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Vatican II's Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) transformed the Catholic view of the Jewish people and the Jewish religious tradition. Asserting that the Church discovers her link to the "stock of Abraham" when "searching her own mystery," *Nostra Aetate* intimated that the mystery of Israel is inseparable from the mystery of the Church. As interlocking mysteries, each community requires the other in order to understand itself.

In *Searching Her Own Mystery*, noted Messianic Jewish theologian Mark S. Kinzer argues that the Church has yet to explore adequately the implications of *Nostra Aetate* for Christian self-understanding. The new Catholic teaching concerning Israel should produce fresh perspectives on the entire range of Christian theology, including Christology, ecclesiology, and the theology of the sacraments. To this end, Kinzer proposes an Israel-ecclesiology rooted in Israel-Christology in which a restored *ecclesia ex circumcisione*—the "church from the circumcision"—assumes a crucial role as a sacramental sign of the Church's bond with the Jewish people and genealogical-Israel's irrevocable election.

Searching Her Own MYSTERY

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

MARK S. KINZER

Foreword by **Christoph Cardinal Schönborn**

"The implications of *Nostra Aetate* lay dormant for a decade or so until the Pontificate of John Paul II. Since then, Catholic thinkers have begun to probe more deeply how the mystery of Israel is related to that of the Church. Mark Kinzer has thought long and hard about these issues and the reader will be the beneficiary of his learning on this important issue."

—**Gary A. Anderson**, Hesburgh Professor of Catholic Theology, University of Notre Dame, Indiana

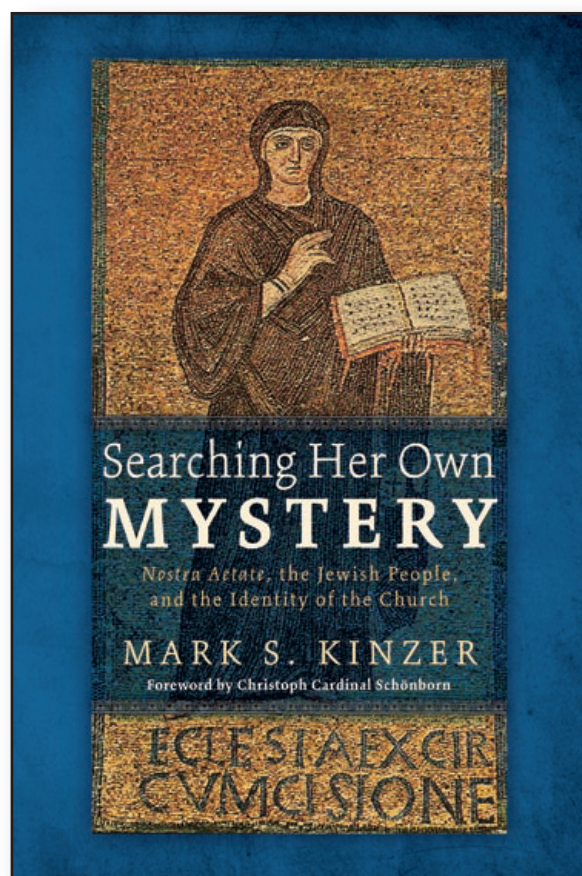
"This is another beautifully written and powerful theological work from leading Messianic Jewish theologian Mark Kinzer. Kinzer, who is not a Catholic but whose life has been marked by rich dialogue with Catholics, urges the Catholic Church to open up explicitly Jewish ecclesial environments for Torah-observant Messianic Jews within the Catholic Church. While I differ from him in significant ways, I agree with him that Catholics must attend ever more deeply to the implications of God's covenantal election of the Jewish people and to the enduring spiritual value, in God's plan, of the Jewish people's observance of the Torah."

—**Matthew Levering**

Perry Family Foundation Professor of Theology, Mundelein Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois

"Mark Kinzer has written a deeply thought-provoking and significant book on furthering the communion between Messianic Jews and the Catholic Church. He presents clearly and creatively his scriptural and theological arguments, and the interweaving of his personal pilgrimage to faith in Jesus. His subsequent journey in that faith adds poignancy and eloquence to his theological project. The theological academy, and especially the Catholic scholars within it, ought seriously to engage this book, and Catholic bishops ought to read it with a sympathetic eye and a discerning spirit."

—**Thomas G. Weinandy**, Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D.C.



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Christoph Cardinal Schönborn



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SEARCHING HER OWN MYSTERY

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Foreword

It is a pleasure for me to introduce this important book by Mark Kinzer. I have known Mark for several years, during which time I have led a Catholic team in a dialogue group with Messianic Jews. Mark has been a member of this group since its inception in September 2000 when it was assembled by Fr. (and later Cardinal) Georges Cottier, O.P., Theologian of the Pontifical Household under Pope John Paul II. Fr. Cottier took this initiative with the encouragement of both the pope under whom he served and his successor, Benedict XVI. Pope John Paul II, Fr. Cottier, and Cardinal Ratzinger had all met with Messianic Jews in the years of preparation for the pope's act of repentance during his 2000 trip to Israel, and the convening of the dialogue group came within the context of that act.¹

The group has met annually since its beginning, rotating its location between Jerusalem and Rome (with obvious symbolic import). Over the years the members of this group have come to know and understand one another, and to see each other as fellow believers in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, the Son of God and Savior of the world. Strong bonds of unity and friendship have developed among us.

Through my experience in the dialogue group I have come to recognize Mark Kinzer as a major theologian whose work deserves serious attention in the Catholic world. I have been particularly struck by Mark's mastery of Catholic theology, which is evident in the current volume. When I first heard Mark speak of his past life, I realized that he had come to this knowledge of Catholicism through personal experience, for he had lived many years as a member of an ecumenical but predominantly Catholic charismatic community, "The Word of God," in Ann Arbor, Michigan.²

Mark's theological stature was confirmed for me when I discovered the high regard in which he is held by many in the United States, not only

1. For more details on this group and the events leading up to its inception from the perspective of Mark Kinzer, see chapter 2, pages 35–37.

2. Mark provides a vivid description of this community and its impact on his life in chapter 2, pages 29–32.

FOREWORD

among his Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters but also among Christian theologians. Along with Professor William Abraham of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Mark has organized and led colloquia that have brought together leading Messianic Jewish scholars and a panel of theologians from various Christian Churches.³ He has been able to assume this role because of the respect shown him by many promising young Messianic Jewish theologians and also by his peers, teachers of Christian theology who seek fidelity to Christ in the midst of an increasingly relativistic culture.⁴

Mark Kinzer became known in the United States through his outstanding books in the field of Messianic Jewish theology. The first is *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People*, published in 2005. This was followed in 2011 by *Israel's Messiah and the People of God: A Vision for Messianic Jewish Covenant Fidelity*. These volumes have for the first time brought the distinctive voice of Messianic Judaism into discussions concerning the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people. The current volume, which contains much material that was first presented in our dialogue group, continues what Mark began in his earlier books.

Mark is not only a first-rate scholar—he is also a man of action. In addition to the meetings he has organized and led in Dallas with Professor William Abraham, Mark co-founded and co-leads (with Fr. Antoine Levy, O.P.) the Helsinki Consultation on Jewish Continuity in the Body of Christ. This initiative brings together Jews who believe in Jesus, whether from the Messianic Jewish movement or from various Church backgrounds. Meetings have taken place in various cities of Europe, including Helsinki, Paris, Berlin, Oslo, and Ede (in the Netherlands).⁵ Mark has also been instrumental in the founding of several notable institutions within the Messianic Jewish world, such as Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, the Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council, the Hashivenu Theological Forum, and Congregation Zera Avraham (Ann Arbor, Michigan).

3. The Christian theologians present have included Catholic scholars such as Bruce Marshall, Fr. Thomas Weinandy, and Fr. Jean-Miguel Garrigues, O.P. Fr. Garrigues has also been a member of the Catholic–Messianic Jewish Dialogue Group from its beginning in 2000. Among the Protestant scholars in attendance have been William Abraham, Kendall Soulen, Gerald McDermott, Fred Aquino, Kurt Anders Richardson, Donald Dayton, and Tommy Givens.

4. The group of young Messianic Jewish scholars includes David Rudolph, who with Joel Willitts has edited the remarkable volume *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*. The group also involves Jennifer Rosner, Jonathan Kaplan, and Akiva Cohen, along with veteran Messianic Jewish scholar Carl Kinbar.

5. For more on the Helsinki Consultation, see chapter 9, pages 182–83, and Appendix 2.

FOREWORD

As the reader will discover in this book, the theological reflections of Mark Kinzer focus upon and are set within the mysterious common reality that brings Judaism and Christianity into a spiritual unity more profound than the diversity of their religious institutions. It can be said that Mark's thinking brings to light the implications of the crucial statement of Pope John Paul II at the synagogue of Rome in 1987: "Your religion is not extrinsic to ours, but is intrinsic to it." Kinzer attempts to think through, in-depth and without syncretism, the meaning of the reciprocal immanence of Israel—the non-rejected People of God—in the Church, and of Messiah Jesus in Judaism. That is what he intends in all his writings, and what he seeks to convey through his concept of "bilateral ecclesiology." This concept presents Messianic Jews as that part of Israel that now houses Jesus as Messiah, Son of God and Savior of the world, just as the apostles and the Jerusalem community of Jewish believers in Jesus welcomed him at the beginning: from inside the people and tradition of Israel. Kinzer's work also draws upon and is paralleled by the writings of contemporary mainstream Jewish thinkers who examine the Jewish roots of faith in Jesus, even to the point of discovering those roots in such doctrines as the Incarnation and the Trinity.⁶

To those within the Christian Churches, and especially to Catholics, Mark Kinzer speaks with respect and appreciation. He tells us that he, a Messianic Jewish rabbi and theologian, is open to receiving the treasures of grace and wisdom deposited by the apostles and developed in the tradition of the Church, provided that we in turn are ready to start breathing with our "two lungs." Pope John Paul II employed this expression to refer to the Christian traditions of East and West. Kinzer uses it to speak of the more original and fundamental ecclesial duality in the one Body of Christ: that between Jews and gentiles. Will we hear the essential question he raises, he and the movement of Messianic Jews in whose name he speaks?

Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, Austria

6. See, for example, Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels and Border Lines*, and Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the members of the Roman Catholic–Messianic Jewish Dialogue Group, past and present, who together have provided such a fertile environment for the ideas in this book to germinate. Among them, I am especially grateful to Christoph Cardinal Schönborn for contributing such a gracious foreword; to Fr. Peter Hocken, Richard Harvey, and David Rudolph, who gave many helpful suggestions for improving the content; and to Fr. Jean-Miguel Garrigues, who first planted in my mind the thought of writing such a volume. Fr. Jean-Miguel has enriched my life not only with his profound learning and wisdom, but also with his friendship, and for this I dedicate the volume to him. I also dedicate the volume to Stephen B. Clark, whose significant role in my own story I describe in chapter 2. I would never have embarked on this strange path as a Messianic Jew in continual interaction with Catholics if Steve had not taken an interest in me when I was still in my teens. Steve also read an early version of this book, and offered much useful advice. In addition, I thank Daniel Keating, Gerald McDermott, Miklos Vetö, and John Yocum for their perceptive comments on the manuscript, which aided me greatly in the writing process. I am ever grateful for my longtime friends, Fr. Prentice Tipton, Fr. Daniel Jones, and John Keating, who have encouraged me to think that Catholics might be receptive to what I have to share. Last but not least, I acknowledge the patience and support of Roz and Helen, wife and mother-in-law, who stand by me in all my exotic endeavors. For all the above, mentors, colleagues, friends, and family, I never cease to give thanks to the Holy Blessed One who is the ultimate source of every good gift.

1

The Ecclesiological Challenge of *Nostra Aetate*

A Theological Revolution

Two Popes and Four Propositions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Norris, “The Jewish People,” 259.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

211–19.

11. Ibid., 218. Emphasis added.

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. Ibid., 4.

14. Ibid., 63.

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

16. Neuhaus, “Salvation,” 73.

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

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

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

The "Spiritual Bond" Linking the Two Communities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18. Ibid., 126.

19. Ibid., 126–27. Emphasis added.

Israel-Ecclesiology and Israel-Christology

Nostra Aetate and Catholic Theology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israel-Ecclesiology and its Christological Foundation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21. Kasper, “Foreword,” xiii.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cardinal Lustiger and Israel-Christology

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

25. Henrix, "Son of God," 137–38.

26. *Ibid.*, 134–37.

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

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

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

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

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

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

27. Ibid., 116–17.

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

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

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

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

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

29. *Ibid.*, 64.

30. *Ibid.*, 28.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

32. Lustiger, *Promise*, 50.

33. *Ibid.*, 85.

34. *Ibid.*, 93.

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

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

Israel-Ecclesiology and the *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*

Nostra Aetate and Jewish Disciples of Jesus

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

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

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

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

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

36. *Ibid.*, 11.

37. *Ibid.*, 10.

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

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

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

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

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

Recovering the *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

42. Ibid., 242.

43. Ibid., 243.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

46. Lustiger, *Promise*, 7.

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

48. Lustiger, *Promise*, 126.

Mapping the Road Ahead

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

50. Torrance, *Mediation*, 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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