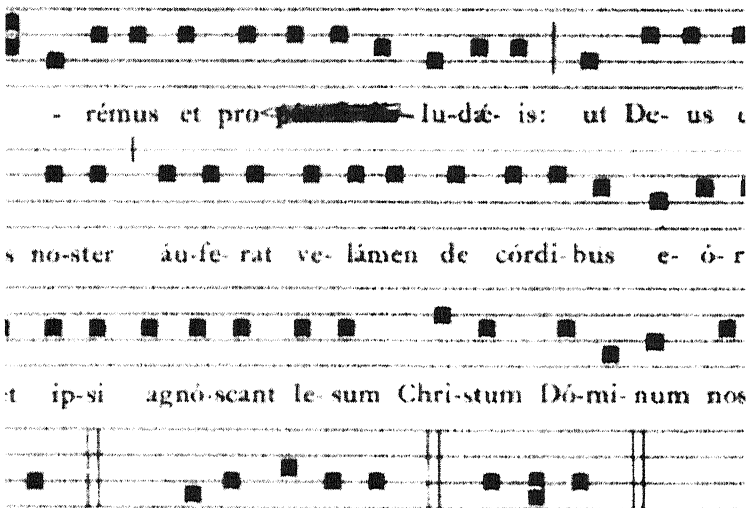


Neville Lamdan, Alberto Melloni (eds.)

Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish-Catholic Relations

8. PRO CONVERSIONE IUDÆORUM



- rémus et pro-~~pter~~ lu-dæ- is: ut De- us
s no-ster au-fe- rat ve- lamen de cōrdi- bus e- o- r
t ip-si agnō- scant le- sum Chri- stum Dō- mi- num nos
nus. V. Flec- tāmus gé- nu- a. R. Le- vā- te.
potens sempitérne Deus, qui étiam ~~in~~ a
icórdia non repéllis: exáudi preces nostras, quas pro illius



Christianity and History

LIT

Contents

N. LAMDAN	
<i>Introduction</i>	1
A. MELLONI	
<i>Nostra Aetate, 1965-2005</i>	9
M. MORSELLI	
<i>Jules Isaac and the Origins of Nostra Aetate</i>	21
TH. STRANSKY	
<i>The Genesis of Nostra Aetate: An Insider's Story</i>	29
A. CAPONERA	
<i>Papers of the Secretariat for Christian Unity on Nostra Aetate</i>	55
U. BIALER	
<i>Israel and Nostra Aetate: the View from Jerusalem</i>	63
S. RUZER	
<i>Nostra Aetate and the Historical Quest for the Jewish Origins of Christianity</i>	87
R. BONFIL	
<i>Nostra Aetate: Jewish Memory, Jewish History, Jewish Vision</i>	101
H.H. HENRIX	
<i>Impact and Effects in Europe of Nostra Aetate</i>	109
D. POLLEFEYT	
<i>The Church and the Jews: Unsolvable Paradox or Unfinished Story?</i>	131
M. VELATI	
<i>The Debate on De Judaeis and Ecumenical Dialogue</i>	145
P. HELDT	
<i>Protestant Perspectives after 40 Years: a Critical Assessment of Nostra Aetate</i>	163

D. ROSEN

Jewish and Israeli Perspectives 40 Years after Vatican II 175

J.A. CHANES

*Impact of Nostra Aetate on Catholic and Jewish Life in the
United States after Four Decades* 189

R.J. ZWI WERBLOWSKY

Nostra Aetate: a Jewish Perspective 199

W. KASPER

Nostra Aetate: a Catholic Perspective 203

Index of Names 209

Authors 215

Participants in the Conference 217

DIDIER POLLEFEYT

The Church and the Jews: Unsolvable Paradox or Unfinished Story?

In the history of Jewish-Christian relations, Christians have often inquired whether Israel was still the People of God, whether the Church has replaced Israel. An affirmative answer to the latter inquiry is often described as the “theology of substitution”, as well as “displacement theology” or “supersessionist theology”. Christians assumed that, thanks to their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, the election of the Jewish people had been definitively and exclusively transferred to them¹. The Church had replaced Judaism for all time and completely.

The implication of this theology is that there is no longer any place for Israel in God’s plan of salvation and that Israel no longer has a role to play in the history of revelation and redemption. The Jewish “no” to Jesus, the Messiah, meant the end of God’s involvement with Israel. The new Chosen People, the true, the spiritual Israel, the new Covenant now occupy centre stage. Accordingly, Christian exegesis, liturgy and catechesis represented the relationship between the First and the Second Testament in terms of “Old and New”, “temporary and definitive”, “shadow and reality”. The ultimate consequence of these supersessionist expressions is that, while Israel at one time was the beloved of God, after she missed her vocation, she lost her election and thus her right to existence. She has become a cursed nation or, at best, an achronistic one. This theology of substitution came to prominence so early in Christian thought that it is hardly surprising that it was for centuries an uncontested element of Christian faith and teaching in the churches of the West and the East. Even if Nazism cannot be seen as an inevitable and direct outcome of Christianity, as the Jewish statement *Dabru Emet* (2002) also

¹ D. POLLEFEYT, *In Search of an Alternative for the Theology of Substitution & Jews and Christians after Auschwitz: from Substitution to Interreligious Dialogue*, in D. POLLEFEYT (ed.), *Jews and Christians: Rivals or Partners for the Kingdom of God? In Search of An Alternative for the Christian Theology of Substitution* (Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, 21), Leuven 1998, 1-9.

accepts², it is very clear that without this long history of Christian anti-Jewish teachings and subsequent anti-Jewish violence, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out to such an extent in the heart of European civilisation.

The promulgation of the Church declaration *Nostra Aetate* in 1965 can be seen as a turning point in the history of Jewish-Christian relations. Reading the text critically without knowing the process of “sanctification” of the text that developed in the last decades, it can come as a surprise that it still contains some elements that refer to substitution theology. The text speaks of the “Church as mysteriously *foreshadowed* by the chosen people’s exodus from the land of bondage”; of Jerusalem that “did not recognize the time of her visitation”; and of the Church as “the new people of God”. In spite of these elements, the text clearly recognizes the intrinsic value of Judaism: “Jews remain very dear to God,” even if this recognition is immediately qualified: “for the sake of the patriarchs”. From this perspective, the document *Nostra Aetate* illustrates how the Church in Vatican II was still wrestling with its relationship with the Jewish people and especially with its age-Old supercessionist understanding of it³.

I pose the question in this paper how the Catholic Church has further re-formulated its relationship to Judaism in line with *Nostra Aetate* and how the Catholic Church has tried to overcome supersessionism after *Nostra Aetate*. I focus here on the work of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, and especially a book that he published on the subject in 1999 under the English title: *Many Religions – One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World*⁴. His essay can be considered as very representative for the Catholic position today, and, now that Cardinal Ratzinger has become Pope Benedict XVI, also for the future of Jewish-Christian relations. Ratzinger poses clearly the central question for Christians concerning a contemporary theology of Jewish-Christian relations:

² T. FRYMER-KENSEY, D. NOVAK, P. OCKS, M. SIGNER, *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity* (National Jewish Scholars Project, 2002); website: <<http://www.icjs.org/what/njsp/dabruemet.html>>, nr. 5: “Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon”.

³ All quotes in this paragraph from the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, October 28, 1965, nr. 4 [our italics added].

⁴ J. RATZINGER, *Many Religions – One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World*, transl. by G. HARRISON, with a foreword by S. HAHN, San Francisco 1999.

"Does the confession of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of the living God and faith in the Cross as the redemption of mankind contain an implicit condemnation of the Jews as stubborn and blind, as guilty of the death of the Son of God?"⁵.

Concerning the latter part of the question, Ratzinger quotes *Nostra Aetate* nr. 4, saying that the report of Jesus' trial cannot substantiate a charge of collective Jewish guilt. "All sinners were the authors of Christ's passion"⁶. Concerning the first part of the question, Ratzinger approaches Jesus as the promised offshoot of Judah, who unites Israel and the nations in the Kingdom of God. In Jesus, the history of Israel becomes the history of all⁷. The inclusive mission of Jesus is understood as uniting Jews and pagans into a single people in whom the Scriptures are fulfilled⁸.

This notion of "fulfilment" well summarizes Ratzinger's position. Jesus is placed, first of all, in line with the Jewish tradition. He fulfils the universal promises of the Scriptures⁹. Jesus and the Sacred Scriptures of Israel appear here as indivisible¹⁰.

"Through him whom the Church believes to be Jesus Christ and Son of God, the God of Israel has become the God of the nations, *fulfilling* the prophecy that the Servant of God would bring the light of this God to the nations"¹¹.

This concept of "fulfilment" places Jesus clearly in continuity with the Old Covenant. At this point, Ratzinger sees a possible theological appreciation of Jesus by the Jewish communities. Even if it is impossible for Israel to see Jesus as the Son of God as Christians do, it should not be impossible for them – Ratzinger believes – to see Jesus as the Servant of God who brings God's light to the nations¹².

In Jesus, the Old Covenant is not "abrogated"¹³. On the contrary, Jesus' fulfilment of the Old Covenant is a "perfect" fulfilment¹⁴ of what is said about the Servant of God in the "Old Testament". But this fulfilment is nevertheless for Christians much more than just a continuation, a

⁵ RATZINGER, *Many Religions...*, 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹² *Ibid.*, 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

broadening and universalization of the history of Israel. Ratzinger criticizes contemporary presentations of Jesus as a Jewish teacher who in principle did not go beyond what was possible in Jewish tradition¹⁵. In the process of fulfilment, the Old Covenant is "renewed"¹⁶ by Jesus, "transformed"¹⁷ and "brought to its deepest meaning"¹⁸. In Jesus, it is God himself who has fundamentally "reinterpreted" the Law and showed Christians that its broadening transformation and conversion is its actually intended meaning¹⁹.

"When Jesus offers the cup to the disciples and says, "This is the blood of the Covenant", the words of Sinai are heightened to a staggering realism, and at the same time we begin to see a totally unsuspected depth in them. What takes place here is both spiritualization and the greatest possible realism"²⁰.

It is clear however that this use of "fulfillment" in terms of "renewal", "reinterpretation", "transformation", "heightening" and "deepening" brings considerable tension to Ratzinger's analysis. On the one hand, he stresses that in the Christological movement where all nations become brothers and receivers of the promises of the Chosen people, "not one iota of it [the Old Testament] is being lost"²¹ and indeed that this new perspective in Jesus does not imply "the abolishment of the special mission of Israel"²².

On the other hand, the stress on the newness of Jesus implies that the Sinai Covenant "within God's providential rule, [...] is a stage that has its own allotted period of time"²³. At one point in the book, Ratzinger's analysis explicitly refers to the terminology of replacement theology. He argues that replacement theology is already present in the First Testament. The New Covenant established by God is itself present in the faith of Israel.

"God, according to the Prophet, will *replace* the broken Sinai covenant with a New Covenant that cannot be broken: this is because it will not confront man in the form of a book or a stone tablet but will be inscribed in his heart. The conditional coven-

¹⁵ RATZINGER, *Many Religions...*, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

²² *Ibid.*, 27.

²³ *Ibid.*, 68.

ant, which depended on man's faithful observance of the Law, is *replaced* by the unconditional covenant in which God binds himself irrevocably"²⁴.

At this point, Ratzinger does not say that the Covenant is fulfilled in the flesh and blood of the Risen Christ. But by referring in the same study to the First Testament theology of the new Covenant, replacing the broken Covenant and – before and after this reference – to the idea of fulfilment in Christ, replacement theology seems to receive some Christological plausibility, especially because Ratzinger in his book never clearly distinguishes “fulfillment” from “replacement”. A question that arises from the study of the book is how something can be fulfilled without being replaced by its perfect completion?

Ratzinger recognizes that this analysis ends in a paradoxical conclusion that for him can only find its solution in an eschatological perspective.

“It follows, therefore, that the figure of Christ both links and separates Israel and the Church. It is not within our power to overcome this separation, but it keeps both of us to the path that leads to the One who comes. To that extent the relationship among us must not be one of enmity”²⁵.

This is in fact the conclusion of Ratzinger's approach, namely that separation and reconciliation between Jews and Christians appear to be bound up in what he calls a “virtually insolvable paradox”²⁶. I do believe that, forty years after *Nostra Aetate*, Christians very often find themselves in this paradoxical situation, which also characterizes to some extent the text of *Nostra Aetate* itself, caught in the tension between continuity and discontinuity with the Jewish tradition, between fulfillment theology and replacement theology. This predicament becomes endurable when it is put into – or perhaps put off to²⁷ – an eschatological perspective, as done by Ratzinger.

For Ratzinger, this paradoxical position seems “good enough” since it can indeed prevent enmity and violence between Christians and Jews. The special mission of Israel is not abolished by Jesus and the Jewish self-esteem does not oblige them to demand that Christians abandon the heart of their faith. In various conferences celebrating *Nostra Aetate*, it seems that some of Jewish partners in dialogue were and are satisfied

²⁴ RATZINGER, *Many Religions...*, 63-64.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁷ M. VOGEL, *The Problem of Dialogue Between Judaism and Christianity*, “Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 4 (1967), 684-699; 689 nr. 2.

with this position and do not show interest in entering deeper into this discussion, which is considered as internal to Christians and often not understood.

Nevertheless, for Christians in dialogue, it is not enough to enable them to enter into a real encounter with the Jewish "other" when they are trapped in such an insolvable paradox. Moreover, I do not believe that this situation is good for Jewish-Christian relations in the long term. The question that emerges is whether this paradox is a structural situation pre-programmed in the very heart of the Christian religion itself that can never find a solution, at least not in human history, as Ratzinger seems to suggest and to accept. Or, if this enigma is linked with a certain (contingent) theological framework, it can be subjected to revision in the future, so that the paradoxical situation can be open to new approaches?

My hypothesis is that the paradoxical situation is the logical and understandable consequence of a clear option of the post-Vatican II Church for an inclusive approach to the "non-Christian religions" and that this insolvable paradox can perhaps be moved a few steps further by an actual reflection and enlargement of the inclusive paradigm with regard to Judaism. This reflection should not necessarily lead into relative consequences that are connected with the contemporary pluralistic theologies of religions, as I hope to show later.

Studying Ratzinger's *Many Religions – One Covenant*, it becomes clear that inclusivity is the driving paradigm behind his approach to the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Inclusivism recognizes that even though the work of Christ is the only means of salvation, this does not imply that explicit knowledge of Christ is necessary in order for one to be saved. Unlike the older exclusivism, inclusivism holds that an implicit faith response to general revelation can be salvific, because participants of other religions are already in touch with the Christian truth, even if this truth is hidden to them. Ratzinger writes:

"In this way, proclamation of the gospel must be necessary a dialogical process. We are not telling the other person something that is entirely unknown to him; rather, we are opening up the hidden depth of something with which, in his own religion he is already in touch. [...] The dialogue is more and more a listening to the Logos, who is [...] in the midst of our separation and our contradictory affirmations, the unity we already share"²⁸.

²⁸ RATZINGER, *Many Religions...*, 112, 113.

An important element of inclusivism is that it affirms the universality of salvation in Jesus Christ – explicitly or implicitly. In this way, inclusivism takes a clear distance from the approach of pluralistic theology *vis-à-vis* the plurality of religions. When Ratzinger speaks about “the Logos”, he clearly employs the concept that John the Evangelist uses in referring to Christ in the opening sentence of his Gospel (John 1:1) – this is to say, in a *Christocentric* way. “Christocentric” implies the inseparable connection between Jesus Christ and the Word. It may in this context be recalled that this inseparable bond was one of the points, which troubled the *Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith* in Jacques Dupuis’ book *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997)²⁹.

The Notification on this book, issued on January 24, 2001 by the Congregation reads as follows:

“It must also be firmly believed that Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary and only Saviour of the world, is the Son and Word of the Father. For the unity of the divine plan of salvation centred in Jesus Christ, it must also be held that the salvific action of the Word is accomplished in and through Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of the Father, as mediator of salvation for all humanity. It is therefore contrary to the Catholic faith not only to posit a separation between the Word and Jesus, or between the Word’s salvific activity and that of Jesus, but also to maintain that there is a salvific activity of the Word as such in his divinity, independent of the humanity of the Incarnate Word”³⁰.

For Christians it is much more difficult than for Jews to combine inclusivism with openness to other religions, because of the essential *Christocentric* understanding of truth in Christianity and because Christ is unique, particular and universal at the same time. For this reason, mission is an intrinsic aspect of Christianity. Ratzinger asks the question:

“Does this mean that missionary activity should cease and be replaced by dialogue, where it is not a question of truth but of making one another better Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, or Buddhists? My answer is No”³¹.

²⁹ J. DUPUIS, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll 1997.

³⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notification on the book Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Vatican 2001, <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010124_dupuis_en.html>, nr. I.2.

³¹ RATZINGER, *Many Religions*, 111.

This answer is in line with the 1975 Vatican document *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis of the Roman Catholic Church*. I quote from point 7:

“Church and Judaism cannot then be seen as two parallel ways of salvation and the Church must witness to Christ as the Redeemer for all, ‘while maintaining the strictest respect for religious liberty in line with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council’”³².

It is this clear, comprehensive position that initiates the difficult question of how can Christians confess Jesus as Christ in an inclusive way and at the same time hold to the idea that the divine election of Israel retains an *intrinsically positive* effect? 40 years after *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic position remains in my analysis paradoxical: the special mission of Israel is not abolished, but at the same time the conditional, broken Covenant is fulfilled in – or replaced by – a new, unconditional Covenant that cannot be broken. This tension is already present in *Nostra Aetate* itself and continues to characterize to some degree the Christian approach to Judaism. From this perspective, I believe that what Gershom Scholem said in 1963 remains valid today:

“A debate about the complexity of the Messianic problem affects a delicate area. It is here, however, that the essential conflict between Judaism and Christianity has developed decisively and still persists”³³.

Forty years after *Nostra Aetate*, one of the great challenges for Christian theology and for Jewish-Christian relations remains how to develop a theology of the religions that combines inclusivity with authentic openness for other religions, especially Judaism³⁴. It seems to me that until now – at a time when religious plurality and inter-religious dialogue are becoming more and more a characteristic of our world – Christians have not yet reached such a coherent theological framework. Strict inclusivity is often seen by other religions as a subtle form of Christian imperialism.

³² *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis of the Roman Catholic Church*, Commission for religious relations with the Jews nr. 7.

³³ G. SCHOLEM, *Zum Verständnis der messianischen Idee im Judentum* [The Messianic Idea in Judaism], in K. COOK, J.M. SCHMIDT (eds.), *Apokalyptik* (WdF, 365), Darmstadt 1982, 327-369.

³⁴ D. POLLEFEYT, *Christology after the Holocaust. A Catholic Perspective*, in M. MEYER, C. HUGHES (eds.), *Jesus Then and Now. Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, Harrisburg (Penns.) 2001, 229-247.

According to the inclusivistic understanding, it is not Judaism that saves, but the Logos (Christ) in Judaism and Islam, that is, they are not saved by their specific beliefs, but in spite of them.

On the other hand, the new and widespread pluralistic theology as such, is not the solution. Pluralism reduces religions to relative and exchangeable historical-cultural interpretations of a universal experience of the ultimate Reality and denies the particularities of religions as well as the attachments and loyalties of those faithful to them. It creates an easy consensus, not among believers of different religions, but among believers in the same religion of pluralism. What we still need 40 years after *Nostra Aetate* is a theology of inter-religious dialogue, that can transcend both the critique by other religions on strict inclusivism, and the relativism and indifference where pluralistic theology ends, in relation both to one's own religious convictions and to those of the other.

Ratzinger notes in his study: "I never hold the whole truth about God in my own hands but am always a learner, on a pilgrimage toward it, on a path that has no end"³⁵. His earlier work testifies to his own search for truth concerning the relation between Judaism and Christianity. In 1977, Ratzinger wrote in his *Memoirs* about Jewish-Christian relations:

"I have come to the realization that Judaism (which strictly speaking, began with the end of the formation of the canon, that is, in the first century after Christ) and the Christian faith described in the New Testament are two ways of appropriating Israel's Scriptures, two ways that in the end are determined by the position one assumes with regard to the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. The Scripture we today call Old Testament is in and of itself open to both ways"³⁶.

How can we understand the Old Testament as "open to both ways"³⁷? A helpful distinction can be found in Schubert Ogden's distinction between a constitutive and a representative understanding of the saving character of Jesus³⁸. In a constitutive interpretation of the saving nature of Jesus' life, Jesus does not simply represent salvation. His life and work *constitute* salvation. Traditional Christology has claimed some sort

³⁵ RATZINGER, *Many Religions*, 110.

³⁶ J. RATZINGER, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*, transl. by E. LEIVA-MERIKAKIS, San Francisco 1998, 53-54 (German original: *Aus meinen Leben. Erinnerungen (1927-1977)*, Stuttgart 1998, 59).

³⁷ R. BIERINGER, D. POLLEFEYT, *Open to Both Ways? Johannine Perspectives on Judaism in the Light of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, in M. LABAHN, K. SCHOLTISSEK, A. STROTMANN (eds.), *Israel und seine Heilstraditionen im vierten Evangelium. Festschrift für Johannes Beutler SJ zum 70 Geburtstag*, Paderborn 2004, 11-32.

³⁸ S.M. OGDEN, *Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?*, Dallas 1992.

of efficacious quality to Jesus' life, a life that definitively revealed the Father and constitutes salvation and, through that life, men and women have the possibility of resurrection, forgiveness and life. In a constitutive Christology, the life and work of Jesus bring about salvation in a way that can never happen in any other way. In a *representative* interpretation of Jesus' saving life, the possibility remains open to recognize the potential of salvation earlier than (and after) the coming of Jesus, given from the beginning of creation. This does not mean, of course, that Jesus is not *confessionally* constitutive for Christians, but it is to say that he is not *per se exclusively* constitutive.

While an exclusive constitutive Christology will inevitably end up in substitution and replacement, a representative Christology opens the possibility of confessing Jesus as the Christ without repudiating the covenantal representation of salvation in the First Covenant with the Jews. It is only in such a representative Christology that the salvific meaning of Jesus can be described as a representation of the covenantal commitment of God expressed in creation and validated at Sinai. In the same representative way, the Covenant of Sinai is an articulation of the Covenant of God with humanity, given from the beginning of creation. And this does not exclude the possibility of seeing Sinai as *confessionally* constitutive for the life of Israel, just as the Christophany of Easter is *confessionally* constitutive for Christian life. Even more, Christians cannot look at reality in another way than to see it through the perspective of Jesus' redemptive life and death. In this way, Christians cannot but be inclusivist. But while Christians experience how the resurrection and Christ-experience function in a paradigmatic way as salvific, they can at the same time recognize that the Exodus functions in its own way paradigmatically as hope for the Jewish people. Christians thus can be fundamentally open to the Jewish religious perspective. In a representative interpretation, the confession of Jesus as Messiah does not have to lead to a theology of contempt and substitution. Jesus, seen in the perspective of Sinai, represents the Covenant mediated there as well. Jesus is perceived by Christians as the One who generously re-presents this covenantal reality.

This, of course, does not dissolve the difference between Jews and Christians, but it redirects our focus to the best way of honoring and representing the covenantal reality of God with humanity within each religion. Representative Christology can be helpful in avoiding two imbalances: to think fulfilment first and foremost as *past* fulfilment in Jesus or in the Church, or to think it only a thing to be accomplished in the *future*.

The search for the novelty of Christ is mostly put in the past tense. Theologians ask what was different about him, what change took place with his coming and going? Putting the question in this way implies speaking of the resurrection as a past event and asking what really happened. These questions about the past certainly play an important role in a living Church but they are not the most crucial ones. We concur with Van Buren:

"What was new about Christ in the past is what is new about him today or the Church's faith is in vain. [...] Living faith will begin in the present, [...] look to the future, and then retell the past"³⁹.

Or in the words of Moltmann:

"Every confession of Christ leads to the way, and along the way, and is not yet in itself the goal. [...] 'I am the way', says Jesus about himself according to one of the old Johannine sayings (John 14:6)"⁴⁰.

This means that Christians recognize Christ-in-his-becoming, Christ on the way, Christ in the movement of God's eschatological history. We see here revelation in the first place as a mission in the present, more than as a fulfillment in the past or in the future. Christology should be open to a constant revision, because revelation stands before us as well as behind us. The story is not over. In different ways, each of the witnesses to Jesus as Lord made this clear. Paul is teaching in Rome "quite openly and unhindered" (Acts 28:31). Revelation in the present is also for us much more a quest than a fulfilment. In this way, fulfilment in Jesus is a partial fulfilment in the past, a dynamic process in the present and for the future.

Moltmann emphasizes the different stages in God's eschatological history with Jesus: the earthly, the crucified, the raised, the present and the coming One. A possible influence in Moltmann's approach is that in Jewish-Christian dialogue we have become too fixated on the final end. When so much emphasis is placed on the Christological end of the story, Van Buren argues, then the intervening chapters written today in the story of Christ are in danger of being treated with less seriousness.

³⁹ P. VAN BUREN, *A Theology of Jewish-Christian Reality. 3: Christ in Context*, Washington 1995, 204.

⁴⁰ J. MOLTSMANN, *Der Weg Jesu Christi. Christologie in messianischen Dimensionen*, München 1989, 51.

"To live in an unfinished story is to realize that one is contributing to its writing by living. It is to realize that the story's development *and its future course* depend not only on God but also on God's partners"⁴¹.

In our view, this implies that the way Jesus will be the Messiah will depend upon the way Christians re-present him today. When the Church or some of its members fail to represent Jesus' cause authentically, to that extent Jesus' cause is set back and will affect the way in which Jesus will or will not be the Messiah. We must concentrate here on the issue we find at the center of the dialectic tension between the two faiths, the issue of the unredeemedness versus redeemedness of the world. The basic difference between Jews and Christians consists fundamentally in the experience of realized eschatology in the Christ event. Christians are linked to, are baptized into, this eschatological event, and they must extend its meaning and its historical dimensions to human history, in time and space. Jews are witnessing the "not yet" of the entire Messianic age. Shalom Ben-Chorin adopted this argument as follows:

"The Jew is profoundly aware of the unredeemed character of the world, and he perceives and recognizes no enclave of redemption in the midst of an unredeemed world. The concept of a redeemed soul in the midst of an unredeemed world is alien to the Jew, profoundly alien, inaccessible from the primal ground of his existence. This is the innermost reason for Israel's rejection of Jesus, not a merely external, merely national conception of Messianism. So when we say redemption, we mean the whole of redemption. Between creation and redemption we know only one caesura: the revelation of God's will"⁴².

Christians must agree with Jews that the world is not yet redeemed and recognize the importance of Israel's continuing witness to this fact. They must also accept the critique that the Christian insistence upon redeemedness has occupied a central place in the Church's ideological justification of its own social and theological dominance. In the light of the historical Christian triumphalism, what could it possibly mean that Jesus is the Redeemer of Israel? In the opinion of Eckardt, the Jew is obliged to ask the Christian a painful question:

"When you set out the cup of communion wine in remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus, what possible *specific* meaning or lesson is embodied in this symbolic act? Are

⁴¹ VAN BUREN, *A Theology of Jewish-Christian Reality*..., 281-282.

⁴² S. BEN-CHORIN, *Die Antwort des Jona. Zum Gestaltwandel Israels. Ein geschichts-theologischer Versuch*, Hamburg 1956, 99.

you ready to suffer as Jesus did? Tell me, where were you when we Jews were living and dying in Auschwitz? In sum, just who are the witnesses of the Redeemer?"⁴³.

The fact that Christians historically have not always represented the redemption in Jesus authentically does not mean that Jesus is no longer the Redeemer for Christians. It is, and remains a fact of Christian life, that Christians experience mercy, or justice, or forgiveness, or love for the enemy in particular lives and communities, and when they experience this radical novelty in the present, they can trace it to the newness of Christ in their lives.

The Christian response to the message of Jesus must always have a certain strange sound to the Jew whose knowledge of the Christian Cross is so vividly one of the Jews' own suffering at the hands of Christians, rather than one of the suffering of Christians for the sake of their faith. Jews know from experience that sometimes Christians are the last ones to love their neighbors as themselves, not to mention their enemies. The dialectic between Jews and Christians is thus a strange one. While Jews suffer more, they show greater social responsibility and utopianism. While Christians suffer less, they show less social hope and more social irresponsibility. Christians like to whisper to themselves that were they to live the fullness of redemption in Christ here and now, the cost would be too great. And precisely this prompts Jews to point to the unredeemedness of the world. At the same time, the moral quality of life of the Jews is a partial refutation of their concentration on the unredeemedness of the world and shows what redemption could mean, even if it is not motivated by the power of Christ. We think here of the Jewish refusal to treat Christians the way Christians treat Jews.

Does this mean that Christians should give up their belief in Jesus as the Redeemer? On the contrary. The confrontation with Judaism asks Christians to be more authentically Christian. Christians should thus not leave open the question of Jesus' "Messiah hood", but they should accept that Jews leave this question open. Christians have to learn to live with the Jewish belief in the "no" to Jesus for the sake of their own Christology. The way Jesus will come as the Christ and the Redeemer of the world will depend on the way Christians re-present him in the here and now. If Christians are not able to bring his redemption to the world today, especially in relation to the Jewish people, then I fear that at the end of time, they will not meet a triumphing Messiah, but what I have

⁴³ A.R. ECKARDT, *Elder and Younger Brothers: the Encounter of Jews and Christians*, New York 1967, 112.

called in other publications a "weeping Messiah", a Messiah weeping for the injuries and the unredeemedness that Christians have caused, especially to God's chosen people. Then it would end quite ironically with the fact that it will not be Christians, with their triumphalist Messianic perceptions, but Jews who will be the first ones capable of recognizing the Messiah as the Savior of the World.