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The Dynamism of Love

Why we have two testaments in the Bible, and why both are vital parts of God's covenant with humanity

The First Covenant

The Second Covenant

Two Inseparable Books

- "Without the Old Testament the New Testament would be an indecipherable book, a plant deprived of its roots and destined to dry out."
- Many have attempted to separate the two books and even pit them against one another

Abraham – Our Common Father

- NRS **Genesis 12:1** Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
- NRS **Galatians 3:6** Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," 7 so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." 9 For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.
- Hearing God and responding in faith is what counts for righteousness in God's eyes – we cannot presume to know what another person hears

Love: Gift of the Jews

- NRS **Mark 12:28** One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'-- this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

What is Your Religion?

- This is the essence of both the Old and New Testaments
- Notice that it is to the Jewish tradition that Jesus turns (Deut 6 and Lev 19:18) – this should warn us against making pejorative generalizations about the "God of the Old Testament"
- Dalai Lama: "My religion is kindness" We can make similar statements

A Covenant Never Revoked

- *Nostra Aetate* (1965) "According to the apostle Paul, the Jews, because of their ancestors, still remain very dear to God, whose **gifts and calling are irrevocable.**
- Pope John Paul II: (Mainz, 1980) "The encounter between the people of God of the Old

Covenant, **which has never been abrogated by God**, and that of the New Covenant is also an internal dialogue in our Church, similar to that between the first and second part of its Bible”.

The Death of a Rabbi

- Marc Chagall
- Death of this rabbi touches off centuries of terror, persecution, and death for his people
- The accusation of deicide and the culpability of the Jews for the death of Jesus was only formally repudiated and renounced at the Second Vatican Council in 1965 (Nostra Aetate)

Cataclysm of 70 AD

- After the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD, and after a second failed uprising of the Jews in 132 AD, the Jews were dispersed
- Jews forbidden to enter Jerusalem, which was rebuilt as a Roman city and renamed Aelia Capitolina
- Seen by evangelists as divine punishment
- Jewish state reestablished in 1948, partially as a response to the Holocaust

Out of the Ashes

- *Mark 13:1 As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" 2 Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."*
- Two religions born out of the Temple's destruction: rabbinic Judaism and Christianity as we know it
- All of the gospels were written after this event. All see the destruction of the Temple as God's punishment for the Jewish rejection and execution of Jesus (and this is mistaken!). The anti-Jewish slant in the Gospels fed Christian **supersessionism** and bigotry for 2,000 years.
- This will affect how the first generation of Christians interprets the “Scriptures” (i.e., the Old Testament)

Matthew – “Jewish” Gospel

- The most Jewish of all the gospels, but not the most sympathetic. The evangelist is clearly a member of a Jewish-Christian community. His gospel depicts Jesus as the fulfillment of all OT prophecies, and as the authoritative interpreter of the Law, a lawgiver surpassing Moses. possesses the fuller truth and therefore more representative of Jewish traditions.
- In the sermon on the mount, the teachings of Jesus are contrasted with traditional interpretations of the Law in a manner that depicts his teachings as deeper, more exacting, and therefore more authoritative. You have heard it said.....but I say to you.....
- *5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*
- Law still in effect!

Matthew and the Jews

- “lost sheep of the house of Israel” 10:5; 15:24 but at the end, to all nations: 28:19
- his blood be on us and our children forever: 27:25

- Matt 23:13-32 – scribes and Pharisees condemned and vilified
- Are these the historical words of Jesus?
- They likely reflect what was going on in Matthew's time rather than during the lifetime of Jesus

Hypocrites

- It is in Matthew that we find some of the most odious comparisons of the teachings of Jesus with the practices of the Pharisees and other Jews, which was instrumental in making the word Pharisee synonymous
- 6:5 *"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.*
- 7:28 *Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.*
- 15:1 *Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat." 3 He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' 5 But you say that whoever tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,' then that person need not honor the father. 6 So, for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God. 7 **You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: 8 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; 9 in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.'**"*

Hand washing and Blood Libel

- 'his blood be on us and our children forever: 27:25'
- source of blood libel
- Written after destruction of Jerusalem – believed to be divine retribution
- Tendency to exonerate Romans and shift blame to Jews
- Repudiated by Vatican II in *Nostra Aetate*

John

- The theme is one of replacement. We see this warning note in the prologue: *NRS John 1:16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 **The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.** 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.*
- In a very carefully choreographed account of Jesus' ministry, the rituals of the Jews are replaced by the person of Jesus: note the replacement theme present in the wedding feast at Cana, or in the proclamations of Jesus in the temple in which he states that he is the light of the world and the source of living waters. These are set against the backdrop of the Jewish feast of Tabernacles and images from the OT in which living waters gush from the temple in the last days.

Your Father the Devil

- Perhaps most damaging, however, is the debate Jesus has with a group of Pharisees and other Jews. They stand on their claim of being Abraham's children. Jesus counters by saying that if that were so, they would recognize the one sent from God, when in fact they are seeking to

kill him. They can therefore not be Abraham's children but can only be the offspring of the devil. This polemical statement, wrenched from its context, was taken to be a divine judgement of the Jewish people, rather than a sharp rejoinder to a group of opponents.

- *8:37 I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. 38 I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father." 39 They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, 40 but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. 41 You are indeed doing what your father does." They said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. 44 **You are from your father the devil**, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.*

Theological Anti-Semitism

- Church Fathers built on anti-Judaic and supersessionist passages from New Testament
- The result was a virulent **anti-Judaism** as a religion and racial anti-Semitism

In Your Face – the Middle Ages

- Cathedral at Strasbourg in France
- The Church is a triumphant female figure
- This blindfolded female figure is the synagogue

The Demonized Jews

- Christ-killers
- Usurers and money-grubbers
- Untrustworthy and treasonous
- The Scapegoat
- Blamed for Black Plague – many burned
- Host desecration and child killing
- Legal restrictions; usury and money collecting/lending
- Butchered during Crusades and pogroms
- 15th century Spain: forced conversions

Medieval Visual Propaganda

Where Hatred and Bigotry Lead

Even Today

A New Beginning - Nostra Aetate (1965)

- “Even though the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (see Jn 19:6), **neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion.** It is true that the church is the new people of God, yet **the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy scripture.** Consequently, all must take care, lest in catechizing or in preaching the word of God, they teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ.

- Indeed, the church reproves every form of persecution against whomsoever it may be directed. Remembering, then, its common heritage with the Jews and moved not by any political consideration, but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity, it deplors all hatreds, persecutions, displays of antisemitism directed against the Jews at any time or from any source.
- The church always held and continues to hold that Christ out of infinite love freely underwent suffering and death because of the sins of all, so that all might attain salvation. It is the duty of the church, therefore, in its preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's universal love and the source of all grace.”

Fresh Directions - The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable (Romans 11:29) 2015

- *Nostra Aetate 4* created a new relationship between Catholics and Jews. Since Vatican II the Catholic and Jewish communities have gradually become reliable partners and even good friends, capable of weathering crises together and negotiating conflicts positively. (Para. 2)
- In December 1974, the Vatican issued *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing Nostra Aetate 4*. The crucial and new concern of the document was that Catholics should become aware of how Judaism is understood by Jews in the light of their own religious experience. Reference is made to the Jewish roots of Christian liturgy and possibilities were outlined for rapprochement between the two faiths in mutual education and joint social action. (Para. 4)
- A second document, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis*, issued eleven years later in June 1985, reflected on the relationship of the Old and New Testaments and the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, discussing in detail the manner in which Jews are represented in the Christian Scriptures. The document also invited Catholics to understand the religious attachment of Jews to the Holy Land and the political significance of the State of Israel. (Para. 5)

1998-2002

- In 1998, a third document spoke about the Shoah. Entitled “**We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah**”, it recalled the dark history of Catholic-Jewish Relations and St Pope John Paul II expressed his hope that the document would help heal the wounds of past misunderstanding and injustice, and begin to shape a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the Shoah would never again be possible. (Para. 6)
- In 2002, a most important document was issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*. It broke new ground in calling Catholics to understand and value Jewish understanding of Sacred Scripture. (Para. 7)
- The 2015 document takes its title from Romans 11:29. “The gifts and the calling of God” refers to the relationship of God and the Jewish people. The gifts named by St Paul in Romans 9:4 include the Covenants God made with Israel. St Pope John Paul II famously stated in Mainz in 1980 that the ‘Old Covenant’ has never been revoked by God. (Paras. 27, 32 and 39)

2015 continued

- At the same time, the document emphasises that for Christian faith there is only one path to salvation and the Church must witness to Christ as universal redeemer. The Church and Judaism cannot be represented as two parallel paths to salvation. (Paras. 35 and 37)
- The document addresses the problem in terms of Divine mystery, drawn from Romans 11. It

is theologically unquestionable for the authors of the document that the Jews are participants in God's salvation. However, "how that can be possible without confessing Christ explicitly, is and remains an unfathomable Divine mystery." (Para. 36)

- The Divine mystery that transcends theological norms in a way known only to God is the ultimate inspiration for different positions taken in the new document. For example, it affirms with *Nostra Aetate 4* that the Church is called the new people of God, and as a community founded on Christ it represents the fulfilment of the promises made to Israel, but at the same time the Church does not replace the people of the God of Israel and Israel, too, remains God's people. (Para. 23)

Having it Both Ways

- Likewise, while Christological exegesis understands the New Testament as the fulfilment of the Old, it must not be seen as a replacement for it. Rather, it is the duty of Jewish-Catholic dialogue to understand the complementarity of the two traditions and, in the words of Pope Francis, to "help one another mine the riches of God's word." (Paras. 30-31)
- The document's understanding of the relation of the Church and the Jewish people as a Divine mystery means that this relationship is sui generis and wholly different from Catholic relationships with other faith communities, however precious and theologically significant these relationships may be. The uniqueness of the Jewish-Christian dialogue is unambiguously and clearly stressed. (Paras. 14, 15, 19 and 20)
- The document emphasises that that the universal salvific significance of Christ must be shared with all peoples and Catholics are called to bear witness to their faith in Christ also to Jews, but the Catholic Church rejects in principle any specific institutional mission directed at Jews, who are already "bearers of God's word", who believe in the one God and remain most dear to God. Discussions with Jews should therefore be conducted in a humble and sensitive manner, particularly in the aftermath of the great tragedy of the Shoah. (Paras. 40-43)

Distorted Images

- Do you agree with any of the following statements?
- *The God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath. The God of the New Testament is a God of love.*
- *The Jews rejected Jesus as their messiah because they were waiting for a royal, glorious messiah and could not recognize Jesus as a suffering messiah.*
- *The self-righteous and hypocritical Pharisees show how legalistic Judaism had become by Jesus' day.*
- *The Jews were unfaithful to their covenant with God, so their covenant has ended. Christians are now the people of God. [1]*
- [1] Mary C. Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing? Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000, page 8.

The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible: Main points

- The writers of the New Testament were nearly all Jews. For them, the Old Testament was "the Scriptures"!
- "Old" does not mean outdated or obsolete (as it does today!) but venerable, ancient, and original
- The prayers of Jesus are Jewish – e.g., the Our Father
- Jesus was interpreted in terms of Old Testament promises and the OT saving action of God

Points

- New Testament recognizes authority of the Old Testament and bases itself on that authority
- There is both continuity and discontinuity
- Dynamism of love animates both testaments
- They can not be played off against one another
- For a Christian to read the OT in a spiritual fashion does not cancel the original meaning – Jewish people are correct to continue reading it according to their own tradition
- The integrity of both testaments must be respected – the OT is not simply a theological grab-bag for Christian doctrine

Points

- On-going revelation of God
- This revelation still continues in our own day as the mystery of God unfolds – God is not white, male, European, North American, or even Catholic!
- Both the OT and NT point beyond to a greater reality
- Both witness to the love and compassionate mercy of God who never abandons us

First or Second Time?

- "The Jewish expectation for the Messiah is not in vain. It can become for us Christians a strong stimulus to maintain alive the eschatological dimension of our faith. We also, like them, live in expectation. The difference lies in the fact that for us He who will come will have the attributes of that Jesus that has already come and is already present and active in us."
- *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Pontifical Biblical Commission)

Branches of Judaism

- Orthodox – strict observance of the Law
- Hasidic – the mystical branch of Judaism – Russia, Poland, and Eastern Europe in 17th-18th centuries
- Conservative – keep many traditions, but progressive
- Reform Judaism – modern movement; do not observe kosher or purity laws; female rabbis allowed
- Ethnic branches - Ashkenazi (The majority) and Sephardi Jews

What We Share

- Abraham – our Father in Faith
- 10 commandments
- Scriptures (Hebrews Bible or Old Testament)
- Covenant
- Prophets
- Many of the prayers; portions of the liturgy
- Worship of the same God
- Concern for social justice
- Commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves
- Hope of the resurrection and the world to come (for Orthodox)

Goals of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

- Catholics should to come to know Jews more profoundly. "One can only learn to love what one has gradually come to know, and one can only know truly and profoundly what one has come to love." (Para. 44)

- Dialogue must not be limited to specialists. It is important that educational institutions, *particularly seminaries*, integrate *Nostra Aetate 4* and subsequent documents into their curricula. (Para. 45)
- Catholics and Jews should work together:
 - for justice, peace, environmental concerns and reconciliation throughout the world. (Para. 46)
 - to combat all forms of anti-Semitism. (Para. 47)
 - on practical projects that support the poor, the sick and the disadvantaged. (Para. 48)

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner (1935-)

- Progressive wing of Conservative Judaism
- Author of famous “*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*” along with many other books on spirituality and suffering

Rabbi Kushner’s Wisdom

- God does not cause our misfortunes. Some are caused by bad luck, some are caused by bad people, and some are simply an inevitable consequence of our being human and being mortal. living in a world of inflexible natural laws. The painful things that happen to us are not punishments for our misbehavior, nor are they in any way part of some grand design on God's part. Because the tragedy is not God's will, we need not feel hurt or betrayed by God when tragedy strikes. We can turn to Him for help in overcoming it, precisely because we can tell ourselves that God is as outraged by it as we are.
- Our souls are not hungry for fame, comfort, wealth, or power. Our souls are hungry for meaning, for the sense that we have figured out how to live so that our lives matter.
- People who pray for miracles usually don't get miracles. But people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for the grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often find their prayers answered. Their prayers help them tap hidden reserves of faith and courage that were not available to them before.
- The purpose in life is not to win. The purpose in life is to grow and to share. "When you come to look back on all that you have done in life, you will get more satisfaction from the pleasure you have brought into other people's lives than you will from the times that you outdid and defeated them.

Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella

- “Rosalie Silberman Abella’s early experiences as a refugee fueled her dedication to justice and led her to become the first Jewish woman elected to the Supreme Court of Canada.”
- “Abella was born in a displaced person’s camp after World War II and immigrated with her family to Canada, where her father, a respected lawyer, was unable to practice law because of his immigrant status. Abella chose to follow in her father’s footsteps, earning a place on the Human Rights Commission of Ontario and the Labor Relations Tribunal when she was still in her twenties and writing a vital study on disabled people’s access to legal services.”
- “Her report on gender equality in employment created the categories for fairness and discrimination that were adopted by the Canadian Constitution in 1982, and has been implemented by New Zealand, Northern Ireland, and South Africa as well. She has written extensively on the law, served as visiting professor for both McGill University and the

University of Toronto, and chaired the Constitutional Conferences to decide the status of Quebec within Canada. In 2004, she was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.”

- *Jewish Women's Archive* - <https://jwa.org/people/abella-rosalie>

Viktor Frankl (1905-1997)

- Holocaust survivor
- Neurologist and psychologist
- Founder of *logotherapy*
- Author of *Man's Search for Meaning*
 - *When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.*
 - *Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*
 - *Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked.*

No More!

God of our fathers,
you chose Abraham and his descendants
to bring Your name to the nations:
we are deeply saddened
by the behavior of those
who in the course of history
have caused these children of Yours to suffer
and asking Your forgiveness
we wish to commit ourselves
to genuine brotherhood
with the people of the Covenant
Jerusalem, 26 March 2000.
Joannes Paulus II

Credits

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