

"Mind the Gap": Bridging One Dozen Lacunae in Jewish-Catholic Dialogue



The Second Annual John Paul II Lecture in Christian-Jewish Relations

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We, at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, in Cincinnati, were privileged for months to host the 2,200 square-foot exhibit entitled: "A Blessing to One Another: Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People." Created at Cincinnati's Xavier University,¹ after seven years of traveling to at least sixteen other venues it returned to Cincinnati to grace our campus' main entrance. (See handout, p. 1.)

The exhibit proceeds through four areas: First, in Poland, where Karol's apartment is owned by a Jewish family, and a close friend is Jerzy Kluger, whose father heads the Jewish community. Second are the years of the Holocaust and World War II, when Karol begins university studies underground, and Jerzy and family are deported to concentration camps. Third, Karol's rise from priest to bishop to cardinal, a period when Jerzy miraculously survives the camps but his entire family is killed, with the two friends then reuniting after the war. Fourth, the papacy of John Paul II during which he and Jerzy begin the healing between their two faiths.²

Having the sense of John Paul II spiritually abiding on our very premises heightens my pleasure in delivering this address. Over the months of the Exhibit honoring him, not only our rabbinical candidates but also our doctoral students (Jewish and Christian) came to appreciate that, as "the first pope to enter a synagogue, the first to officially visit and recognize the State of Israel,³ and the first to formally engage in an act of repentance for the Catholic Church's past treatment of Jews,"⁴ John Paul II dramatically energized Jewish-Catholic relations. Further, given today's global resurgence of antisemitism, we take comfort in his uncompromising condemnation of this hatred past and present — in statements of his own⁵ and iterations of *Nostra Aetate* (1965)⁶ and of

¹ Produced by Xavier University, Hillel Jewish Student Center and the Shtetl Foundation, with The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati and Xavier University financial sponsors.

² Cf. <<http://www.downtownphoenixjournal.com/tag/jerzy-kluger/>>.

³ <<http://www.mfa.gov.il/PopeinIsrael/Israel-Vatican/Israel+welcomes+visit+by+Pope+John+Paul+II++March.htm>>.

⁴ <<http://www.xavier.edu/news/news/9857/1/no>>.

⁵ See, e.g.: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/14/international/europe/14POPE.html>>;

<<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2007/12/john-paul-ii-and-the-jews>>;

<http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01111997_p-42a_en.html>.

⁶ *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra Aetate,"* proclaimed by his holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, Section 4.

its commentary *Guidelines* (in 1974)⁷ and *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism ...* (in 1985).⁸

This very week the Jewish community has been further buoyed by indications that Pope Francis I may substantively extend John Paul II's contributions in Jewish-Catholic relations. Yet words concluding the 1974 *Guidelines* continue to resonate: in Jewish-Catholic relations, we face a "still ... long road ahead."

Beyond prospects for modern interpersonal relationships, what can we foresee regarding our *academic* arena? Applying here recent trends, the next phase of our academic dialogue may entail intensified concentration by Jews and Catholics together on the New Testament *alone*, as reflected in the publication of the *Jewish Annotated New Testament*⁹ — beyond our already long-standing focus on the New Testament in relation to Jewish Scripture. This potential development will be illustrated by the latter part of my presentation today.

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As we turn now to p. 2 of the handout, I explain my presentation's unusual title, opening with "Mind the Gap." Many months ago, in advance of a long subway ride underneath much of London, I brought along some reading matter of past vintage, including a 1990 essay by my respected friend of several decades, Fr. John Pawlikowski: "Rethinking Christianity: A Challenge to Jewish Attitudes."¹⁰ Considerably later, after being invited to this program, I recalled Fr. Pawlikowski's essay when I saw that indeed he himself had referenced it during his inaugural lecture here last year.¹¹ In that 1990 piece, Fr. Pawlikowski had pondered the feasibility of establishing some quasi-formal "bonding" of Catholics and Jews (the concept of bonding also present in *Nostra Aetate* itself¹²).

Even amidst the rattling of my subway, I found the essay stimulating, challenging, but not a little troubling. Fr. Pawlikowski expressed frustration at the relatively shallow understanding of Christianity by Jews, including Jewish scholars in general. Given the mammoth overhaul of Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism since Vatican II, why had the degree of reciprocity not been commensurate from the Jewish side? Why did Jews continue to show less interest in

⁷ *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration "Nostra Aetate"* (n. 4), Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, instituted by Paul VI on 22 October 1974. Given at Rome, 1 December 1974. Preamble.

⁸ *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis of the Roman Catholic Church*. 24 June 1985, VI.2, Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

⁹ *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. Edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Z. Brettler. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ John T. Pawlikowski, "Rethinking Christianity: A Challenge to Jewish Attitudes," *Moment*, 15:4 (August 1990): 36-39.

¹¹ *Pope John Paul II on Christian-Jewish Relations: His Legacy, Our Challenges*, Boston College Center for Christian-Jewish Learning, March 1, 2012, note 17.

¹² Opening with: "As the Sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock"; see also <<http://www.sju.edu/int/academics/centers/ijcr/pdf/NA%207%20Key%20Points.pdf>>.

Christianity than did Christians in Judaism? Despite lip-service by Jewish theologians that a corrective was indeed long-overdue, there had been but little follow-through. With all of these assessments I myself agree! Further, not only was this the case back in 1990 but it remains largely so also today.

Fr. Pawlikowski also volunteered a rich series of conjectures as to what has contributed to, even caused, this asymmetry: that Christianity needs to speak of Judaism as a basis for articulating its own meaning and purpose, but the reverse is not true; that Jews cannot recover from the deep scarring left on the Jewish consciousness by the bitter history of Christian persecution of Jews; that Jews experience a lurking fear that dialogue may become a cover for missionizing; and the like. Nonetheless, are we not long overdue for some closer "bonding" today at least in response to the ending of the Church supersessionism and triumphalism of yesteryear? I felt that Fr. Pawlikowski was justified in asking, even somberly, whether "bonding" was achievable without both parties embracing it. I say "somerly" because he stated in his essay that he had already experienced a cool reception to his (then recent) proposal from some in the Jewish community.

My intent at this juncture is not overtly to respond to his essay because, not a *theologian*, I am instead a New Testament *historian*. Rather, I intend to relate how the experience of reading his essay specifically on the London subway generated this lecture's title and structure — i.e., the shaping of my remarks this afternoon. For upon finishing my reading of his essay, I had but fifteen seconds left on my train to ponder why a warmer response had not come Fr. Pawlikowski's way.

At that moment, abruptly, I saw the writing on the walls — literally. My train pulled into my destination station, and the walls were plastered with that ubiquitous London iconic logo warning: "Mind the Gap," referring to the up to eight inch space, or "gap," running between trains and their exiting platforms. Here disembarking passengers might stumble or, worse, fall in between. (How many broken ankles have those signs prevented? Actually, how many broken ankles did it take for those signs to be installed for the first time in 1969?) Homiletically, I could not help but associate and apply the "Mind the Gap" signs to account for the resistance to Fr. Pawlikowski's call for "bonding": was the cool reception he perceived due to "gaps" that we Catholics and Jews have yet to mind, or to gaps that we simply *cannot* mind?

*

In speaking for myself, I propose now to present a nominal dozen "gaps" the minding of which would bring at least *me* closer to the kind of "bonding" as I interpreted Fr. Pawlikowski's term. Yet the "gaps" that I will be offering will be manifestly *Jewish* perspectives and, pointedly I believe, mostly of a nature not mentioned in the Pawlikowski essay. This is so because, for me, the most significant gap is my contention that we Catholics and Jews have skipped over a required stage for bonding to occur — this in the area of *historical* (in contrast to theological) analysis. In our discussion period, I fervently hope to hear Catholics respond and suggest their own perceived "gaps" that we, together, must work to narrow. For now, let us correlate my lecture-outline with the handout on the middle of p. 2.

SEVEN GENERAL "GAPS"

"Mind the Gap" #1: *Theological Compared to Historical Discourse*

Most Jewish participants assess our Jewish-Catholic dialogue as conducted primarily in *theological* terms. Yet not theology but ethnicity, culture, ethical *mitzvot* (or commandments), and especially history generally constitute the core elements of Jews' self-definition. Since it is the history of past centuries that has brought us into our modern relationship, Jews may feel that to close this gap — in the interest of dialogue and even "bonding" — requires us to proceed *historically* more so than theologically, and that this includes not only quoting but commencing *full historical analyses of every New Testament passage that we quote in Jewish-Catholic dialogue*. This first "gap" — theology vs. history — will surface time and again over the next few moments, and segues directly into Gap #2.

"Mind the Gap" #2: *Teaching Pre- as Well as Post-Vatican II History*

A Jewish colleague recently related how a devout Catholic friend took umbrage at the "insult to Catholic faith" when my colleague happened to reference centuries of Church maltreatment of Jews. Months later their friendship resumed — my colleague assumes that her friend's priest had confirmed the allegation. Is there a "gap" here, and if so how do we mind it?

In this connection, Chicago's late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, appointed by John Paul II, was most appreciated by Jews. In his 1995 lecture in Jerusalem's Hebrew University (titled *Antisemitism: The Historical Legacy and the Continuing Challenge for Christians*¹³), he urged that "the history of antisemitism and of anti-Judaic theology be restored [not eliminated but *restored*] to ... Catholic teaching materials ... to tell the full story of the Church's treatment of Jews over the centuries, ending with a rejection of the shadow side of that history and theology at the Second Vatican Council The Church needs to engage in public repentance."¹⁴

The gap that concerned Cardinal Bernadin was sharply evinced, in year 2000, when John Paul II publicly sought forgiveness for centuries of Catholic sin against Jews. *Jews* instantly understood the Pope's apology, yet because the welcomed thrust of Vatican II had so stripped away from Catholic educational materials reportage of traditional Church negativity toward Jews, by 2000 an entire new generation of Catholics could not fathom what it was for which the Pope was now apologizing! This explains why, in that year's March 27 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, John Leo captioned his write-up of the Pope's apology: "Can you please be a bit more specific?"¹⁵

¹³ (Published Fairfield, CT. Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, 1995), 16, 19.

¹⁴ See also Michael J. Cook, "Jewish Views of Jesus," *Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Jerusalem Lecture* (Chicago: Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, March 26, 2007).

¹⁵ See reference to John Leo, <<http://www.bibletoday.com/archive/popeapology.htm>>.

Cardinal Bernadin had instructed that minding this kind of gap required "restor[ing] to ... Catholic teaching materials ... the full story of the Church's treatment of Jews over the centuries" so that Christians today will no longer be mystified as to what *Nostra Aetate* was trying to mind and mend. Indeed, we may even be faced here with an unfortunate reversal, as illustrated now in Gap #3 (continuing the handout, p. 2).

"Mind the Gap" #3: Christian Religious Antisemitism in Relation to the Holocaust

A Jewish historian at a Catholic University painfully admitted to me recently that he has ceased at least a decade of teaching any courses on Holocaust history. His Catholic students no longer resonate with terminologies proposed by various, including especially Christian, historians: that Christian anti-Jewish teachings and actions were a "precondition," "contributing ingredient," "prelude," "matrix," "germ-carrier," "seed-bed," "groundwork," or "motivation for," or "supplied the climate or context for" the Holocaust.¹⁶ Instead, these students are now desirous of shifting Holocaust courses from under the "History" or "Theology" departments instead to "Ethics" or even "Psychology" — this because they are finding discomfiting consideration that Nazi antisemitism interacted with antecedent Christian attitudes toward Jews. This problem naturally segues, now, to "Mind the Gap #4" (still p. 2 of the handout).

"Mind the Gap" #4: Were the Gospels Implicitly Anti-Jewish or Only Anti-Jewishly Misapplied?

Jews sensitively respect Catholic belief that the Gospels, inspired by divine love, could not intentionally encourage contempt of any people. Given Jesus' preaching of turning the other cheek (Matt 5:39), of even loving one's enemies (5:44), how could those recording his teachings, and deeply committed to him themselves, be thought to have written works that were anti-Jewish? A gap thereby arises because Jews shrink from asking the follow-up question: if the Church Fathers superimposed their own anti-Jewish attitudes onto earlier New Testament views, could not the Gospel writers, in like fashion, have themselves superimposed anti-Jewish sentiments from their age when depicting Jesus' ministry?

The Roman Catholic *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism* (1985) themselves state: "Certain [Gospel] controversies reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus."¹⁷ Yet left relatively unclear is where such a statement should lead us. After all, explicitly it is *Jesus himself* who is depicted as central in the controversies with Jews that the Gospels report. Were the *Notes* alerting Catholics that Jesus' depicted negativity toward Jews might not actually have involved him at all — that, instead, the Gospels here enlist and *adjust* Jesus' image as an aid to later Christians in coping with Jewish skeptics of *their own time*, not

¹⁶ Gerald Darring presents these terms and their sponsors in "The Holocaust and the Teaching of Contempt,"

<<http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/03Connection.htm>>.

¹⁷ IV.D.

his? This is one of those considerations which my book terms "Gospel Dynamics."¹⁸ Are the *Notes* themselves "minding a gap" between, on the one hand, how the historical Jesus actually comported himself and, on the other, how the Gospel writers enlisted and adjusted his image decades later to address problems of *their* day?

"Mind the Gap" #5: Juxtaposing New Testament to Jewish Scripture or Rabbinic Literature? (Handout, top of p. 3.)

It is Catholic directives — the *Guidelines*, thereafter the *Notes* — that began urging Christians to "strive to learn by what essential traits ... Jews define themselves in the light of [Jews'] own religious experience."¹⁹ Yet all branches of Judaism today, however differing from one another, derive from *rabbinic* interpretations that accommodate the Hebrew Bible to changing times.

The "gap" here? So many Catholic theological pronouncements continue to relate the "New" Testament solely to the Jewish Bible and not to Rabbinic Literature at all — although John Paul II himself endorsed post-biblical Jewish sources for Catholic self-understanding, insisting that Jesus used teaching methods similar to those employed by the rabbis of his time.²⁰ Of like mind is the explicit directive from the *Notes*: "We [Catholics] must remind ourselves how the permanence of Israel is accompanied by a continuous spiritual fecundity, in the rabbinical period."²¹ Why, then, does not Rabbinic Literature figure as more of a staple of our dialogue? I feel it Jews' responsibility to press minding this gap, but also Christians' responsibility to request aid in this endeavor.

"Mind the Gap" #6: Should Typology Be Processed as Prediction or Conformance?

Verbalized by the Roman Catholic *Guidelines* and *Notes* are the following quoted materials (sequencing adjusted):

- "Typological interpretation consists in reading the Old Testament as preparation and, in certain aspects, outline and foreshadowing of the New"
- "God ... wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New."²²
- Such "typology ... makes many people uneasy and is perhaps the sign of a problem unresolved Christians read the Old Testament in the light of the event of the dead and

¹⁸ Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*. (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, repr. 2012), xi, xiii-xiv, xvi-xviii, xxiv, 11, 73-91, 106, 120, 132, 143-144, 146, 159, 188-189, 208, 218, 229, 248-249, 267-269, 282-294, 297.

¹⁹ Cf. *Guidelines*: Preamble (cf. also Introductory Note); repeated by *Notes* I.4.

²⁰ *Guidelines* III - Teaching and Education.

²¹ *Notes* III, VI.1.

²² *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation "Dei Verbum."* Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI (November 18, 1965), n. 16; also cited in *Guidelines*, III - Teaching and Education.

risen Christ and ... on these grounds ... a Christian reading of the Old Testament ... does not necessarily coincide with the Jewish reading.²³

The "gap" here is less that Catholics and Jews read Jewish Scripture differently than that some consequences of typology may have come to threaten the Jewish people's very survival — and *this* dimension of the "gap" goes unrecognized. For example, how are we together to process the parallelism between Jesus' Passion and that of Jeremiah? (Turn now to "Mind the Gap #6," the bulk of p. 3 of the handout.)

Is This Jesus?

Long ago, there lived a righteous Jew who spoke for God. Defying the religious establishment, he aroused enmity from Jewish priests. Demanding they amend their ways, he threatened destruction of the Temple ("a den of robbers")! The priests threatened him with death. He warned that they could bring innocent blood upon themselves. The vacillating civil authority summoned and pronounced him innocent, expressing reluctance to heed his accusers' demands. As the just man warned, the Temple was later destroyed.

This is Jeremiah

The problem typologically? Did the author of Jeremiah genuinely cast Jeremiah's Passion in terms uncannily foreshadowing the Passion of Jesus; or were later traditions about Jesus tailored to match the Jewish Biblical imagery regarding Jeremiah?

The Passion of JEREMIAH	The Passion of JESUS
"Has the house ... become a den of robbers ...?" (7:11)	→ "Is it not written [Jer 7:11], 'My house ... you have made ... a den of robbers?'" (Mk 11:17 & parr)
I will "do to th[is] house [temple #1] ... as I did to Shiloh [1 Sa 4–6]!" (7:14)	→ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple [#2] ...'" (Mk 14:58 & par; cf. Jn 2:19)
"All the people laid hold of him, saying: 'You shall die'" (26:8)	→ "All the people" demanded his death (Mt 27:25)
An inquiry convened for Jeremiah (26:10)	→ A Sanhedrin convened for Jesus (Mk 14:53 & parr)
Priests (and others) said Jeremiah "deserves ... death" for words that "you have heard" (26:11)	→ The Sanhedrin decided that Jesus "deserves death" (Mt 26:66 [cf. Mk 14:64]) for words that "you have heard" (Mk 14:64; cf. Mt 26:65)
"you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves" (26:15)	→ "His blood be on us and on our children!" (Mt 27:25)
His captors took him for execution to the vacillating King Zedekiah, who replied:	→ His captors took him for execution to the vacillating prefect Pilate, who replied: "See to

²³Notes II: Relations between the Old and New Testament, 3 and 6.

“He is in your hands ...” (38:5)		it yourselves” (Mt 27:24)
Wanting a private conversation, “Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah” (38:14)	→	Wanting a private conversation, “Pilate ... called Jesus” to him (Jn 18:33)
Zedekiah was “afraid” (38:19)	→	Pilate was “the more afraid” (Jn 19:8)

The "Bull's-Eye" Analogy

A farmer once arrayed his barn wall with bull's-eyes, with an arrow piercing the center of each. But appearances differed from reality: he had shot the arrows first and only thereafter painted a bull's-eye around each! The end result looked the same but not to someone who knew the underlying process. We should be dialoguing over this "gap" in perception: the degree to which passages perceived as Jewish Scriptural predictions are "arrows shot first," with Jesus' Gospel image a bull's-eye framed to surround them.

Some resultant choices include these three: (1) Was the Jewish Bible *fulfilled by* Jesus? (2) Was Jesus' image *conformed to match* the Jewish Bible? Or (3) did Jesus himself cite the Jewish Bible (as in quoting Jeremiah 7:11), and thereafter was, in turn, himself *further conformed* to it? Here constructive is the solution of Raymond Brown: that not only might Gospel narrators have created incidents "to give scriptural flavor," but from incidents that did actually occur narrators dramatized those capable of echoing the scriptures.²⁴

The core problem here is that no section of the Gospels has proven more dangerous to Jews than the preaching of Passion traditions that generated antisemitism, costing the lives of uncountable Jews and cutting off as well their potential offspring. Did the Passion of *Jeremiah* play even the slightest role in early Christian crafting of the contours of *Jesus' Passion*? The observation that "a Christian reading of the Old Testament ... does not necessarily coincide with the Jewish reading" leaves unaddressed not simply a gap in how we Catholics and Jews may read Jewish Scripture but a veritable *chasm* given the dire consequences of the way typology on some Biblical subjects imprinted itself on traditions tragic for Jewish history ever after.

"Mind the Gap" #7: The Problematic "Sibling Faiths" Metaphor (see handout, p. 4).

Modern-day use of the "sibling faith" metaphor — that Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity sprang from the same parentage — may at first look seem salutary for modern theological interchange, conveying how radically for the better our relationship has changed since, and as a result of, Vatican II. Indeed, this change even comes close to fulfilling the image of "bonding."

Yet I alert us to the "gap left unminded" here for many Jews — a gap contributing to the "coolness" directed toward that overture of "bonding." *Sibling* is a biological term in the sense

²⁴ *The Death of the Messiah*. (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 16 n. 20.

that genuine siblings can only derive from an *identical* gene pool, no matter how much the siblings may come to diverge later on. Many Jews are discomfited, then, by the question: how did an allegedly identical gene pool come to generate fundamental elements of early Christianity not traceable to Judaism's own heritage? Examples: Incarnation, sacrifice for others' sins (eventually, for Original Sin), the Eucharist, vicarious identification with a dying and rising deity — all elements with which Rabbinic Judaism is not attuned and, indeed, opposed? Do these elements owe no derivation or indebtedness whatsoever to an antecedent *Greco-Roman* context?

*

How widely representative of Jews are my first proposed seven "gaps"? I feel that each would elicit a fair measure of resonance — and that even Jews who have not heard some of these articulated before would now readily agree with them upon experiencing a first exposure.

FIVE (5) MORE "GAPS" FROM MAJOR NEW TESTAMENT SOURCES

The remaining five "gaps" (of my nominal dozen) address the problem of what may be missing when we interpret, in isolation from their wider context, New Testament texts commonly cited as key to dialogue. I draw on five: one each, respectively, from Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, but there are dozens of others like them. Each of these five "gaps" is the space between how, on the one hand, the texts are cited in isolation and how, on the other, they could be differently interpreted if only their *panoramic* context were also explored (which I do not find sufficiently done). Too narrow a wrestling with New Testament texts is the single greatest obstacle for me to "bonding" — one not enumerated by Fr. Pawlikowki.

"Minding the Gap" #8: PAUL — Do We Misapply Romans 9-11? (See handout, p. 5.)

These three chapters from Paul's letter to Christians in Rome represent his only significant statement of proper relations between Jews and Christians (both Jewish and Gentile). Yet I feel we too readily apply them to the relationship between Jews and Christians *today*. The "gap" here: the likelihood that our "universal" application of these three chapters may differ sharply from Paul's aim in composing them. After all, each of Paul's genuine²⁵ Epistles is prompted by particular circumstances of the churches or persons involved. Because Jewish-Christian relations are not a consuming interest in any other Pauline writing, are we entitled to view Romans 9–11 solely as Paul's timeless universal discourse for interfaith theological dialogue without instead also pondering whether our text is Paul's response to a far more limited historical situation in the Roman community itself? Can we legitimately proceed when omitting what may be such a vitally relevant panoramic explanation of historical context?

²⁵ In my view: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

An example of a possibly missing "panorama," even if but speculative: The second-century Roman historian Suetonius mentions a disturbance in Rome's Jewish quarter, apparently during the late 40's, caused by a certain "Chrestus," sufficiently disruptive that the Emperor Claudius banished at least some Jews from the city.²⁶ By "Chrestus" did Suetonius mean "Christ"? Did the disturbances stem from Jews' reaction to Christian missionizing in Rome's Jewish quarter? Did Claudius' action also alter Rome's Christian demographics, for expelled along with Jews per se would likely have been Jewish-Christian leaders — as when the Book of Acts reports how Paul "found [in Corinth] a Jew named Aquila ... lately come from Italy with his wife, Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome" (18:2)?

As it applies to the Epistle to the Romans: did this banishment of Jewish-Christian leaders allow Gentile-Christians, by default, to fill the leadership vacuum caused by Claudius' expulsions of Jewish-Christians from Rome? If so, then should not we be reading Romans 9-11 against the backdrop of *this* panorama, and therefore hesitate to apply Paul's Epistle primarily to today's Gentile-Christians rather than to those of mid-first-century Rome? When the new Emperor, Nero, in 54 C.E., did not renew Claudius' decree, Jews and Jewish-Christians were now permitted to trickle back into Rome. Imagine the wariness, anger, and tension among Roman Jews and Roman Christians (both Jewish and Gentile) — as per our handout, p. 5:

- Wariness by returning *Jews* of renewed *Jewish-Christian* missionary incursions akin to those sparking Claudius' expulsion of Jews and Jewish-Christians to start with!
- Anger of returning *Jewish-Christians* at condescending Gentile-Christians who, in the interim, had displaced them as leaders of the very Roman church that Jewish-Christians themselves had founded!
- Tension fostered by *Gentile-Christians* arguing for a status reversal: that Jewish-Christians' banishment had been God's displacement of them with Gentile-Christians as those fit to run the Roman church!

Since Paul composed Romans shortly after this turn of events before setting out for Rome — likely during spring of 56, in Corinth — should we not at least try out interpreting Roman 9-11 as not an intended universal treatise at all but instead as Paul's attempted resolution of the complex situation awaiting his arrival in Rome? Yet rather than *also* processing Romans 9-11 against this (or another) historical backdrop, we appear to ignore this option as of no consequence — explicating Romans 9-11 as if in a vacuum in which Paul himself did not live. To do this, I submit, is to leave a major gap unminded.

"Mind the Gap" #9: MARK — Jesus' Sanhedrin Trial a Merely Aggrandized "Consultation"?

The 1988 *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion*, formulated by the (then) National Conference of Catholic Bishops, averred that "the historical and biblical questions

²⁶ Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.1-5 — "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus ["Christ"?], he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome" (ca 49 C.E.?).

surrounding the notion that there was a formal Sanhedrin trial [of Jesus] argue for extreme caution and, perhaps, even abandoning the device."²⁷ Yet the content of the Sanhedrin episode continues as a regular feature in many dialogue sessions. The import of the gap between the Bishops' document and our customary dialogue is that, second only to the Barabbas episode, the Sanhedrin trial is *the* Gospel episode of most devastating impact on countless Jews throughout history (just think of Mel Gibson's dramatization of it!²⁸). We cannot successfully talk about "bonding" today without a meticulous examination of whether the key Gospel passages so deleterious to Jews throughout history are now declared re-understood by Christians themselves.

The missing panorama? Keeping in mind that Mark is here the primary source for Matthew and Luke, let us focus on our handout's p. 5, at the bottom — Diagram 12.3 — leaving out the separate and in my view later tradition of Peter's denial.²⁹ Examine here the second line from the bottom: Mk 15:1's report of a brief Friday morning "consultation" by Jewish leaders, in Jesus' absence, over what to do with their captive?

At least as an observation, read the diagram without the gray arrow (that contains a concentrated report of the supposed Sanhedrin trial):

14:53 "And they led Jesus to the high priest **15:1** And as soon as it was morning the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, ... held a *consultation*; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate."

Here "the chief priests, with the elders and scribes held a consultation." How simply, yet sufficiently, the story-line proceeds without the shaded arrow — the Sanhedrin trial.³⁰ Evidently, the "consultation" and the trial appear redundant. Could we not have had the second without the first?

I believe that Christian tradition belatedly came to deem the mere Friday morning "consultation" as so demeaning for the Son of God as to motivate aggrandizing Friday's morning's fleeting "consultation" into a full-fledged trial the previous night, before the Sanhedrin, greatest court of the land. ("Aggrandizing" is another example of what I term "Gospel Dynamics," with scores of illustrations of the latter.³¹) The arrows in handout Diagram 12.4 point out the possibly missing panorama: to secure attending personnel for a Sanhedrin night trial, Mark extended back into Thursday night the Friday morning services of the "chief priests, elders, and scribes."³²

²⁷ *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion*. (Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988).

²⁸ *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

²⁹ Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, 137–147, 184–191.

³⁰ See <<http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/2013/coo378023.shtml>>, where I justify abbreviating 14:53 and 15:1 (due to editing by Mark so as to facilitate his insertion, between these two texts, of the aggrandizing Sanhedrin paragraph).

³¹ See my "Gospel Dynamics Index," *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, 351-354.

³² In Mk 14:53; 15:1, matching the same odd order of these three components. Only here in Mark are "elders" the second of the triad; elsewhere "scribes," not "elders," occupy the second position (8:31; 10:33; 11:18,27; 14:1,43). This is another tell-tale clue that Mark literarily extended the Friday morning triad to serve as the audience at the previous night's manufactured trial.

- This would explain why the previous night's "trial" oddly renders Friday morning's "consultation" superfluous — what would remain to discuss by the same personnel, now mysteriously summoned anew, that was not already decided just hours before? Friday morning's mere "consultation," then, would be the earlier tradition and the previous night's trial crafted and belatedly inserted thereafter.³³
- This would likewise explain why Jesus' two radically different demeanors inside the Sanhedrin — *silence*, then *stridence* — are traceable to a harnessing of the figure of Jesus to two clashing proof-texts from later Christianity (handout bottom of p. 6):
 - His *silence* conformed to Isaiah 53:7's Suffering Servant: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."
 - His *stridence* matched to Daniel 7:13's Son of man text, "... with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of man," together with Psalm 110:1: "The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand'"
- To be noticed also (handout Diagram 12:7) is the *structure* of the high priest's two questions to Jesus at night: it seems to parallel that of Pilate's two questions to Jesus following Friday morning's "consultation":
 - *Questioning Jesus' SILENCE*
HIGH PRIEST: 14:60 ... the high priest ... asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"
PILATE: 15:4 ... Pilate ... asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you."
 - *Specifying Jesus' CRIME*
HIGH PRIEST: 14:61 ... the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"
PILATE: 15:2 ... Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Is this parallel structure coincidental? If not, then was the structure of Pilate's queries literarily modeled on that of the high priest's, or the reverse? I believe the reverse. Given the litany of oddities spotted thus far with the Sanhedrin narration, it is probable that the high priest's questions were structured on those "later" coming down from Pilate.

Many factors, then (the Sanhedrin-paragraph's proof-texting; its structural affinities with Pilate's interrogation of Jesus; and especially its overall unnaturally skeletal trial presentation), give the sense that Mark is trying to come up with "filler material" to flesh out a trial that never transpired.

³³ This kind of literary technique (introducing new materials into contexts where they do not now rest comfortably) is characteristic of what Mark exhibits elsewhere: e.g., inserting a "blasphemy" unit (2:5b–10) into the healing of the paralytic; a "Passover" unit (14:12–16) before the Last Supper; and a "Barabbas" unit — with its prisoner release — between 15:5 and 15:15b.

In the light of further ramifications still,³⁴ I am perplexed at never once hearing these important considerations cited in any dialogue session I have attended.

"Mind the Gap" #10: MATTHEW — The "Lost Sheep of ... Israel" vs "the Great Commission"

Among the most frequent quotations in dialogue are two cornerstone texts from Matthew (handout, p. 7 top): When Jesus' disciples embark on their mission, he charges them: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5–6). And when implored to heal the daughter of a Canaanite woman, he intensifies this warning: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24). Here Jesus' concern is not simply to go to the Jews primarily but to the Jews *alone*.³⁵

Yet certain Gospel texts selected as foundational for dialogue today may not have originated in the fashion presupposed. Dependence on these two crucial passages is another example of an omitted panorama. Consider Matthew's revision of Jesus' Great Commandment which, as first recorded by Mark, is directed to "Hear, O Israel" (handout, p. 7, middle). Why then does Matthew, copying Mark, delete the Shema's opening sentence, thereby altering Jesus' "Great Commandment" so that it is no longer directed to "Israel"? Does this not impact how we assess Matthew's insistence, twice, on Jesus' commitment solely to Israel as the "lost sheep"? Where, moreover, is the concern for the "lost sheep" in Jesus' "Great Commission" (also only in Matthew; handout Diagram 16.7, p. 7)? Placed here as this Gospel's very last message, Matt 28:19 casts Jesus' directive as now to "make disciples of all nations" — indeed, better translated still would be to "make disciples of all *Gentiles*" (since that is also what *ethne* must mean in the Matt 10 citation).³⁶ Either of these readings seems to reverse Matthew's "lost sheep" texts. However interpreted,³⁷ this "gap" of consequence points up a major panoramic omission caused by blithely citing the "lost sheep" texts in isolation.

"Mind the Gap" #11: LUKE — The Possibility of Inadvertent (i.e., in Full Faith) Retrojection? (handout, p. 8)

Luke 4:16-30 depicts Jesus rejected in his home synagogue, Nazareth. Did this occur, or did Luke intend it as a paradigm for what Christian preachers would later undergo? Jesus recites messianic texts from Isaiah, but was reading from the Prophets (second division of the *Tanakh*) liturgical practice already in Jesus' day (ca. 30) or does this instead reflect Luke's time: retrojection from the 90s? Does this function here as Luke's opportunity anachronistically to put into the context of

³⁴ See my "Is Jesus' Nighttime Sanhedrin Trial an Aggrandizement of Friday Morning's 'Consultation'?" <<http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/2013/coo378023.shtml>>.

³⁵ Cf. *Notes*, "III. Jewish Roots of Christianity — 1. Jesus was and always remained a Jew, his ministry was deliberately limited 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt 15:24)."

³⁶ Not to mention that this is most often the meaning intended by the Septuagint's rendering of the Hebrew Bible.

³⁷ See chapter 16 of my *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, 192-209.

synagogue worship Jesus' proclamation of his Messiahship?³⁸ When Jesus begins developing an anti-Jewish pro-Gentile message,³⁹ his audience rejects, then ejects, him. Why then enlist this episode as proving Jesus' Jewishness rather than Luke's theology? Does it, instead, reflect Luke's need to account for Christianity's rejection by Jews of Luke's own time — which he presents as foreshadowed by Jesus' (alleged) rejection by people of his native town: again retrojection from the 90s?

The missing panoramic context here, then, is that Mark and Matthew relate Jesus' visit to Nazareth's synagogue, but they tell us nothing about his reading here the text from the prophets, and therefore nothing here of Jesus' alleged anti-Jewish interpretation thereof. While our predisposition may be to accept as historically true any text (here, one in Luke) unless proven otherwise, only by asking *panoramic* questions do we "mind this gap."

"Mind the Gap" #12: JOHN — Why Counter "Jews" (~~Judeans~~) with Jesus, Not with the Disciples?

A fundamental contrast in John is alleged to be the diametric opposition between "the Jews" versus Jesus. This explains the profoundly dangerous impact that John exerted on Jews throughout history: for in so far as Jesus, in John, is deemed God as well as the Christ, John can be construed as presenting God Himself as antisemitic. To avoid this conclusion we have the highly dubious argument that by "the Jews" John means only the "Judeans."

It may be impossible to solve this problem especially when, as Raymond Brown argues, this Gospel may have been written in four or more layers over time by different editors.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, again missing for me is a panoramic perspective — in other words, we have a "gap."

According to our handout's last diagram, 18.2 (p. 8): the foil for "the Jews" intended by John could be not *Jesus* but his *disciples*, with the issue defining the difference between *Jews* and *disciples* being "belief." We may tally up over seventy mentions of "the Jews" in John while forgoing tabulating the approximately 100 references to "belief" — more than all in Mark, Matthew, and Luke combined (more striking if we omit places where Matthew and Luke derive their mentions of "belief" from Mark). Indeed, John ends his all important chapter 20: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).⁴¹

³⁸ The *Notes* (III.3) do not consider these more far-reaching concerns, stating only more simply that Jesus "often taught in the Synagogues (cf. Matt 4:23; 9:35; Lk 4:15-18; Jn 18:20 etc.) and ... he wished to put in the context of synagogue worship the proclamation of his Messiahship" (cf. Lk 4:16-21).

³⁹ "4:25 ... there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

⁴⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12* (Volume 1, 1966) and *13-21* (Volume 2, 1970) of the Anchor Bible.

⁴¹ It is widely debated whether Chapter 21 is an epilogue or an addition of sorts.

Arrange the three protagonists as an isosceles triangle, with the "disciples" at one base at the lower left, "the Jews" at the other base at the lower right, with Jesus at the pinnacle — with Jesus transcending both parties. So depicted, opposing "the Jews" are "the disciples." *Belief* comes into the two-columned diagram where "the disciples" (on the left) model those who believe despite all discouragement, and "the Jews" (on the right) symbolizing those who disbelieve in the face of all compelling evidence. So understood, John's paramount concern is not anti-Judaism but rather challenging unbelievers to become believers. This would account for the term's elasticity: where others besides the Jews also fail to believe, the term "the Jews" expands to include these others as well, resolving the enigma of why John sometimes uses the "world" and "the Jews" interchangeably. For overall he portrays "the Jews viewed from the standpoint of Church faith, as the representatives of unbelief (and thereby ... of the unbelieving 'world' in general)."⁴² Such a schematization is certainly preferable to the inference that God personally is anti-Jewish.

Now, John's paramount concern is not anti-Judaism (negative) but rather challenging unbelievers to become believers (positive). The "gap" here is that John's intention is different from our common reading of him,⁴³ so that we should not continue to cite the latter without a sufficient contextual panorama.

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My expectation is that the New Testament, by itself, is the next frontier for Jewish-Catholic dialogue, especially with my listing of the last five "gaps to mind" obviously an attempt to induce us in the direction I predict. The broad clarion call to "mind our gaps" means difficult work — whether my dozen proposed gaps or the many potentially added by others. Even in the absence of successfully closing these gaps, *narrowing* many of them can yet prove manageable, and such a narrowing could materially warm receptivity to any earnest wish for "bonding." Certainly, my own surmises as a historian are only meant to "complement" / "compliment" those of my theologian colleagues. Yet the bottom line remains the cautionary closing sentiment of the *Guidelines*: we still have a long road ahead.

⁴² Consult here Terry Schram, *The Use of Ioudaios [Jew] in the Fourth Gospel*. (Netherlands: Utrecht State Univ., 1974), 132ff., 138, 165, 200ff.

⁴³ This is unlikely to work with every passage mentioning "the Jews," because, as with Brown's analysis, John was created by accrued layers, a process which could introduce inconsistency of meaning of "the Jews."