Townsville, Queensland. Andrew is co-founder of the *Association of Hebrew Catholics*, an organization which has spread to several countries. His installation in 2002 in the *Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*, is acknowledgement of his love for Israel, the Holy Land, and his commitment to the Catholic Faith.

### **About the book**

An overview of the history of the Jewish dispersion into Europe leads the author to describe his personal story as a Hebrew Catholic. From Subotica in Yugoslavia the place of his birth, through Vienna, Haifa, Barcelona, the narrative takes the reader to Australia, the country of adoption. The book demonstrates in detail the close links between the customs and the heritage of the Jewish religion and Catholic practice. Some of the most common expressions in the Christian Faith are explained to show their Hebrew derivation. The author relates texts from the Old Testament with those in the New Testament to identify the Messiah. Finally, in a hopeful note, the author describes the future for those of Hebrew origin in the Catholic Church.

*Completed Jew* indicates how the author, at the book's end, finds himself fully complete.

# *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*

## *Consultation of the National Council of Synagogues and the Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs*

### *August 12, 2002*

#### **PREFACE**

For more than twenty years leaders of the Jewish and Roman Catholic communities in the United States have met semi-annually to discuss a wide range of topics affecting Catholic-Jewish relations. Currently, the participants in these ongoing consultations are delegates of the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (BCEIA) and of the National Council of Synagogues (NCS). The NCS represents the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Rabbinical Assembly of Conservative Judaism, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. The Consultation is co-chaired by His Eminence William Cardinal Keeler, the U.S. bishops' moderator for Catholic-Jewish relations and Rabbi Joel Zaiman, of the Rabbinical Assembly of Conservative Judaism and Rabbi Michael Signer of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The dialogues have previously produced public statements on such issues as Children and the Environment and Acts of Religious Hatred.

At its meeting held on March 13, 2002 in New York City, the BCEIA-NCS Consultation examined how the Jewish and Roman Catholic traditions currently understand the subjects of Covenant and Mission. Each delegation prepared reflections that were discussed and clarified by the Consultation as statements of the current state of the question in each community. The BCEIA-NCS Consultation voted to issue its considerations publicly in order to encourage serious reflection on these matters by Jews and Catholics throughout the United States. After taking time to refine the initial statements, the separate Roman Catholic and Jewish reflections on the subjects of Covenant and Mission are presented below.

The Roman Catholic reflections describe the growing respect for the Jewish tradition that has unfolded since the Second Vatican Council. A deepening Catholic appreciation of the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people, together with a recognition of a divinely-given mission to Jews to witness to God's faithful love, lead to the conclusion that campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church.

The Jewish reflections describe the mission of the Jews and the perfection of the world. This mission is seen to have three aspects. First there are the obligations that arise as a result of the loving election of the Jewish people into

a covenant with God. Second, there is a mission of witness to God's redeeming power in the world. Third, the Jewish people have a mission that is addressed to all human beings. The Jewish reflections conclude by urging Jews and Christians to articulate a common agenda to heal the world.

The NCS-BCEIA Consultation is concerned about the continuing ignorance and caricatures of one another that still prevail in many segments of the Catholic and Jewish communities. It is the hope of the Consultation that these reflections will be read and discussed as part of an ongoing process of increasing mutual understanding.

The NCS-BCEIA Consultation reaffirms its commitment to continue deepening our dialogue and to promote amity between the Jewish and Catholic communities in the United States.

#### **ROMAN CATHOLIC REFLECTIONS**

##### *Introduction*

The gifts brought by the Holy Spirit to the Church through the Second Vatican Council's declaration *Nostra Aetate* continue to unfold. The decades since its proclamation in 1965 have witnessed a steady rapprochement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish people. Although controversies and misunderstandings continue to occur, there has nonetheless been a gradual deepening of mutual understanding and common purpose.

*Nostra Aetate* also inspired a series of magisterial instructions, including three documents prepared by the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, Nostra Aetate No. 4* (1974); *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church* (1985); and *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998). Pope John Paul II has offered many addresses and engaged in several important actions that have furthered Catholic and Jewish amity. Numerous statements concerning Catholic-Jewish relations have also been composed by national conferences of Catholic bishops from around the world. In the United States, the conference of Catholic bishops and its committees have issued many relevant documents, including: *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations* (1967, 1985); *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion* (1988); *God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic*

*Preaching* (1988); and most recently *Catholic Teaching on the Shoah: Implementing the Holy See's We Remember* (2001).

A survey of these Catholic statements over the past few decades shows that they have progressively been considering more and more aspects of the complex relationship between Jews and Catholics, together with their impact on the practice of the Catholic faith. This work inspired by *Nostra Aetate* has involved interfaith dialogue, collaborative educational ventures, and joint theological and historical research by Catholics and Jews. It will continue into the new century.

At the present moment in this process of renewal, the subjects of covenant and mission have come to the forefront. *Nostra Aetate* initiated this thinking by citing Romans 11:28-29 and describing the Jewish people as "very dear to God, for the sake of the patriarchs, since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made."<sup>1</sup> John Paul II has explicitly taught that Jews are "the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God,"<sup>2</sup> "the present-day people of the covenant concluded with Moses,"<sup>3</sup> and "partners in a covenant of eternal love which was never revoked."<sup>4</sup>

The post-*Nostra Aetate* Catholic recognition of the permanence of the Jewish people's covenant relationship to God has led to a new positive regard for the post-biblical or rabbinic Jewish tradition that is unprecedented in Christian history. The Vatican's 1974 *Guidelines* insisted that Christians "must strive to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience."<sup>5</sup> The 1985 Vatican Notes praised post-biblical Judaism for carrying "to the whole world a witness—often heroic—of its fidelity to the one God and to 'exalt Him in the presence of all the living' (Tobit 13:4)."<sup>6</sup> The Notes went on to refer to John Paul II in urging Christians to remember "how the permanence of Israel is accompanied by a continuous spiritual fecundity, in the rabbinical period, in the Middle Ages and in modern times, taking its start from a patrimony which we long shared, so much so that 'the faith and religious life of the Jewish people as they are professed and practiced still today, can greatly help us to understand better certain aspects of the life of the Church' (John Paul II, 6 March 1982)."<sup>7</sup> This theme has been taken up in statements by the United States Catholic bishops, such as *God's Mercy Endures Forever*, which advised preachers to "[b]e free to draw on Jewish sources (rabbinic, medieval, and modern) in expounding the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures and the apostolic writings."<sup>8</sup>

Post-biblical Judaism's "spiritual fecundity" continued in lands in which Jews were a tiny minority. This was true in Christian Europe even though, as Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy has noted, "from the time of the Emperor Constantine on, Jews were isolated and discriminated against in the Christian world. There were expulsions and forced

conversions. Literature propagated stereotypes [and] preaching accused the Jews of every age of deicide."<sup>9</sup> This historical summary intensifies the importance of the teaching of the 1985 Vatican Notes that, "The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design."<sup>10</sup>

Knowledge of the history of Jewish life in Christendom also causes such biblical texts as Acts 5:33-39 to be read with new eyes. In that passage the Pharisee Gamaliel declares that only undertakings of divine origin can endure. If this New Testament principle is considered by Christians today to be valid for Christianity, then it must logically also hold for post-biblical Judaism. Rabbinic Judaism, which developed after the destruction of the Temple, must also be "of God."

In addition to these theological and historical considerations, in the decades since *Nostra Aetate* many Catholics have been blessed with the opportunity to experience personally Judaism's rich religious life and God's gifts of holiness.

### ***The Mission of the Church: Evangelization***

Such reflections on and experiences of the Jewish people's eternal covenantal life with God raise questions about the Christian task of bearing witness to the gifts of salvation that the Church receives through her "new covenant" in Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council summed up the Church's mission as follows:

*While helping the world, and receiving many benefits from it, the Church has a single intention: that God's kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass. For every benefit which the People of God during its earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is "the universal sacrament of salvation," simultaneously manifesting and exercising the mystery of God's love for humanity.<sup>11</sup>*

This mission of the Church can be summarized in one word: evangelization. Pope Paul VI gave the classic defi-

1. Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* "1965), 4.
2. John Paul II, "Address to the Jewish Community in Mainz, West Germany," November 17, 1980.
3. Ibid.
4. John Paul II, "Address to Jewish Leaders in Miami," September 11, 1987.
5. Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, Nostra Aetate No. 4* (1974), Prologue.
6. Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church* (1985), VI, 25.
7. Ibid.
8. NCCB, *God's Mercy Endures Forever* (1988), 31i.
9. Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, "Reflections on the Vatican Statement on the Shoah," *Origins* 28/2 (May 28, 1998), 31.
10. CRRJ, *Notes* (1985), VI, 25.
11. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), IV, 45, citing *Dei Verbum* (1965), II, 15.

nitition, “The Church appreciates that evangelization means the carrying forth of the good news to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men and renew the human race.”<sup>12</sup> Evangelization refers to a complex reality that is sometimes misunderstood by reducing it only to the seeking of new candidates for baptism. It is the Church’s continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ, who embodied the life of the kingdom of God. As Pope John Paul II has explained,

*The kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God’s plan of salvation in all its fullness.*<sup>13</sup>

It should be stressed that evangelization, the Church’s work on behalf of the kingdom of God, cannot be separated from its faith in Jesus Christ in whom Christians find the kingdom “present and fulfilled.”<sup>14</sup> Evangelization includes the Church’s activities of presence and witness; commitment to social development and human liberation; Christian worship, prayer, and contemplation; interreligious dialogue; and proclamation and catechesis.<sup>15</sup>

This latter activity of proclamation and catechesis - the “invitation to a commitment of faith in Jesus Christ and to entry through baptism into the community of believers which is the church”<sup>16</sup> - is sometimes thought to be synonymous with “evangelization.” However, this is a very narrow construal and is indeed only one among many aspects of the Church’s “evangelizing mission” in the service of God’s kingdom. Thus, Catholics participating in interreligious dialogue, a mutually enriching sharing of gifts devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism, are nonetheless witnessing to their own faith in the kingdom of God embodied in Christ. This is a form of evangelization, a way of engaging in the Church’s mission.

### ***Evangelization and the Jewish People***

Christianity has an utterly unique relationship with Judaism because “our two religious communities are connected and closely related at the very level of their respective religious identities.”<sup>17</sup>

*The history of salvation makes clear our special relationship with the Jewish people. Jesus belongs to the Jewish people, and he inaugurated his church within the Jewish nation. A great part of the Holy Scriptures, which we Christians read as the word of God, constitute a spiritual patrimony which we share with Jews. Consequently, any negative attitude in their regard must be avoided, since “in order to be a blessing for the world, Jews and Christians need first to be a blessing for each other.”*<sup>18</sup>

In the wake of *Nostra Aetate*, there has been a deepening Catholic appreciation of many aspects of our unique spiritual linkage with Jews. Specifically, the Catholic Church has come to recognize that its mission of preparing for the coming of the kingdom of God is one that is shared with the Jewish people, even if Jews do not conceive of this task christologically as the Church does. Thus, the 1985 Vatican Notes observed:

*Attentive to the same God who has spoken, hanging on the same Word, we have to witness to one same memory and one common hope in Him who is the master of history. We must also accept our responsibility to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah by working together for social justice, respect for the rights of persons and nations and for social and international reconciliation. To this we are driven, Jews and Christians, by the command to love our neighbor, by a common hope for the Kingdom of God and by the great heritage of the Prophets.*<sup>19</sup>

If the Church, therefore, shares a central and defining task with the Jewish people, what are the implications for the Christian proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ? Ought Christians to invite Jews to baptism? This is a complex question not only in terms of Christian theological self-definition, but also because of the history of Christians forcibly baptizing Jews.

In a remarkable and still most pertinent study paper presented at the sixth meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in Venice twenty-five years ago, Prof. Tommaso Federici examined the missiological implications of *Nostra Aetate*. He argued on historical and theological grounds that there should be in the Church no organizations of any kind dedicated to the conversion of Jews. This has over the ensuing years been the de facto practice of the Catholic Church.

More recently, Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Religious Relations with

12. Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), 18.

13. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), 15.

14. *Ibid.*, 18.

15. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991), 2.

Note these similar comments from Pope John Paul II, “Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways. Among these ways, some have particular importance in the present situation of the church and the world.” *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), 41. The pope went on to cite these various ways: “Witness” [42-43], “Proclamation” [44-47], “Forming local churches” [48-49], “Ecumenical activity” [50], “Inculturation” [52-54], “Interreligious Dialogue” [55-57], “Promoting Development and Liberation from Oppression,” [58-59].

16. *Ibid.*, 10.

17. John Paul II, “Address to Representatives of Jewish Organizations,” March 12, 1979.

18. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* (1999), 50; citing *idem*, “Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” April 6, 1993.

19. CRRJ, Notes (1985), II, 11. At the general audience on December 6, 2000, John Paul II spoke of the partnership among all religious people: “All who seek God with a sincere heart, including those who do not know Christ and his church, contribute under the influence of grace to the building of his kingdom” [Catholic News Service, December 6, 2000].

the Jews, explained this practice. In a formal statement made first at the seventeenth meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in May 2001, and repeated later in the year in Jerusalem, Cardinal Kasper spoke of “mission” in a narrow sense to mean “proclamation” or the invitation to baptism and catechesis. He showed why such initiatives are not appropriately directed at Jews:

*The term mission, in its proper sense, refers to conversion from false gods and idols to the true and one God, who revealed himself in the salvation history with His elected people. Thus mission, in this strict sense, cannot be used with regard to Jews, who believe in the true and one God. Therefore, and this is characteristic, there exists dialogue but there does not exist any Catholic missionary organization for Jews.*

*As we said previously, dialogue is not mere objective information; dialogue involves the whole person. So in dialogue Jews give witness of their faith, witness of what supported them in the dark periods of their history and their life, and Christians give account of the hope they have in Jesus Christ. In doing so, both are far away from any kind of proselytism, but both can learn from each other and enrich each other. We both want to share our deepest concerns to an often -disoriented world that needs such witness and searches for it.<sup>20</sup>*

From the point of view of the Catholic Church, Judaism is a religion that springs from divine revelation. As Cardinal Kasper noted, “God’s grace, which is the grace of Jesus Christ according to our faith, is available to all. Therefore, the Church believes that Judaism, i.e. the faithful response of the Jewish people to God’s irrevocable covenant, is salvific for them, because God is faithful to his promises.”<sup>21</sup>

This statement about God’s saving covenant is quite specific to Judaism. Though the Catholic Church respects all religious traditions and through dialogue with them can discern the workings of the Holy Spirit, and though we believe God’s infinite grace is surely available to believers of other faiths, it is only about Israel’s covenant that the Church can speak with the certainty of the biblical witness. This is because Israel’s scriptures form part of our own biblical canon and they have a “perpetual value . . . that has not been canceled by the later interpretation of the New Testament.”<sup>22</sup>

According to Roman Catholic teaching, both the Church and the Jewish people abide in covenant with God. We both therefore have missions before God to undertake in the world. The Church believes that the mission of the Jewish people is not restricted to their historical role as the people of whom Jesus was born “according to the flesh” (Rom 9:5) and from whom the Church’s apostles came. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger recently wrote, “God’s providence ... has obviously given Israel a particular mis-

sion in this ‘time of the Gentiles.’”<sup>23</sup> However, only the Jewish people themselves can articulate their mission “in the light of their own religious experience.”<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, the Church does perceive that the Jewish people’s mission *ad gentes* (to the nations) continues. This is a mission that the Church also pursues in her own way according to her understanding of covenant. The command of the Resurrected Jesus in Matthew 28:19 to make disciples “of all nations” (Greek = *ethne*, the cognate of the Hebrew = *goyim*; i.e., the nations other than Israel) means that the Church must bear witness in the world to the Good News of Christ so as to prepare the world for the fullness of the kingdom of God. However, this evangelizing task no longer includes the wish to absorb the Jewish faith into Christianity and so end the distinctive witness of Jews to God in human history.

Thus, while the Catholic Church regards the saving act of Christ as central to the process of human salvation for all, it also acknowledges that Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God. The Catholic Church must always evangelize and will always witness to its faith in the presence of God’s kingdom in Jesus Christ to Jews and to all other people. In so doing, the Catholic Church respects fully the principles of religious freedom and freedom of conscience, so that sincere individual converts from any tradition or people, including the Jewish people, will be welcomed and accepted.

However, it now recognizes that Jews are also called by God to prepare the world for God’s kingdom. Their witness to the kingdom, which did not originate with the Church’s experience of Christ crucified and raised, must not be curtailed by seeking the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity. The distinctive Jewish witness must be sustained if Catholics and Jews are truly to be, as Pope John Paul II has envisioned, “a blessing to one another.”<sup>25</sup> This is in accord with the divine promise expressed in the New Testament that Jews are called to “serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before God all [their] days” (Luke 1:74-75).

With the Jewish people, the Catholic Church, in the words of *Nostra Aetate*, “awaits the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and serve him shoulder to shoulder (Soph 3:9; see Is 66:23; Ps 65:4; Rom 11:11-32).”<sup>26</sup>

20. Walter Cardinal Kasper, “Dominus Iesus.” Address delivered at the 17th meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, New York, May 1, 2001.

21. *Ibid.*

22. CRRJ, “Guidelines” (1974), II.

23. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *One Covenant, Many Religions: Israel, the Church and the World* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 104. “Time of the Gentiles” recalls Luke 21:24’s term for the era after the destruction of the Second Temple.

24. Guidelines, Prologue.

25. John Paul II, “Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” April 6, 1993.

26. Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, 4.

## JEWISH REFLECTIONS

### *The Mission of the Jews and the Perfection of the World*

In the endless quest to bring meaning to life, communities, just like individuals, seek to define their mission in the world. So it is certainly for the Jews.

The mission of the Jews is part of a three-fold mission that is rooted in Scripture and developed in later Jewish sources. There is, first, the mission of covenant: the ever-formative impetus to Jewish life that results from the covenant between God and the Jews. Second, the mission of witness, whereby the Jews see themselves (and are frequently seen by others) as God's eternal witnesses to His existence and to His redeeming power in the world. And third, the mission of humanity, a mission that understands the Biblical history of the Jews as containing a message to more than the Jews alone. It presupposes a message and a mission addressed to all human beings.

### *The Mission of Covenant*

The Jews are the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the physical embodiment of God's covenant with these ancestors.

Abraham not only sets out on a journey to the Land of Canaan after being called by God, but when he is ninety-nine years old, God appears to him and tells him: "Walk in my ways and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous."<sup>27</sup> The covenant is described as "everlasting,...to be God to you and to your offspring to come."<sup>28</sup> The covenant involves the Land of Canaan which is an everlasting holding.<sup>29</sup> There is a physical symbol of the covenant: the circumcision of all males on the eighth day of their lives.

The covenant is both physical and spiritual. The Jews are a physical people. The covenant is a covenant of the flesh. The Land is a physical place. But it is also a covenant of the spirit for it is connected to "walking in His ways."

The Jews are a people called into existence by God through a loving election. Why would God do such a thing? The Torah tells us the story of a unique God who, so different from the God of Aristotle, was not content with contemplating Himself. It is a great mystery, but God, who is essentially beyond our ken, willed a world into existence. He gave His creatures a single commandment, not to eat of a certain fruit of the Garden of Eden. What, of course, do they do? They eat the fruit.

And so God, who had decided to share His ineffable self, was denied. It was not long before the earth became corrupt before God. And so He began again, destroying the creation, bringing the primordial waters back together and leaving only Noah and his family. Yet that too does

not work, for no sooner are they out of the Ark than Noah gets drunk and uncovers himself. Downhill again-until the Torah begins the story that works, that is the heart of the Bible's saga: the story of Abraham and his progeny, the Jews.

The covenant is not just a promise or a general exhortation toward perfection. When the People of Israel has turned into a large community and has suffered Pharaoh's bondage, the people is redeemed from Egypt with extraordinary wonders. They come to Sinai and the covenant gains its content: the laws and statutes given there and subsequently in the Tent of Meeting.

*You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. Now, then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*<sup>30</sup>

To Jews this is not divine flattery but the burden of divine obligation. And this, then, is the theological definition of the Jews: a physical people called upon to live in a special relationship with God. That relation has specific content. There are rewards for its observance, punishments for its abandonment.

Such a view of the Jews is not tailored to fit the normal sociological definitions of a people, a community or a folk. It is even possible that most Jews would be uncomfortable with this theological sociology. People are usually more satisfied with picturing the Jews either as an ethnic group or as a faith community untied to a people. But that is not the notion of the Jews in the Bible and in later Jewish literature. The Jews are, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, partners with God in a sometimes stormy and sometimes idyllic romance, in a loving marriage that binds God and the People of Israel together forever and which gives the deepest possible meaning to Jewish existence.

The practical result of all of this is that the first mission of the Jews is toward the Jews. It means that the Jewish community is intent upon preserving its identity. Since that does not always happen naturally, it is the reason why Jews talk to each other constantly about institutional strengths and the community's ability to educate its children. It creates an abhorrence of intermarriage. It explains the passion to study the Torah. The stakes are high in Jewish life and in order not to abandon God, the Jewish community expends a great deal of energy seeing to it that the covenantal community works.

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27. Gen. 17:1-2.

28. Gen. 17:7.

29. Gen. 17:8.

30. Ex. 19:4-6.

## ***The Mission of Witness***

Isaiah speaks to a role the Jews play that goes beyond themselves. “My witnesses are you-declares the Lord-my servant whom I have chosen.”<sup>31</sup>

The Jews are His witnesses that there is a God in the world who is its Creator, that He is one and that idols have no power-”To me every knee shall bend and every tongue vow loyalty”<sup>32</sup>-and that the power of God is a redemptive power, one more awesome than human beings can conceive.

How is the power of God manifest? In the life of nations, including the fall and rise of the nation of Israel. And it is well known through the Torah and the prophetic books that the suffering of Israel is understood to be a witness to God’s covenant with Israel.

What is not understood, at least not well enough, is that God wants the nations to see the redemption of Israel and be impressed. That is, for example, what God wants the Pharaoh and the people of Egypt to see. It is not enough, apparently, to simply redeem the people of Israel from bondage. The redemption is designed to be public, filled with signs and wonders. For it is designed to teach the great nation of Egypt about the power, the glory and the interest of the God of Israel in redeeming slaves.

It is also in this sense that the prophet Isaiah speaks of the Jews as a “light to nations.” “I raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the survivors of Israel: I will also make you a light to nations, that My salvation may reach the ends of the earth.”<sup>33</sup> The nations will look and see the redemption of the people of Israel and they will be amazed. They will therefore learn, if they had not learned before, that the Lord, God of Israel, restores His people to His land.

The herald of joy to Zion says: “Let every valley be raised, every hill and mount made low. Let the rugged ground become level and the ridges become a plain.”<sup>34</sup> This is not rhetoric about some mystical manifestation of God transforming nature. It is bold imagery to speak about the creation of an extraordinary highway to bring back the exiled people to their land.

While we spend a good deal of time thinking about our sins, it is not suffering that is God’s message. God’s message is the power of repentance and the power of His love as manifested in the redemption of Israel. One of the great needs of theology, therefore, is to detach itself from the message of suffering. The great message of God is the power of redemption. The great hope of the Jews is their redemption and the rebuilding of their nation state. The witness to be borne is the witness of God who redeems His people.

## ***The Mission of Humanity***

The message of the Bible is a message and a vision not only to Israel but to all of humanity. Isaiah speaks twice

of the Jews as a light to peoples and I have so far referred to his statement in the forty-ninth chapter. What else does he mean when he speaks of the Jews as a “covenant people and a light to nations?” The medieval commentator, David Kimhi, sees the light that comes forth as the light of the Torah that comes forth from Zion. Since the message of the Torah is peace, the light that comes forth conveys a message of the blessing of peace that ought reign throughout the world.<sup>35</sup> The messianic vision is: “And he shall speak peace to the nations.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, Isaiah notes that in those times “He will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.”<sup>37</sup>

It is a mistake to be like Jonah and to think that God is concerned only with the Jews. When Jonah is asked to go to Nineveh, a great gentile city, Jonah refuses God’s command to tell the people of Nineveh to repent. He only learns through suffering that God’s word is to the Ninevites as well. He finally goes there and the people of Nineveh call a fast. Great and small alike put on sackcloth, even the king. Not only did they fast for the Bible says that they “turned back from their evil ways.”<sup>38</sup>

Though one might have thought that Jonah would be thrilled by his success, he is bereft-and there are probably two reasons for this. First, he believed that sin should be punished and that God’s mercies should not take away that punishment. And second, who were the people of Nineveh? What right did they have to expect God’s intimate concern and forgiving love?

Jonah leaves the city and sits to its east, making a booth and sitting in its shade. And the Lord makes a gourd to grow above him, providing shade over his head. Jonah was so happy! Until God appointed a worm at dawn the next day who attacked the plant until it withered. And then God brought up a light east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah’s head until he fainted. And he wanted to die.

Then God says to Jonah, “Are you so deeply angry about the plant?... You care about the plant, which you did not work for and which you did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight. And should I not care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than twelve myriad persons who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well!”<sup>39</sup>

The God of the Bible is the God of the world. His visions are visions for all of humanity. His love is a love that extends to every creature.

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31. Is. 43:10.

32. Is. 45:23.

33. Is. 49:6.

34. Is. 40:4.

35. Rabbi David Kimhi, known as Radak (Provençal scholar of the late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries) in his comment on Isaiah 42:6.

36. Zech. 9:10.

37. Is. 2:3-4.

38. Jonah 3:10.

39. Jonah 4:9-11.

The suffering man of the Scriptures, Job, is not portrayed in any way as if he is a Jew.<sup>40</sup> Is it any wonder? The suffering of humanity is limited to no particular people. The covenant might make the issue particularly troublesome for Jews,<sup>41</sup> but all of us try to come to terms with the problem of the righteous who suffer. Job is a universal human being. God's call to him out of the whirlwind is God's call throughout the world to the righteous who try to understand the meaning of their fate.

The God who loved Abraham - "But you, Israel My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham the one I love"<sup>42</sup> - loves all people. For He is the Creator of the world. Adam and Eve were His first creations and they are created long before the first Jews. They are created in "the image of God," as are all of their children to eternity. Only the human creation is in the divine image.

God created the world with only one original being, the Talmud says, to teach that everyone who destroys a single soul, it is as if he had destroyed the whole world.<sup>43</sup> And everyone who saves a single soul, it is as if he had saved the whole world. And it teaches the concept of peace in the world, such that no one should say: my father is greater than your father.<sup>44</sup>

"Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel out of the land of Egypt? And the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir?"<sup>45</sup> All are God's people.

When Abraham raises the issue of divine justice and mercy with God, he argues on behalf of the people of Sodom, a wicked group. Abraham frames his challenge to God in terms of God acting justly.<sup>46</sup> The innocent should not suffer. And the challenge is not made as a result of any special relation that devolves from the covenant God has made with the Jews. Rather, the Bible assumes that there is a divine justice and mercy that prevail throughout the entire world. Mercy and justice reign because the God of Creation is the God of mercy and justice throughout the world.

When Amos asks that "justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream,"<sup>47</sup> it is because there is a God of the whole world who calls it to justice. When Isaiah rhetorically asks what the meaning of religious fasting is, he answers that God wishes human beings to "loose the chains of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring the poor, who are cast out, to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?"<sup>48</sup>

Judaism assumes that all people are obligated to observe a universal law. That law, spoken of as the Seven Noahide Commandments, is applicable to all human beings. These laws are: (1) the establishment of courts of justice so that law will rule in society, and the prohibitions of (2) blas-

phemy, (3) idolatry, (4) incest, (5) bloodshed, (6) robbery, and (7) eating the flesh of a living animal.<sup>49</sup>

The fact of the covenant notwithstanding, Maimonides and subsequent decisors all make it clear that "the pious of all the nations of the world have a place in the world to come."<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, in Judaism, the absolute value of human beings, their creation in the divine image, as well as God's overriding concern for justice and mercy is at the basis of a universal joint community of the created, a community called to respond to the love of God by loving other human beings, by setting up the structures of society that maximize the practice of justice and mercy and by engaging unendingly in the religious quest to bring healing to the broken world.

One of the central prayers of Judaism puts it this way: "We hope in you, Lord our God, to quickly see the beauty of Your might, to cause the idols to pass away from the earth and the false gods cut down, to perfect the world into the Kingdom of the Almighty, where all flesh will call upon your name, where all the wicked of the earth will be turned to you."

*L'taken olam b' malkhut Shaddai, to perfect the world into the Kingdom of the Almighty. Tikun ha-olam, perfection or repairing of the world, is a joint task of the Jews and all humanity. Though Jews see themselves as living in a world that is as yet unredeemed, God wills His creatures to participate in the world's repair.*

### Christians and Jews

Having examined the three-fold notion of "mission" in classical Judaism, there are certain practical conclusions that follow from it, conclusions that also suggest a joint agenda for Christians and Jews.

It should be obvious that any mission of Christians to the Jews is in direct conflict with the Jewish notion that

40. See BT (Babylonia Talmud) Baba Batra 15b.

41. See, for example, the extraordinary struggle of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira to make sense of this in Nehemia Polen, *The Holy Fire* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1994).

42. Is. 41:8.

43. Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin 4:22a. Variants in the Babylonian Talmud read: "Everyone who destroys a single soul of Israel..." The inclusion of "Israel" is not polemical or exclusive. The phrase means, as the Jerusalem Talmud makes clear, "people."

44. BT Sanhedrin 37a.

45. Amos 9:7.

46. Gen. 18:24-25.

47. Amos 5:24.

48. Is. 58:6-8.

49. BT Sanhedrin 56; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings, Chs. 9 and 10*. According to R. David Kimhi this is a further implication of the light that the Jews will bring to the nations: that the nations will learn the seven commandments and will come to abide by them. See his commentary to Isaiah 42:6.

50. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah (Code of Jewish Law), Laws of Repentance 3:5*. Also *Laws of Kings, 8:11*. This is based on the Talmud, BT Sanhedrin 105a. In that chapter, Balaam is noted as a king (obviously a gentile king) who will not be rewarded with life in the world to come. His lack of righteousness is emphasized. It follows therefore that those who are righteous will have a place in that eternal abode.

the covenant itself is that mission. At the same time, it is important to stress that notwithstanding the covenant, there is no need for the nations of the world to embrace Judaism. While there are theological verities such as the belief in God's unity, and practical social virtues that lead to the creation of a good society that are possible and necessary for humanity at large to grasp, they do not require Judaism in order to redeem the individual or society. *The pious of all the nations of the world have a place in the world to come.*

Just as important, however, is the idea that the world needs perfection. While Christians and Jews understand the messianic hope involved in that perfection quite differently, still, whether we are waiting for the messiah-as Jews believe-or for the messiah's second coming-as Christians believe-we share the belief that we live in an unredeemed world that longs for repair.

Why not articulate a common agenda? Why not join together our spiritual forces to state and to act upon the values we share in common and that lead to repair of the unredeemed world? We have worked together in the past in advancing the cause of social justice. We have marched together for civil rights; we have championed the cause of labor and farm workers; we have petitioned our government to address the needs of the poor and homeless; and we have called on our country's leader to seek nuclear disarmament. These are but a few of the issues we Jews and Christians have addressed in concert with each other.

To hint at what we might yet do together let us look at some of the concrete ways that classical Judaism takes theological ideas and transforms them into ways of living. And, if these be stones in a pavement on which we might together walk, then we will be able to fashion a highway that is a route we share in common toward humanity's repair and the world's perfection.

### ***Some Talmudic Thoughts About Repairing the World***

Though the prophetic concern for the needy is well known, it should be stressed that it is in the Talmud that the specifics of doing good are laid out in such a way that they become the cornerstones of life.

*Tzedakah* (charity) and deeds of kindness are weighed in the balance as equal to all the commandments of the Torah. The obligation of charity is directed at the poor and deeds of kindness are directed at the poor and the rich. Charity is directed at the living and deeds of kindness are rendered to the living and to the dead. Charity utilizes one's money while deeds of kindness utilize one's money and one's self.<sup>51</sup>

Already in Talmudic times, charitable institutions to care for the poor were an established and essential part of the community's life. When, for example, the Mishnah teaches that a Jew must celebrate the Passover seder with four

cups of wine,<sup>52</sup> it notes that the public dole (*tamhui*) must provide that wine for the poor. The poor must celebrate and feel the dignity of being free people-and that is the responsibility of the community.<sup>53</sup> Yet as much as charitable institutions are a central part of the community's life, Maimonides makes it clear that the highest form of charity is to make it possible for someone to earn a living himself.<sup>54</sup>

The large section of the Talmud that deals with civil and criminal law, *Nezikin* or Damages, specifies and protects workers' compensation.<sup>55</sup> It gives concrete form to the Torah's prohibitions against interest<sup>56</sup> and extends the laws prohibiting interest to include many types of financial transactions that appear to be interest, even when they are not. All this is done in order to create an economy where people are encouraged to help each other financially as an expression of their common fellowship, rather than as a way of making money. Financial instruments are created that enable people without funds to become partners with others rather than borrowers-another way of protecting human dignity and encouraging the development of a society where this dignity is manifested in everyday life.<sup>57</sup>

Acts of kindness that are required and developed in detail by the law include the obligations to visit the sick and to comfort mourners. Jews are required to redeem captives and to provide for brides, to bury the dead and to welcome people to their tables.<sup>58</sup> The Talmud details the obligation of Jews to show deference to the old. "Standing up" and showing special signs of respect to the old are responses to the physical problems of aging.<sup>59</sup> As a person's own sense of dignity diminishes, the community is asked to reinforce the individual's dignity.<sup>60</sup>

Of course Jewish law is directed at Jews and its primary concern is to encourage the expression of love to the members of the community. It deals not in sentiments but, principally, in actions. But it is important to note that many of these actions are mandatory toward all people. Thus the Talmud says: "One must provide for the needs of the gentile poor with the Jewish poor. One must visit the gentile sick as one visits the Jewish sick. One must care for the burial of a gentile, just as one must care for the burial of a Jew. [These obligations are universal] because these are the ways of peace."<sup>61</sup>

The Torah's ways of peace manifest a practical response

51. Jerusalem Talmud, Peah 1:1.

52. To remember the four verbs of God's deliverance in Exodus 6:6-7.

53. Mishnah Pesahim 10:1.

54. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Gifts to the Poor," 10:6.

55. BT Bava Metzia, Ch. 7.

56. Exodus 22:24, Leviticus 25:6, Deuteronomy 23:20 and 23:21.

57. BT Bava Metzia, Ch. 5.

58. BT Shabbat 127a.

59. Leviticus 19:32. The Talmud develops these idea particularly in BT Kiddushin 32b-33a.

60. See Harlan J. Wechsler, *Old is Good*.

61. BT Gittin 61a.

to the sacred creation of humanity in the divine image. They help perfect the world into the Kingdom of the Almighty.

Does not humanity need a common path that seeks the ways of peace? Does not humanity need a common vision of the sacred nature of our human existence that we can teach our children and that we can foster in our communities in order to further the ways of peace? Does not humanity need a commitment of its religious leadership, within each faith and beyond each faith, to join hands and to create bonds that will inspire and guide humanity to reach toward its sacred promise? For Jews and Christians who heard the call of God to be a blessing and a light to the world, the challenge and mission are clear.

Nothing less should be our challenge—and that is the true meaning of the mission which we all need to share.

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*Editor's notes:*

1. *This document was taken from the Communications web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The web address of this document is:*

*[http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2002/02-](http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2002/02-154.htm#reflections)*

*154.htm#reflections*

2. *The following editorial changes were made while incorporating the document into "The Hebrew Catholic":*

*a. The "Endnotes" were changed to "footnotes" and included on the pages where they were referenced.*

*b. Text that was indented in the original document, representing quotations, was additionally italicized here.*

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***America's Bishops ... Continued from page 31***

of Jews who converted absolute assimilation, and began to treat "backsliding" as a form of heresy. The most infamous examples of this occurred during the Inquisition in Spain — which popes of the day condemned but were unable to control. Repeated statements by popes and theologians — not infallible, but highly influential statements — suggested that the survival of the Jews as a separate entity was a rebuke to Christianity, that their purpose had been served 2000 years before, and they ought simply to convert and disappear into the mass of the New Israel, assimilating without a trace.

Now we have begun to understand that this is not true, that a deeper, more beautiful mystery marks the destiny of Jews and Christians as forever intertwined in God's love and Western history. ...

## **Reflections' Represent Present State of Dialogue, Cardinal Says**

WASHINGTON (August 16, 2002) — Cardinal William H. Keeler of Baltimore said today that a document made public August 12 represents the state of thought among the participants of a dialogue that has been going on for a number of years between the U.S. Catholic Church and the Jewish community in this country.

Cardinal Keeler, the U.S. Bishops' Moderator for Catholic-Jewish relations, said that the document, entitled *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*, does not represent a formal position taken by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) or the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA). The purpose of publicly issuing the considerations which it contains is to encourage serious reflection on these matters by Jews and Catholics in the U.S.

These considerations provide a basis for discussing both the similarities and the significant differences between the Christian and Jewish understandings of the call given by the one God to both peoples.

Cardinal Keeler said that, within the Catholic community, there has been a growing respect for the Jewish tradition and the lasting covenant which God made with them. Judaism is "already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant" (Catechism of the Catholic Church #839), a response to God's grace that requires religious freedom and respect for the faith relationship between God and the human person. This same respect for the freedom of faith requires us to be open at the same time to the action of God's grace to bring any person to accept what Catholic belief understands as the fullness of the means of salvation which are found in the Church.

Participants in the ongoing consultation are delegates of the BCEIA of the USCCB and the National Council of Synagogues (NCS) which represents the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Rabbinical Assembly of Conservative Judaism, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

The *Reflections* derive from a meeting which the BCEIA-NCS Consultation held in New York last March.

August 19, 2002

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*Ed. This additional comment by Cardinal Keeler was taken from the USCCB Communication web site at*

*<http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2002/02-161.htm>*

# AHC Calendar

Ed. Until we are again able to produce an annual calendar, we are happy to present an abbreviated calendar. Optional and Eastern Rite memorials are not included.

<sup>R</sup> From Roman Martyrology  
<sup>L</sup> From Proper, Latin Patriarch, Jerusalem  
 † Sabbath Candle Lighting ● Rosh Chodesh (new moon)  
 † Holy Day μ Abstinence f Fast [...] AHC date

## November 2002

## 5763 Heshvan

1 †	<b>All Saints Day</b>	‡‡ 26
2	All Souls Day	27
3 †	<b>Sunday - 31st of Ordinary Time</b>	28
4	St. Charles Borromeo	29
5	<sup>R</sup> Zachary & Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist ● 30	
<b>Kislev</b>		
6	● 1	
8	‡‡ 3	
9	Dedication of St. John Lateran	4
10 †	<b>Sunday - 32nd of Ordinary Time</b>	5
	[Hermann Cohen, born 1821]	
11	St. Martin of Tours	6
12	St. Josaphat	7
13	St. Francis Xavier Cabrini	8
15	‡‡ 10	
17 †	<b>Sunday - 33rd of Ordinary Time</b>	12
21	Presentation of the Virgin Mary	16
22	St. Cecilia	‡‡ 17
24 †	<b>Sunday - Our Lord Jesus Christ the King</b>	19
29	Erev <u>Hanukah</u> – 1st candle	‡‡ 24
30	St. Andrew, apostle	25
	<u>Hanukah</u> – 2nd candle	

## December

1 †	<b>Sunday - 1st of Advent</b>	26
	<u>Hanukah</u> – 3rd candle, <sup>R</sup> Nahun, prophet	
2	<u>Hanukah</u> – 4th candle	27
3	St. Francis Xavier	28
	<u>Hanukah</u> – 5th candle, <sup>R</sup> Zephaniah, prophet	
4	<u>Hanukah</u> – 6th candle	29
5	<u>Hanukah</u> – 7th candle	● 30
<b>Tevet</b>		
6	<u>Hanukah</u> – 8th candle	‡‡ 1
7	St. Ambrose	2
8 †	<b>Sunday – 2nd of Advent</b>	3
9 †	<b>Immaculate Conception</b>	4
12	Our Lady of Guadalupe	7
13	St. Lucy	‡‡ 8
15	<b>Sunday – 3rd of Advent</b>	10
16	<sup>L</sup> King David & all the holy ancestors of our Lord	11
20	‡‡ 15	
22	<b>Sunday – 4th of Advent</b>	17
25	<b>Christmas</b>	20
26	St. Stephen, protomartyr	21
	2nd day, Octave of Christmas	
27	St. John, evangelist	‡‡ 22
	3rd day, Octave of Christmas	
28	Holy Innocents	23
	4th day, Octave of Christmas	
29 †	<b>Sunday – Holy Family</b>	24

30	6th day, Octave of Christmas	25
31	7th day, Octave of Christmas	26

## January 2003

1 †	<b>Mary, Mother of God</b>	27
	New Years	
2	Ss. Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen	28
3	‡‡ 29	
<b>Shevat</b>		
4	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (US)	● 1
5 †	<b>Sunday – Epiphany (US)</b>	2
6	<b>Epiphany</b>	3
10	‡‡ 7	
12 †	<b>Sunday - Baptism of the Lord</b>	9
14	<sup>R</sup> Malachy, prophet	11
15	<sup>R</sup> Habakkuk and Micah, prophets	12
17	St. Anthony	‡‡ 14
19 †	<b>Sunday – 2nd in Ordinary Time</b>	16
20	[Mary converts Alphonse Ratisbonne]	17
21	St. Agnes	18
24	St. Francis de Sales	‡‡ 21
25	Conversion of St. Paul, apostle	22
26 †	<b>Sunday – 3rd in Ordinary Time</b>	23
28	St. Thomas Aquinas	25
31	St. John Bosco	‡‡ 28

## February

2 †	<b>Sunday – Presentation of the Lord</b>	● 30
<b>Adar I</b>		
3	<sup>R</sup> Simeon and Anna, prophetess	● 1
5	St. Agatha	3
6	St. Paul Miki & companions	4
7	‡‡ 5	
9 †	<b>Sunday – 5th of Ordinary Time</b>	7
10	St. Scholastica	8
14	Ss. Cyril and Methodius	‡‡ 12
16 †	<b>Sunday – 6th of Ordinary Time</b>	14
18	<sup>R</sup> Simeon, son of Cleophas, 2nd bishop of Jerusalem	16
21	‡‡ 19	
22	Chair of St. Peter, apostle	20
23 †	<b>Sunday – 7th of Ordinary Time</b>	21
28	‡‡ 26	

## March

2 †	<b>Sunday – 8th of Ordinary Time</b>	28
4	● 30	
<b>Adar II</b>		
	<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	● 1
7 μ	Ss. Perpetua and Felicity	‡‡ 3
9 †	<b>Sunday – 1st of Lent</b>	5
11	[Elias Friedman, OCD, born 1916]	7