

The Catholic Church and the Mystery of Israel: The State of the Question⁽¹⁾

Volume 11, Number 1 (Winter/Spring 2004): 14-25.

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It is when "pondering her own mystery," the assembled Fathers of the Second Vatican Council declared, that the Church encounters the mystery of Israel.⁽²⁾ The "Introductory Note" published with the 1974 Vatican guidelines for implementing *Nostra Aetate* state that the latter document "does not propose a Christian theology of Judaism." It further cites the need for "considerable study" of the profound questions raised by contemplation of these mysteries of the faith based upon "a better knowledge on the part of Christians of the essence of the religious tradition of Judaism and of the manner in which the Jews identify themselves."⁽³⁾ It is now almost a half century since the Council re-directed the Church's attention to one of its oldest problems, five decades in which the Church on all levels, from parishes and institutions of higher learning to national bishops' conferences and various dicasteries of the Holy See, have pondered the mysteries of the faith highlighted for reflection by the Council, both in dialogue with Jewish representatives and in internal discussion among Catholic theologians. As one who has been privileged for over half of that period to be deeply involved in these dialogues and discussions, I would like to present my sense of where our dialogical and internal Catholic "pondering" has led us thus far.

I will do this by reflecting primarily on two documents and the reactions to them especially among Catholics. The first is a report of the work of the Pontifical Biblical Commission to its parent body, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which came out in French and Italian toward the end of 2001 and in English in April of 2002. It is entitled, provocatively enough, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*.⁽⁴⁾ The second document is also a report, this time of a joint group of Catholic and Jewish theologians delegated by the National Council of Synagogues and the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Much shorter in length, its title is also, fittingly, more modest and less provocative, *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*.⁽⁵⁾ This latter text has so far occasioned far more comment in the media, both secular and Catholic, than the former. Perhaps this is because it is simply a statement of a group of Catholics delegated to a particular dialogue, albeit by the appropriate committee of the U.S. bishops, and thus does not have magisterial status, while *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures* is a report of a Commission of the Holy See to its Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, not having in itself full magisterial status, either, but certainly a document that must be taken with great seriousness by Catholic theologians and teachers on all levels.⁽⁶⁾

While there were immediate positive reactions, negative reactions to *Reflections* were also quick to come, many even before the reactors had read the statement itself. One such, by the Rev. John Echert, a professor at St. Thomas University in Minnesota, rather imprudently in my humble opinion, predicted that the document might be a "sign" that the "final apostasy" was at hand.⁽⁷⁾ Indeed, so strident were some of these Web site responses that one must conjecture whether the Church, which ponders best over long periods of time and through meditative discernment, is well

served by taking such virtual and virtually instantaneous responses seriously when it comes to matters that touch on the doctrine of the faith and the divine mysteries themselves, as do these two documents, both of which took some years to produce by teams of competent Catholic theologians working together.

Positive reflections on the text have come a bit more slowly, and because of that have been able to take into account -- if not also attempt to adjudicate -- the debate surrounding the original statement of the dialogue team. In addition to Cardinal William Keeler's initial welcome and subsequent clarification of the status of the document in August 2002,⁽⁸⁾ Cardinal Walter Kasper of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews described the statement as a substantive contribution and as an "invitation and a challenge" to further theological work by Catholic theologians.⁽⁹⁾

A serious critique came in October 2002 with the article by Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., in *America*.⁽¹⁰⁾ Cardinal Dulles raised questions about the consistency of the use of terms such as "evangelization" in the text, saying that its authors "propose an extremely broad definition, seeming to make evangelization synonymous with service to the kingdom of God through liberation in any form."⁽¹¹⁾ Cardinal Dulles pointed out that such a broad definition is "difficult to reconcile" with such papal teachings as Paul VI's 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.⁽¹²⁾ He is, of course, correct; but, as the respectful response in the same issue of *America* pointed out, there are "multiple layers of meaning of evangelization" in various statements of the Holy See since the Second Vatican Council that leave the term "vulnerable to inconsistent usage."⁽¹³⁾ Indeed, the Holy See itself has recognized the need to reconcile its varying usages. In 1991 no fewer than three dicasteries (the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and, though it was not a signatory, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) issued a remarkable document attempting the necessary reconciliation. The U.S. statement, *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*, attempted to use the terminology worked out in that 1991 Vatican document as the basis for its own usage.

I will not attempt here to judge how successful *Reflections* was in applying to the context of the Holy See's specific dialogue with Jews terminology developed by the Holy See in its grappling with the set of theological issues arising from interreligious relations in general. One would have to say, judging from responses such as that of Cardinal Dulles, that they were not completely successful. I would emphasize at this point that the attempt made by the dialogue team was clearly and thoroughly faithful to Catholic tradition both in its intent and in its methodology. Furthermore, to the extent that *Reflections* represents a faithful if not entirely successful attempt to grapple with definitional issues currently unresolved in official teaching even on the highest level, the fact that it has occasioned the interest and involvement of Catholic systematic theologians such as Cardinal Dulles and others is itself a contribution to necessary further discussion in Catholic theological faculties and seminaries.⁽¹⁴⁾ With reference to the debate over *Reflections*, Cardinal Kasper, too, noted that its contribution needs to be seen as part of a longer, still unresolved reflection that goes to the heart of the Mystery of the Church itself, and that very much needs the sustained involvement of the best of our systematic theologians and biblical scholars:

As I see things, a convincing solution is not yet in sight and the discussion must continue. Thus, I take this document for what it sets itself out to be, and that is, an invitation and a challenge for further discussion.... What we can do, and what the US

Bishops' Committee rightly did in order to avoid misunderstanding, is to substitute a term (for the word, 'mission') which had due to many reasons become misleading, with other terms such as evangelisation or witness. But even when we avoid an historically incriminated terminology and seek a less misleading wording and even when we reject former attitudes, when we recognize and actively promote religious freedom, the thorny problem will not be resolved. For it is not simply a question of wrong attitudes in the past coupled with a misleading terminology. The problem goes much deeper and is much more fundamental: it leads us to the very core of our respective religious convictions and to the very heart of our religious identities.(15)

Finally, on the issue of theological terminology so cogently raised by Cardinals Dulles and Kasper, I would offer the comment that perhaps the problem lies in the attempt to apply general theological terminology and analysis to the very specific Mystery of Israel with which the dialogue team was grappling. When viewed from the perspective of the Mystery of Salvation, the Mystery of Israel (God's chosen people) simply does not and cannot fall under any other category than its own. By God's choice, Israel is a *unicum* of the faith that deserves and theologically requires respectful consideration on its own and not as part of the "larger" category of interreligious relations. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, citing both *Nostra Aetate* no. 4 and *Lumen Gentium* no. 16, places Judaism at the beginning of the general category, "those who have not yet received the gospel," but then immediately strains the category itself by emphasizing the uniqueness of the relationship of the Church with the Jewish people:

When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God of 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 from them, according to the flesh, is the Christ' ... 'for the gifts and call of God are irrevocable' (Romans 9:4-5; 11:29).(16)

It is of interest to note that the term used by the Council and the *Catechism* to translate the text of Romans, "belong," is in the present not the past tense. Prior to the Council, it had become the practice in many translations of the Bible to translate Romans 9:4-5 in the past tense, as even the 1970 version of the New American Bible did, an error corrected in the most recent, 1990 edition.(17)

It is equally of interest to note the *Catechism's* citation of the only prayer for the Jews in the official liturgy of the Church, the Good Friday prayer.(18) Prior to the Council -- even though Pope John XXIII, concluding considerations begun under the pontificate of Pius XII, suppressed the ancient term "perfidious" -- the Good Friday intercession was unabashedly a prayer "for the conversion of the Jews" to Christianity. By quite conscious decision, the liturgists who worked on the reform of the Liturgy in the light of the Council radically changed its wording and intent. It now reads:

Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they many 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.

As I have argued elsewhere,⁽¹⁹⁾ since this is the only prayer of the Church for the Jews in the Catholic liturgy, and since it went through such a profound change of character in the light of Conciliar teaching, its doctrinal significance is not inconsequential. *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*. The Church's hope and prayer for the Jews is now placed quite properly in eschatological terms, as Cardinal Kasper and the Catechism immediately go on to consider, I think not coincidentally. First, the *Catechism*:

[W]hen one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah whose features remain hidden till the end of time.⁽²⁰⁾

Cardinal Kasper writes:

What we have in common is above all what Jews call the Hebrew Bible and we the Old Testament. We have in common our common father in faith Abraham, and Moses and the Ten Commandments, the Patriarchs and Prophets, the covenant and the promises of the one and unique God, and the messianic hope. Because we have all this in common and because as Christians we know that God's covenant with Israel by God's faithfulness is not broken (Rom 11,29; cf. 3,4), mission understood as call to conversion from idolatry to the living and true God (1 Thes 1,9) does not apply and cannot be applied to Jews. They confess the living true God, who gave and gives them support, hope, confidence and strength in many difficult situations of their history. There cannot be the same kind of behaviour towards Jews as there exists towards Gentiles. This is not a merely abstract theological affirmation, but an affirmation that has concrete and tangible consequences such as the fact that there is no organised Catholic missionary activity towards Jews as is for all other non-Christian religions.

But having said and confirmed all this we cannot stop, because we have considered only one half of the problem. And on this point the issues raised in the above mentioned document -- as I see it -- should be developed and amplified. The approach to be taken to this becomes clear when we reflect on our differences, immediately evident from the different names we give to our common heritage -- Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. This difference in terminology denotes that we have a different reading of what we have in common. Paradoxically we could say: we differ on what we have in common. The recent document of the Biblical Pontifical Commission entitled *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001) signed by Cardinal Ratzinger, shows for me very convincingly that in a mere historical perspective and interpreted with mere historical methods both readings and both interpretations, the Jewish rabbinical and the Christian one, are possible and legitimate. What reading we choose depends on what faith we have chosen.⁽²¹⁾

This reference by Cardinal Kasper brings us to the second of the two recent documents that I wished to raise for consideration. The Pontifical Biblical Commission's 2001 report -- which was, it might be added, initiated at the request of Pope John Paul II -- concluded that on the basis of the Church's understanding of the ongoing role of the Jewish people in the one Mystery of Salvation, the rabbinical interpretation of Scripture must be understood by Christians to have validity in its own right. Jewish interpretations of "their" Scriptures, while by no means invalidating Christian interpretations, even where these differ or are seemingly in conflict by the light of reason alone are, when viewed in the light of faith "analogous" or "parallel" to Christian readings, and so they deserve respect and consideration by us, even as we insist on the truth of our own claim to valid interpretation of the same sacred texts. This is of course a radically different view from the "either/or" approach taken by, for example, those who organized the medieval disputations; but I believe it will ultimately be seen to be the more "Catholic" view since it derives from an awareness that in matters of faith we are ultimately dealing not with simple human truths but with divine revelation, whose meaning often transcends what can be derived from the senses and organized into neat categories by human logic. While the theological disciplines of the Church over the centuries have and continue to guide us ever more deeply into the sacred mysteries of our faith, we Catholics humbly acknowledge that ours is a continuing pilgrimage toward eternal truths revealed to us that we glimpse and tentatively, but never quite completely, grasp in their full, divine reality. The Mystery of Israel, ultimately, is, I believe, very much in this category, since it touches the ultimately inscrutable Mystery of the Divine Will itself. As Cardinal Kasper concluded:

Only at the end of time shall the historically indissoluble relation between Israel and the church find a solution. Until then though they may not be united in one another's arms, neither should they turn their backs to each other. They should stand shoulder to shoulder as partners, and -- in a world where the glimmer of hope has grown faint -- together they must strive to radiate the light of hope without which no human being and no people can live. Young people especially need this common witness to the hope of peace in justice and solidarity. [\(22\)](#)

Similarly, with reference to the shared Messianic vision and witness of Jews and Christians, the Pontifical Biblical Commission states that while Jewish understanding of the Messiah may differ from that of the Church, Jewish expectation and hope "is not in vain. It can become for us Christians a powerful stimulant to keep alive the eschatological dimension of our faith." [\(23\)](#) I believe that this is a reference to the "not yet" aspect of our own eschatological proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom in Christ's first coming. The Biblical Commission's document itself contains a long and fruitful reflection on the "continuity, discontinuity, and progression" [\(24\)](#) inherent in the proclamation of the "fulfillment" of the biblical promises in Christ. An ancient and continuing temptation of Christians has been -- as seen so vividly in Eusebius' equation of the Roman Empire with the Kingdom of God (an equation demolished by Augustine's deeper and more lasting theological considerations) -- that of triumphalism, of "historicizing the eschaton," confusing that which is unfulfilled with that which is proleptically and sacramentally, but "not yet" fully and historically, fulfilled. One significant, ongoing Jewish witness to the Church and to the world, then, may well be their perpetual reminder to us of the significance of our own "not yet."

Pope John Paul II himself has adduced another continuing Jewish witness to the Church and to the world, which he first articulated to the Jews of Warsaw in 1987 and has since repeated, for example in meeting with American Jewish leaders at Castelgandolfo on September 1, 1987, a meeting I was

privileged, along with then Bishop, now Cardinal Keeler, to attend. Speaking to the remnant of the community that suffered the "terrible sacrifice of extermination" of the Shoah, the pope noted the "purifying power of suffering." "The more painful the experience," he stated, "the greater the hope." Jewish witness to the Shoah, paradoxically, is then not only a goad to the conscience of the world, it is a witness of hope:

I think that today the people of Israel, perhaps more than ever before, finds itself at the center of attention of the nations of the world, above all because of this terrible experience, through which you have become a loud warning voice for all humanity, for all nations, all the powers of this world, all systems and every person. More than anyone else, it is precisely you who have become this saving warning. I think that in this sense you continue your particular vocation, showing yourselves to be still the heirs of that election to which God is faithful. This is your mission in the contemporary world before the peoples, the nations, all of humanity, the Church. And in this Church all peoples and nations feel united to you in this mission.... In your name, the pope, too, lifts up his voice in this warning.(25)

The Pontifical Biblical Commission's statement, it should be noted, has already in this country been the subject of two major and most fruitful theological exchanges. The first took place in April 2002 at The Catholic University of America between Catholic theologians and an international group of Jewish scholars. At the request of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, I organized the Catholic side. The second, which was a dialogue among Catholic biblical theologians and systematicians, took place in the fall of 2002 at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., organized by Fr. Francis Martin, who holds the Catholic-Jewish Studies chair at the Center. Interestingly, the internal Catholic dialogue, as well as the dialogue with rabbis, quite soon moved into a discussion of the same issues taken up by *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*. In light of this, I want to confirm the need for continuing Catholic reflection on the issue of how the Church can proclaim, on the one hand, the universality of the salvific significance of the Christ event for all humanity, including Jews, and, on the other hand, its respect for the ongoing salvific validity of God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people and their own "particular vocation" or "mission" to the world that was, we now acknowledge, not exhausted in giving to the world its Messiah "according to the flesh" and whose final coming we Christians still await along side of the Jews.

Various proposals for how to articulate these two revealed truths theologically can be put forth. One that might bear further reflection is the category of sublation, originally put forth by Karl Rahner and then adapted by Bernard Lonergan within his own theological studies. Briefly, it holds that while one effort or reality can include and at the same time transcend another, the latter does not in any way vitiate the integrity on its own terms of the former. Hence, the search for historical truth has its own merits and integrity. It can be said that the search for moral truth includes and transcends the search for historical truth while still validating, presuming, and relying upon it. In so doing, it takes nothing away from the integrity, on its own terms, of the search for historical truth. Similarly, the saving revelation in Christ may, by Christians, be seen as a "higher," or perhaps better, more "inclusive" truth that in no way vitiates the integrity or validity of God's Covenant with the Jewish people understood on its own terms, that is, Judaism. Both Christianity and Judaism in this

perspective can be said to be true, even though they differ, and even though Christians (from their own perspective and, one would surmise, Jews from theirs) would not be ready to say that they are "equal" in truth without qualification.

One can see in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document as well an attempt to develop new language that better articulates the relationship between the Scriptures and between God's people, Israel, and God's people, the Church, as we saw above. The conclusion of a key section (21) on the relationship merits close study. It reads in English:

Although the Christian reader is aware that the internal dynamism of the Old Testament finds its goal in Jesus, this is a retrospective perception whose point of departure is not in the text as such, but in the events of the New Testament proclaimed by the apostolic preaching. It cannot be said, therefore, that Jews do not see what has been proclaimed in the text, but that the Christian, in the light of Christ and in the Spirit, discovers in the text an additional meaning that was hidden there.

The notion of a "retrospective perception" by Christians allows for the simultaneous continuity and discontinuity between Jewish and Christian interpretations as well as for their simultaneous validity, since that which is "new" does not come out of the text as such, but out of the light of faith in Christ that is founded in "the events of the New Testament." Thus it is not true, as traditional imagery such as the thirteenth century sculpture of a blindfolded "Synogoga" in the Strasbourg Cathedral in France had it, to say the Jews are "blind" to the meaning of their own texts. Rather, the Christian discovers something undiscoverable save through the eyes of faith. Here, it is helpful to refer to the French original of the passage:

Lorsque le lecteur chrétien perçoit que le dynamisme interne de l'Ancien Testament trouve son aboutissement en Jésus, il s'agit d'une perception rétrospective, dont le point de départ ne se situe pas dans les textes comme tels, mais dans les événements du Nouveau Testament proclamés par la prédication apostolique. On ne doit donc pas dire que le Juif ne voit pas ce qui était annoncé dans les textes, mais que le chrétien, à la lumière du Christ et dans l'Esprit, découvre dans les textes un surplus de sens qui y était caché.

Perhaps, as Fr. Lawrence Frizzell of Seton Hall University suggested during a dialogue in December between representatives of our Bishops' Committee and the National Council of Synagogues, the last phrase should not be translated as "the Christian ... discovers in the text an additional meaning," but rather "the Christian discovers in the *texts* a surplus of meaning." This is not the *sensus plenior*, Fr. Frizzell points out, since that in French is *sens plénier*. Rather, there is a sense of additional *symbolic* meaning, an inexhaustible richness.

I am not at all sure that "sublation" or "*surplus de sens*," any more than the ways of speaking theologically offered in *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*, will win the day, or how a practical catechesis based upon such models and images might be developed. I am most gratified to find, however, so much interest today among many Catholic theologians, especially systematicians, in delving into these mysteries of the faith heretofore advanced, as it were, by the relatively few Catholic theologians who have been deeply engaged in dialogue with Jews since the Second Vatican Council. This in itself represents a step forward in the ongoing work to which the Church has been

called by the Council. In this spirit I make my own the conclusion of Cardinal Kasper's remarks at Boston College, to which I referred earlier:

Ultimately, relations between Jews and Christians cannot be reduced to a simple formula and even less so can it be raised to a higher synthesis. Franz Rosenzweig and others have spoken of a mutual completion. Yet Rabbi Professor Michael Signer (Chicago) is certainly right when he states that their highly tense relation can only be expressed through images and symbols.

One such image is found in the interpretation of the prophet Zechariah by rabbinical theology. The prophet looks into the messianic future where the peoples are taken into the alliance with Israel. 'On that day the Lord will be one and his name one' (14:9). According to rabbinical interpretation, all of us, Jews and all peoples, will stand shoulder to shoulder....

Jews and Christians together maintain this hope. For they can testify from the bitter and painful lessons of history that -- despite otherness and foreignness and despite historical guilt -- conversion, reconciliation, peace and friendship are possible. May thus the new century become a century of brotherhood-shoulder to shoulder. *Shalom!*
(26) •

Notes

1. The 2002-2003 Pio Cardinal Laghi Lecture, Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio, November 5, 2002. Because of the public debate at the time surrounding the then still recent statement of a consultation between delegates of the National Council of Synagogues and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, *Reflections on Covenant and Mission (Origins* 32, no. 13 [September 5, 2002]: 218-24), what was to have been a formal lecture turned into something more akin to a dialogue in itself. The dialogue continued the next morning in a three-hour session. I would like to express my profound gratitude to the students and faculty of the Josephinum for the courtesy and precision of their comments, and for the seriousness with which they took the deep theological issues presented to them. The present paper is a much different and, I would like to think, better one than any I would have prepared before our stimulating exchange.
2. Catholic Church, Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate* (The Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, 1965), no. 4.
3. Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4" (December 1, 1974), introductory note.
4. The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002). Though the text itself continues the Christian tradition of calling Hebrew Scriptures the "Old Testament," the title acknowledges that while in one sense they are part of "our" Christian Bible, in another and equal sense they remain "The Bible" of the Jewish people to whom they were given by God. It can be found on the Web site of the Holy

See, <www.vatican.va>, on the pages of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which sponsored it, along with a Preface welcoming it written by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the president of both the Congregation and the Commission.

5. *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* can also be found online on the Web site for the Center for Jewish-Christian Learning at Boston College <www.bc.edu/research/cjl> as well as on <www.jcrelations.net>. The latter site has Spanish, Portuguese, French, and German translations; the former contains commentary and context within the Catholic teaching documents that *Reflections* surveys.

6. The Pontifical Biblical Commission's document does not, of course, carry the full magisterial weight that would inhere in a statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, but given the unusual if not entirely unprecedented nature of the President of the CDF adding such an enthusiastic and lengthy Preface, it can be said to be a statement that must be taken into account, even if disagreed with in various details, in all future doctrinal and biblical-theological considerations of the themes it has taken up.

7. Cited by Cardinal Avery Dulles in his otherwise sober and, as we shall see, ultimately helpful critique of the document in "Covenant and Mission," in *America* 187, no. 12 (October 21, 2002): 9.

8. National Council of Synagogues and the USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*, 218.

9. Cardinal Walter Kasper, "Christians, Jews and the Thorny Question of Mission," *Origins* 32, no. 28 (December 19, 2002): 462.

10. See footnote 7.

11. Dulles, 9.

12. Ibid.

13. Mary C. Boys, Philip A. Cunningham, and John T. Pawlikowski, "Theology's 'Sacred Obligation': A Reply to Cardinal Avery Dulles on Evangelization," *America* 187, no. 12 (October 21, 2002): 13.

14. Cardinal Kasper was engaged with Catholic and other Christian theologians interested in the dialogue at Boston College. The Christian Scholars' Group on Jews and Judaism, founded in the late 1960s by the National Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, is an independent association of Protestant and Catholic scholars actively engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue. It meets twice yearly at Boston College's Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. Its most recent statement, to which I was a signatory, is "A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People." It is available online at <www.bc.edu/research/cjl> and <www.jcrelations.net>.

15. Cardinal Walter Kasper, "The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: A Crucial Endeavor of the Catholic Church" (November 6, 2002), available online at <www.bc.edu/research/cjl>.

16. Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), no. 839.

17. The change was finally made after a pleasant conversation between the secretary of the Catholic Biblical Association, Fr. Joseph Jensen, and myself, on the implications of *Nostra Aetate* shortly prior to its publication. I might also note here that from the point of view of Catholic biblical scholarship and, clearly, *Nostra Aetate*, Cardinal Dulles was not correct when he called the Letter to the Hebrews "the most formal statement on the status of the Sinai covenant under Christianity." Cardinal Augustin Bea, who shepherded the declaration through the Council deliberations and who was himself one of the leading Catholic biblical scholars of his time, chose to give this status not to Hebrews 7-10, as does Cardinal Dulles, but to Romans 9-11. Also, 2,221 Fathers of the Church formally voted *placet* in agreement with Cardinal Bea, with the handful of opponents in the end also signing their names to the resulting document. Likewise, the question taken up by Hebrews is clearly not "the status of the Sinai covenant under Christianity" as such. Rather, it is the status of the sacrifices of the Jerusalem Temple vis-à-vis the one sacrifice of Christ that is at issue for the author of the non-Pauline Epistle to the Hebrews. The Church, beginning with its rejection of Marcion's view that the Old Covenant as such had been "abolished" and replaced by the New ("supersessionism," which is once again rejected specifically in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*), has traditionally distinguished between Jesus' transcendence of the Temple sacrifices and the Old Covenant as such, for example by taking the Ten Commandments as the starting point and organizing principle of its own moral theology.

18. Catholic Church, *Roman Missal*, Good Friday 13: General Intercessions, VI (1985).

19. Eugene J. Fisher, "Is There a Christian Mission to the Jews? A Catholic Response," in Clark Williamson, ed., *A Mutual Witness: Toward Critical Solidarity Between Jews and Christians* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1992): 15-32.

20. CCC, no. 840.

21. Kasper, "Thorny Question," 463.

22. *Ibid.*, 466.

23. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures*, II, A, 5.

24. *Ibid.*, II, C.

25. John Paul II, "Address to Jewish Leaders in Warsaw" (June 14, 1987), in Eugene Fisher and Leon Klenicki, ed., *Spiritual Pilgrimage: Pope John Paul II: Texts on Jews and Judaism, 1979-1995* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 99. As the Holy Father explained to us in Castelgandolfo, this thought came to him spontaneously during the meeting. He said it to them at the time and then, after prayerful meditation, wrote it down in the form in which we have it on record today. I do not think it is too much of a stretch to see in this remarkable, inspired statement a discernment by the Holy Father of what Catholic tradition would consider a doctrinally relevant "sign of the times," especially given the theologically pregnant terminology of the papal reflection, e.g., "saving warning," "your particular vocation," "heirs of that election to which God is faithful," "your mission" to the world to which the pope, speaking as head of the Church, adds the lifting up of his own voice. These are biblical, even

sacramental terms. They are not used here with any sense of rhetorical finesse, but as the proper terminology, the necessary terminology, with which to speak of the "saving" mysteries that they in turn evoke.

26. Kasper, "Thorny Question," 466.

*Biographical information is true at time of publication.