

## The Evolution of a Tradition: From *Nostra Aetate* to the 'Notes'

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In a remarkable and still most pertinent study paper presented at the Sixth Meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in Venice in March 1977, Professor Tommaso Federici termed the 'profound renewal' of the Catholic Church's attitudes towards Jews and Judaism in our age an 'irreversible' movement.<sup>1</sup> Fr Thomas Stransky CSP, who was on the staff of the Secretariat which drafted *Nostra Aetate* for the Second Vatican Council, spoke in similar terms at a recent anniversary colloquium at the Angelicum: 'only twenty years ago and only with fifteen long Latin sentences, the impossible became possible and the possible became act. Two thousand, two hundred and twenty-one Council Fathers, by their approvals, committed the Roman Catholic Church to an irrevocable act, a *heshbon ha-nefesh*—a reconsideration of the soul. The act began to shift with integrity 1,900 years of relationships between Catholics and Jews.'<sup>2</sup>

Part of the 'irreversibility' or 'irrevocability' of that act, Federici argued, lies in the fact that the change in the Church's attitude is a flowering of the biblical, liturgical, ecclesiological, even missiological movements that made the Second Vatican Council possible.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the development of Catholic-Jewish relations in the post-conciliar period can rightly be said to be a 'litmus test' for measuring the success of the Council's effort as a whole, since so many of the Council's major themes flow into it.

There is perhaps an even deeper reason for the irreversibility of

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the changes wrought by the Council through its 'fifteen long Latin sentences'. To understand this deeper reason one needs an appreciation of the concept of 'Catholic Tradition'. For the fact is that *Nostra Aetate*, n. 4 for all practical purposes begins the Church's teaching (Tradition with a capital 'T' as one might say) concerning a theological or, more precisely, doctrinal understanding of the relationship between the Church as People of God and God's People, Israel. No previous Ecumenical Council of the Church, in point of fact, had ever directly addressed the issue.

The Council of Jerusalem in the first century of the common era addressed only the issue of Gentile acceptance into the Body of Christ, determining that, given faith, a rough equivalent of the Noahide commandments and ritual immersion was sufficient for Gentiles (Acts 15). In the second century, Marcion's gnostic theory of incompatible dualism between the God of the ancient and renewed covenants (and therefore the peoples that witness to those covenants) was condemned. In that condemnation, the Church affirmed the unity of the divine plan but did not spell out how that unity was to be understood. So the matter stood until Vatican II. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215), of course, issued its four discriminatory canons against Jews. These, however, were disciplinary laws only, and did not have doctrinal significance.<sup>4</sup>

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, in a talk given in honour of his predecessor at the Vatican Secretariat, Cardinal Augustin Bea, was thus able to call *Nostra Aetate* 'an absolute unicum', stating that 'never before has a systematic, positive, comprehensive, careful and daring presentation of Jews and Judaism been made in the Church by a Pope or a Council. This should never be lost sight of.'<sup>5</sup> So too, Pope John Paul II has reiterated, first in Venezuela and then again earlier this year in Rome, his desire 'to confirm', with utmost conviction, that

the teaching of the Church proclaimed during the Second Vatican Council in the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* . . . remains always for us, for the Catholic Church, for the Episcopate . . . and for the Pope, a teaching which must be followed—a teaching which it is necessary to accept not merely as something fitting, but much more as an expression of the faith, an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as a word of the Divine Wisdom.

Such terminology is normally applied to sacred Scripture.

Considering the centuries in which the 'teaching of contempt' against Jews and Judaism held sway; considering the expulsions, the forced baptisms (prohibited by canon law but done anyway), the martyrdom of hundreds of thousands of Jews by the Crusaders and their

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equally barbarous successors over the ages; and considering the false, but pervasive, theological and social theories ('blood libel', 'well-poisoning', 'purity of blood', the *Protocols* etc.) that arose on the popular level to rationalize such violence by Christians against Jews, one recognizes the guidance of the Holy Spirit in ensuring that the Church did not try to formulate its attitudes toward the Jewish people and Judaism until the present age.

One can only speculate how the leaders of the Spanish Inquisition or the authors of the first passion plays in fourteenth century Germany might have articulated the Jewish-Christian relationship had they been at a Council willing to debate such a document as *Nostra Aetate*. But, in fact, they did not have that opportunity. And no Council took up the questions left unresolved by St Paul in Romans 9-11 until the Second Vatican Council renewed the entire issue in a fresh perspective. This is the significance of *Nostra Aetate* (to paraphrase a famous saying about Maimonides, whose anniversary we also celebrate this week): 'From Paul to Paul, there was none to accept the challenge' (i.e., from St Paul to Paul VI, who signed the Conciliar Declaration).

But if there is no extensive official 'pre-history' for *Nostra Aetate*, there is a determinative post-history upon which to build an interpretation and assessment of the text. Again, from the perspective of the Catholic sense of tradition, such a document can *only* be properly understood in the light of the teachings and statements of the magisterium which are designed to interpret and implement it. This point was made strongly by Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and also of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Declaration in October 1980:

We read it [*Nostra Aetate*] in the light of the 'Guidelines and Suggestions' for its implementation, published by the Commission in 1975 . . . [and] of comments and references to our text coming from Popes and various Episcopates over the years. . . . But it is not only a matter of texts, life itself, that is, the progress of the dialogue with Judaism called for by the Council, sets the texts within the context of lived reality. This context absolutely cannot be ignored.<sup>6</sup>

*Nostra Aetate* opened many windows in the Church's traditionally negative assessment of Jews and Judaism, flatly denying the deicide charge and stressing the positive aspects of the biblical testimony, especially Romans 9-11 (cited some seven times in the text), without totally defining what the positive appreciation it called for would look like. Given all of the ecclesiastical in-fighting that sur-

rounded it and the necessary compromises from the earlier drafts of the statement to the final product,<sup>7</sup> it is not surprising that many commentators at the time tended to stress its ambiguities and weaknesses compared with the earlier drafts: it did not mention the rebirth of the State of Israel or the Holocaust, the chief events of contemporary Jewish self-understanding; it did not 'condemn' the deicide charge, but simply eschewed the notion of collective guilt; it did not address the question of proselytism or of the validity of *Jewish* witness in and to the world; it did not make clear in what sense God's covenant with the Jewish people perdures *post Christum* (on its own or as 'fulfilled' in the Church as the 'new people of God?'); it did not mention explicitly the continuing role of the Jewish people *as a people* after New Testament times (so that it could be read as 'supercessionist' though not abrogationist); it expressed no explicit sorrow or regret for the persecution of Jews by Christians over the centuries; it was silent on whether the Jewish people today had a 'mission' or role of witness to the world and in what way that might relate to the Church's own mission in and for the world; it mentioned only glancingly the issue of the treatment of Jews and Judaism in the liturgy, and while mandating clearly a renewal of catechesis and preaching regarding Jews and Judaism, it gave few explicit examples.

A decade later, and based upon dialogues on the local and international levels that were remarkably fruitful given the shortness of the period when compared to the millenia in which the 'teaching of contempt' held sway, the Holy See issued its implementing document for *Nostra Aetate*, n. 4.<sup>8</sup> One can trace in these 1975 'Guidelines' various phrases and insights that had earlier appeared in local or national Church documents, such as the 'Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations' put out by the US Bishops' Secretariat in 1967, and the statements of the Bishops of Austria (1968), Holland (1970), Belgium (1973), France (1973) and Switzerland (1974).

As with the Conciliar Declaration itself, an earlier draft of the 1975 Vatican 'Guidelines' was made public some years before the adoption of the official text, with the result that many commentators judged the final version 'weakened' and therefore unsatisfactory.

Again a decade of dialogue over the 'grey areas' of the 1975 'Guidelines', and a growing conviction that progress made in Catholic teaching materials<sup>9</sup> (so important on the agenda of the International Liaison Committee over the years) needed to be consolidated and furthered on the international level, resulted in the issuance by the Commission of 'Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in

Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church' on 24 June 1985.<sup>10</sup> Once again, the Holy See's initiative in the dialogue was greeted with some disappointment among Jewish leaders.<sup>11</sup> As before, Jewish concerns were both substantive and procedural, and, as before, not without validity. Jews have, after all, a very real and valid 'stake' in how Jews and Jewish traditions are presented to the world's 800 million Roman Catholics, not, certainly, as a matter of doctrine (which is the Church's own self-articulation) but as a matter of history and objective accuracy. So I believe we Catholics need to take these calls for clarification, offered as they are in the spirit of the dialogue itself, with utmost seriousness, as a most helpful aid to our discernment rather than as any sort of external (and therefore questionable) judgement made upon the integrity of our intentions.

On the other hand, one can, I believe, discern in the cautiousness of each of these steps taken on an official Catholic level not only the seriousness with which the topic is approached by the magisterium, but above all an indication of the 'irreversibility' of the process itself. Each step, indeed each half-step, is measured and secured before the next step is attempted. Each step takes into account and builds upon previous statements. While such a process may appear painfully slow to many of us in the dialogue, the result is increasing security in understanding. From the perspective of the history preceding Vatican II, of course, such progress as has occurred appears breathtakingly rapid.

### The development of a tradition

The following chart<sup>12</sup> lists several areas in which the wording of the 1975 Vatican 'Guidelines' and the more recent 'Notes' have specifically clarified wording left 'creatively vague' by the Second Vatican Council, thus determining how *Nostra Aetate* is today to be read. Many of these, it will be noted, are directly responsive to critiques made of *Nostra Aetate* and the 1975 'Guidelines' in the dialogue between Catholics and Jews sparked by the Council. It is to be expected that the 'Notes' will undergo a similar process of clarification through dialogue.

<i>Nostra Aetate</i> 1965	'Guidelines and Suggestions' 1975	'Notes for Preaching and Catechesis' 1985
1 'The Church . . . decries hatreds, persecutions and manifestations	'Condemn, as opposed to the very spirit of Christianity, all forms of	'The urgency and importance of precise, objective and rigorously

<i>Nostra Aetate</i> 1965	'Guidelines and Suggestions' 1975	'Notes for Preaching and Catechesis' 1985
of antisemitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone' (n. 4, para. 7).	antisemitism and discrimination' (Intro., para. 5).	accurate teaching on Judaism for our faithful follows too from the danger of antisemitism, which is always ready to reappear under different guises' (I, 8); VI, 26 reaffirms the condemnation of antisemitism.
2 Makes no mention of the post-biblical religious tradition of Judaism.	'The history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem but rather went on to develop a religious tradition' (III, 7); associates 'Jewish and Christian tradition' (IV, 1).	Contains an entire section on 'Judaism and Christianity in History' (VI, 25): 'The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without a trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design . . . accompanied by a continuous spiritual fecundity, in the rabbinical period, in the Middle Ages, and in modern times.'
3 'The spiritual bonds which tie the people of the New Covenant to the offspring of Abraham' (n. 4, para. 1).	'The spiritual bonds and historical links binding the Church to Judaism . . . these links and relationships' (Intro., para. 5).	'Because of the unique relations that exist between Christianity and Judaism . . . "linked together at the very level of their identity" (John Paul II, 6 March 1982)—relations "founded on the design of the God of the Covenant" (ibid.), the Jews and Judaism should not occupy an occasional or marginal place in catechesis: their presence there is essential and should be organically integrated' (I, 2).
4 Makes no reference to traditional false stereotyping of the Pharisees or to misunderstandings	Mandates an 'overriding preoccupation' in liturgy and education to provide adequate back-	Two major sections of the text (III and IV) spell out the issues in detail, e.g.: Jesus 'ex-



<i>Nostra Aetate</i> 1965	'Guidelines and Suggestions' 1975	'Notes for Preaching and Catechesis' 1985
which can arise from reading the New Testament or in the liturgy.	ground for scriptural readings 'which Christians, if not well informed, might misunderstand because of prejudice', and specifies John's Gospel and the treatment of the Pharisees (II, 5).	toll respect for' the Law and 'invited obedience to it' (III, 13). He shared, 'with the majority of Palestinian Jews of that time', central elements of pharisaic doctrine (III, 17); '... references hostile or less than favourable to the Jews have their historic context in conflicts between the nascent Church and the Jewish community. Certain controversies reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus' (IV, 21A)..
5 Defines the Jews solely in biblical terms, i.e. in reference to their past: 'the Jewish religion', the 'Chosen People', 'the wild olive shoots', 'the Jews' (8 times always in the context of the New Testament). Limits itself to 'the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews' (n. 4, para. 5).	Speaks of the Jews of today as well as biblically, and in modern terms: 'Judaism', 'Jewish brothers', 'the Jewish people' (twice, and in specifically religious context, being followed immediately by 'the Christian people'); encourages Christians to learn 'by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious tradition' (IV, 1).	Citing John Paul II, calls the 'common patrimony' of the Church and Judaism 'considerable'; calling on catechists and preachers 'to assess it carefully in itself and with due awareness of the faith and religious life of the Jewish people as they are professed and practised still today' (I, 3; cf. VI, 25). In this context, mentions the Holocaust and the State of Israel as proper subjects for affirmative Catholic teaching (VI, 25).
6 Makes no reference to the Holocaust of European Jewry.	Refers to the Holocaust as the 'historical setting' of <i>Nostra Aetate</i> and the present Jewish-Christian dialogue.	Mandates the development of Holocaust curricula in religious education programming: 'catechesis should ... help in understanding the meaning for the Jews of the extermination [ <i>Shoah</i> ] during

<i>Nostra Aetate</i> 1965	'Guidelines and Suggestions' 1975	'Notes for Preaching and Catechesis' 1985
7 No reference to the State of Israel.	No reference to the State of Israel.	the years 1939-45, and its consequences' (VI, 25).  Speaks of the 'religious attachment' between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel as one that 'finds its roots in the biblical tradition' and as an essential aspect of Jewish covenantal 'fidelity to the one God'. Affirms 'the existence of the State of Israel' on the basis of 'the common principles of international law', while warning against a biblical fundamentalist approach to contemporary 'political options' in the Middle East (VI, 25).
8 Crucifixion 'cannot be blamed on all Jews then living without distinction nor upon the Jews of today. ... Christ freely underwent His passion and death because of the sins of all men' (n. 4, para. 6).	Repeats <i>Nostra Aetate</i> .	Adds details: Christians are more responsible than 'those few Jews' because we sin knowingly (IV, 22); '... the Pharisees are not mentioned in accounts of the passion' (III, 19).
9 Does not try to deal with significance of the Jewish 'no' to Christian claims concerning Jesus and the significance of the Christ-event.	Calls on Christians to 'strive to understand the difficulties which arise for the Jewish soul—rightly imbued with an extremely high, pure notion of the divine transcendence—when faced with the mystery of the incarnate word' (I, 3).	Begins to grapple with it as 'a fact not merely of history but of theological bearing of which St Paul tries hard to plumb the meaning' (IV, 21C and F) and hints at a positive response to 'the permanence of Israel' as 'a sign to be interpreted within God's design' (VI, 25).
10 Presents the Church as the new people of God	Avoids supercessionist implications and states	Jews are to be presented as 'the people of God of

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(n. 4, para. 6).	instead: 'The Old Testament and the Jewish tradition founded on it must not be set against the New Testament in such a way that the former seems to constitute a religion of only justice, fear and legalism with no appeal to the love of God and neighbour (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18).'	the Old Covenant, which has never been revoked by God' (I, 3, citing John Paul II at Mainz, 17 November 1980), and 'a Chosen People' (VI, 25). Both Jews and Christians 'are driven . . . by the command to love our neighbour' (II, 11).
11 Does not deal, as such, with the 'promise/fulfilment' theme.	Distinguishes 'fulfilment' of the promises in Christ from 'their perfect fulfilment in his glorious return at the end of time' (II, 3).	'The people of God of the Old and the New Testament are tending towards a like end in the future: the coming or return of the Messiah—even if they start from two different points of view' (II, 9: cf. also II, 1-2 and I, 5).
12 Does not deal with typology.	Does not deal with typology.	Terms typology 'perhaps the sign of a problem unresolved'. Attempts to frame the question in terms of both the Church and Judaism as 'awaiting' their 'definitive perfecting' and 'final consummation' in the End Time (II, 4-9). Allows for other models for relating the Scriptures (II, 2).
13 No direct reference to joint witness to the world, though the possibility is implicit in the affirmation that God 'does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues'.	'Jewish and Christian tradition, founded on the Word of God . . . will work willingly together, seeking social justice and peace on every level' (IV).	'Hanging on the same word, we have to witness to one same memory and one common hope in Him. . . . We must also accept our responsibility to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah by working together for social justice

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		. . . To this we are driven . . . by a common hope for the Kingdom of God' (II, 11).
14 No explicit acknowledgment of the validity of Jewish witness, to the Church or to the world, <i>post Christum</i> . Implicit in present-tense translation of phrase from St Paul: 'Theirs are the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises' (Rom. 9:4-5). Many Christian translations of the New Testament (e.g. the New American Bible) had tended to translate this key phrase in the past tense: 'Theirs were . . .'	Still implicit, e.g. in IV.	'A numerous Diaspora . . . allowed Israel to carry to the world a witness—often heroic—of its fidelity to the one God and to "exalt him in the presence of all the living"' (VI, 25). Affirms that Christian catechesis cannot adequately convey the Christian message without taking into account past and present Jewish tradition (I, 2-3; II, 11; III, 12, 17-18, 20; VI, 25).

This chart, I believe, indicates at least in rudimentary fashion the painstaking, step-by-step character of the process in which the Church is engaged in its efforts to clean its own house of the rubble of centuries of misunderstanding. None of these statements, taken by themselves, is adequate to the task. None can be interpreted rightly except in the context of the others. Taken together, they reveal perhaps only a direction, a gradual formulation of more positive outreach and acceptance of Jews and Judaism on its own terms, i.e. 'as the Jews define themselves in the light of their own traditions' ('Guidelines' I, 'Notes' I, 4).

This principle, accepted for the dialogue in the 1975 'Guidelines' and repeated for catechesis in the 1985 'Notes', has pertinence, I would maintain, for the reconsideration of the process of consultation (or lack of it) that should obtain in the procedures the Commission itself employs when considering the issuance of a document for and to the Catholic Church.

In some areas the 'Notes' offer a clear and significant advance over earlier documents of the Holy See.<sup>13</sup> They deal, for example,

with key elements of the teaching of contempt merely alluded to in previous official documents. Jesus' relationship with the Law is shown to be an essentially positive one. The congruence of Jesus' teachings with basic pharisaic beliefs is highlighted. The negative references to Jews and Judaism in the New Testament are frankly acknowledged and a catechetical method for treating them in the classroom firmly established: 'references hostile or less than favourable to the Jews have their historical context in conflicts between the nascent Church and the Jewish community. Certain controversies reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus.' This specifies for teachers and preachers in a practical manner the general biblical hermeneutic of the Council that 'the Jews should not be presented as repudiated or cursed by God, as if such views followed from the Holy Scriptures.' Since, as my own rather exhaustive studies of Catholic textbooks have shown, these are precisely the areas in which the remaining negative references to Jews and Judaism can still be found, the 'Notes' should go a long way toward eliminating altogether the remnants of the 'teaching of contempt'.

In the final section VI, the 'Notes' begin to specify for the first time the content only implied in the reference of the 1975 'Guidelines' to the fact that Judaism 'went on to develop a religious tradition' of its own after the time of Christ. Through the Diaspora (here given a positive theological interpretation as opposed to the traditional negative one that the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jews signified divine punishment for Jewish refusal to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah), the Jewish people, the 'Notes' maintain, were able 'to carry to the whole world a witness—often heroic—of its fidelity to the one God . . . while preserving the memory of the land of their forebears at the heart of their hope' (VI, 25).

This statement is truly remarkable. Jewish 'hope' had previously been defined—and its validity acknowledged—in an eschatological sense: 'the people of God of the Old and the New Testaments are tending towards a like end in the future: *the coming or return* of the Messiah—even if they start from two different points of view. . . . Thus it can be said that Jews and Christians meet in a *comparable hope*, founded on the same promise to Abraham' (II, 10, italics added).

The Jewish 'no' to Jesus as 'the Christ' (Messiah) is here put in a larger, more positive framework: God's overall plan for humanity. Indeed, Christians can learn from this 'no'; this continuing Jewish witness in and for the world that 'we must also accept our responsibili-

ty to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah by working together for social justice . . . and international reconciliation' (II, 11).

In this precise sense, the Church no less than the Synagogue is to be seen (II, 4-9) as 'awaiting' the 'final consummation', at which point both will 'make way for the fulfilment of God's design' (II, 9). Here, the 'Notes' seek to frame a non-triumphalist interpretation of the ancient tradition of typology, which is acknowledged as 'the sign of a problem unresolved'. More work will surely be needed on this topic and, perhaps more important, other theological frameworks for the relationship developed and approved. As the 1975 statement of the US Catholic bishops put it so well: 'There is here a task incumbent on theologians, as yet hardly begun, to explore the continuing relationship of the Jewish people with God and their spiritual bonds with the New Covenant and the fulfilment of God's plan for both Church and Synagogue' (NCCB, November 1975). The 'Notes', I believe, intend to foster just such ongoing theological development.

'The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without a trace)' and the 'continuous spiritual fecundity' of the Jewish people in rabbinic, medieval and modern times are seen by the 'Notes' as 'a sign to be interpreted within God's design'. Thus, while for St Paul in Romans 9:2, the 'fact that the majority of the Jewish people and its authorities did not believe in Jesus' is a 'sad' one (cf. 'Notes', IV, 21C), it may be part of God's mysterious will (Romans 11:11-12, 30-6). In any event, it is 'a fact not merely of history but of theological bearing', concerning which Christians are called in a renewed way today 'to plumb the meaning'. Earlier in the text (I, 7), the 'Notes' had alluded, in the words of Mgr Jorge Mejia, Secretary of the Commission which issued the document, to 'the affirmation about Christ and his saving event as central to the economy of salvation', an affirmation Mejia called 'essential to the Catholic faith'. This affirmation, Mejia continued in his statement introducing the 'Notes' (and carried on the same page in *L'Osservatore Romano*) 'does not mean that the Jews cannot and should not draw salvific gifts from their own traditions. Of course they can and should do so'.

Mejia's commentary is crucial for understanding the 'Notes'. Referring to its brief reference to the Holocaust, for example, Mejia states that Catholics, within the very process of catechesis itself, must begin to grapple with 'the dimensions of such tragedy (what is called in Hebrew, the *Shoah*, the catastrophe) and its significance for the Jews, but also for us', as Catholics, 'whom it also obviously concerns'.



Mejia commends the development of Holocaust curricula 'by Catholic offices for education to awaken such awareness, or else to deepen it'. As with other sections, the aptly titled 'Notes' do not attempt to draw out such a catechesis in detail, but mandate renewed efforts by Catholic educators around the world toward that end.

Criticized particularly by Jewish agencies was the reference in the 'Notes' to the State of Israel. Here, I believe, an unfortunate misunderstanding has occurred which requires further dialogue (as, indeed, other sections of the 'Notes' will require expansion and clarification). This is the first time that the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews has commented on the 'religious attachment' of the Jewish people to Eretz Israel, an attachment it affirms as finding 'its roots in biblical tradition' and which it mandates, again for the first time, as a proper, even necessary element of Catholic teaching. The 'Notes', here, need to be understood carefully within the context of the 1975 US Catholic Bishops' Declaration, to which they specifically refer. (This is the only direct reference in the 'Notes' to any statement of an Episcopal conference, a fact which heightens its significance). The US Bishops' statement declared:

In dialogue with Christians, Jews have explained that they do not consider themselves as a Church, a sect, or a denomination, as is the case among Christian communities, but rather as a peoplehood that is not solely racial, ethnic or religious, but in a sense a composite of all these. It is for such reasons that an overwhelming majority of Jews see themselves bound in one way or another to the Land of Israel. Most Jews see this tie to the Land as essential to their Jewishness. Whatever difficulties Christians may experience in sharing this view, they should strive to understand this link between Land and people which Jews have expressed in their writings and worship throughout two millennia as a longing for the homeland, holy Zion.

Also pertinent to interpreting the attitude of the 'Notes' toward Israel, as the report of a group of Catholic and Jewish scholars convened by the American Jewish Committee to discuss the 'Notes' rightly stated, is Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter of Good Friday 1984. There, the Pope said: 'For the Jewish people who live in the State of Israel and who preserve on that land such precious testimonies to their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquility that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society.'

This clear recognition by the Holy See of the legitimacy of the State and the 'Notes' own affirmation of the religious validity of Jewish attachment to the Land provide the context for what follows. The 'Notes' maintain that consideration of the 'political options' of the

State (e.g. boundaries) should be guided by 'the common principles of international law', which themselves validate 'the existence of the state', rather than by 'a perspective which is *in itself* religious'. This is a caution for Catholics against biblical fundamentalism. It is in no case a denial of the religious relationship of the Jewish people to Eretz Israel, or of the validity or necessity of the Jewish state, which it supports. Rather, it mandates teaching about that relationship and about the state (though not necessarily all its policies) affirmatively in Catholic classrooms.

If I have dwelt rather more on the 'Notes' in this paper than I had envisioned when first accepting the assignment, this is not only because of their significance but also because of the controversy currently surrounding them. That controversy should teach us, if nothing else, something about the challenge of the dialogue launched by the Second Vatican Council. It is a dialogue, if not in its infancy, at least in its babyhood. Like a baby, it is something entirely new and unique on the world scene: in a sense much more so, for it represents an effort at interreligious reconciliation never before tried to my knowledge in world history.

The flap over the 'Notes' shows that we are not yet too sure of one another. We do not understand how to address each other as well as we thought. Catholics, reading the 'Notes', are surprised at the vehemence of the Jewish negative response. To Catholics, the 'Notes' appear to be a solid, if imperfect effort in good faith to move the relationship forward at least one more small step. Jews, reading the 'Notes', are surprised that Catholics in the main could not have predicted how Jews would react to key passages (e.g. on typology), and wonder further, even once the text is explained, how Catholics could get themselves so lost in the intricacies of theological 'balancing' (again, for example, on typology).

Part of this sense of surprise, I would surmise, stems from our differences of style. Catholicism works itself out, in practice, precisely *through* the intricacies of theological nuance, Judaism through the equal delicacies of *halachic* distinction, though Catholicism is no stranger to Law nor Judaism to theological embellishment. The deeper part may be the historical chasm of blood shed and stated principles broken that divides us, despite the shared bridges of hope ('spiritual bonds' in Catholic terminology) that impel us together even as we 'fuss and holler', in typical family fashion, at one another.

The key is trust. The very imperfections of the document (as of those which preceded it) reveal the depth of the faith-substance with

which the dialogue must yet deal. But the development of trust, on both sides, takes time—and a proven record of delivery. We can, I believe, have a certain faith in the God of Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Rivkah upon which, in hope, to build that trust. But we will also need a certain measure of patience ('mercy on words' to use Augustine's phrase) regarding what we say and what we *mean* to say. In such an effort, the presumption must always be in favour of the integrity of the other's intention. Neither hasty press releases nor unconsulted promulgations will prove the best tools with which to build our bridges of trust.

The 'Notes', as the Holy See's own 'anniversary gift' to *Nostra Aetate*, move forward the discussion between our two peoples and at the same time invite further reflections and exchange between us. They see the 'heroic witness' of Jewish fidelity to God's covenant over the centuries as a 'sign to be interpreted within God's design'.

Such language is reminiscent of the words of Rabbi Gamaliel, as cited in the Books of Acts, with regard to early Christians. Today, we Catholics are learning that Gamaliel's dictum applies equally well to Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. The Sanhedrin, the Book of Acts reports, had arrested the Apostles and was trying them on capital charges. Gamaliel, portrayed in Acts as 'a Pharisee . . . highly respected by all the people', saved the lives of the Apostles by arguing: 'Fellow Israelites, think twice about what you are going to do with these men. . . . Let them alone. If their purpose or activity is human in its origins, it will destroy itself. If, on the other hand, it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them without fighting God himself.' Judaism, no less than Christianity, comes from God. This was the central message of the Second Vatican Council, and one to which we Catholics must re-commit ourselves in each generation.

### Notes

- 1 Tommaso Federici, 'Study outline on the mission and witness of the Church', *SIDIC* (Rome), vol. 11, no. 3, 1978, 25.
- 2 Thomas Stransky CSP, 'Focusing on Jewish-Catholic relations', *Origins* (Washington), vol. 15, no. 5, 20 June 1985, 67.
- 3 Federici, 25-30.
- 4 The canonical decrees of the Middle Ages, while crucial to an understanding of Christian-Jewish history, are likewise not of binding doctrinal import for the Church. Cf. Edward A. Synan, *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages* (London 1965).
- 5 Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, 'Vatican II and the Jews: twenty years later', Westminster Cathedral, 10 March 1985, published in *CHRISTIAN JEWISH RELATIONS*, vol. 18, no. 1, March 1985, 16-17.
- 6 Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, 'Address on the fifteenth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*', *SIDIC*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1981, 28-9. For a collection of such documents, Protestant as well as

Catholic (in English), see the two volumes edited by Helga Croner for the Stimulus Series: *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations*, vol. 1 (New York 1977); *Jewish-Christian Relations*, vol. 1 (New York 1977); vol. 2 (New York 1985). Cf. also M. T. Hoch and B. Dupuy, *Les églises devant le Judaïsme: documents officiels, 1948-1978* ('The Churches and Judaism: Official Documents, 1948-1978') (Paris 1980); and L. Sestieri and G. Certi, *Le Chiese Cristiane e L'Ebraismo, 1947-1982* ('The Christian Church and Judaism, 1947-1982') (Casale Monferrato 1983).

- 7 See John M. Oesterreicher, 'The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions: introduction and commentary' in H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 3 (Freiburg 1969); and R. Laurentin and J. Neuner, *Commentary on the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (New York 1966).
- 8 Holy See Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, 'Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, n. 4', January 1975.
- 9 Textbook self-studies were initiated by the American Jewish Committee in the late 1950s. The findings of the Jewish study, conducted by Dropsie University, were published by B. Weinryb and D. Garnick, *Jewish School Textbooks and Intergroup Relations* (New York 1965). The studies of Catholic educational materials took the form of three doctoral dissertations prepared between 1958 and 1961 under the auspices of St Louis University by Sisters M. Rita Mudd FSCP, M. Linus Gleason CSJ, and Rose Thering OP. For a summary of their results, see John T. Pawlikowski, *Catechetics and Prejudice* (New York 1973). Significant updatings and analyses of materials in various languages can be found in, among others: François Houtart et al., *Les Juifs dans la catéchèse* ('The Jews in Catechism'), 3 vols. (Louvain 1969-72); Otto Klineberg et al., *Religion and Prejudice: Content Analysis of Catholic Religious Textbooks in Italy and Spain* (Rome 1967); Claire Hutchet Bishop, *How Catholics Look at Jews: Inquiries into Italian, Spanish and French Teaching Materials* (New York 1974); Gerald S. Strober, *Portrait of the Elder Brother: Jews and Judaism in Protestant Teaching Materials* (New York 1972); Michael Kane, *Minorities in Textbooks* (New York 1970); E. Fisher, 'A content analysis of the treatment of Jews and Judaism in current Roman Catholic textbooks' (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1976), results summarized in E. Fisher, *Faith without Prejudice* (New York 1977), 124-51; Peter Fiedler, *Das Judentum im katholischen Religionsunterricht* ('Judaism in Catholic Religious Education') (Düsseldorf 1980, 1981); Ann Moore, 'The seeds of prejudice: an analysis of religious textbooks', *The Sower* (London), January 1971; A. Bullen, 'Catholic teaching of Judaism', *Christian Attitudes on Jews and Judaism* (London), no. 39, December 1974; Pinchas Lapide, *Jews, Israelis and Jesus* (New York 1979); and most recently, Y. Glickman and A. Bardikoff, *The Treatment of the Holocaust in Canadian History and Social Science Textbooks* (Downsview, Ont. 1982). German studies also include: Walter Renn, 'The Holocaust in West German textbooks', in *Shoah* (New York), fall/winter, 1982-83, 26-30; M. Stohr, *Das Judentum in Christlichen Religionsunterricht* ('Judaism in Christian Religious Education') (Frankfurt 1983); R. Kastning-Olmesdahl, *Die Juden und der Tod Jesu* ('The Jews and the Death of Jesus') (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981).

My own studies have been updated in Eugene Fisher, 'Future agenda for Catholic-Jewish relations', in N. Thompson and B. Cole (eds.), *The Future of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Schenectady, NY 1982); 'Christian-Jewish dialogue: from theology to the classroom', *Origins*, vol. 11, 27 August 1981; and 'Research on Christian teaching concerning Jews and Judaism', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Philadelphia), vol. 21, no. 3, summer, 1984, 421-36.

An update of the Jewish studies can be found in Judith Herschlag Muffs, *Jewish Textbooks on Jesus and Christianity* (New York 1978). Cf. also Judith H. Banki, 'The image of Jews in Christian teaching', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, summer 1984, 437-51. The same issue also has excellent articles by Ruth Kastning-Olmesdahl, Peter Fiedler, Paul M. van Buren and John Carmody.

- 10 *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24-5 June 1985, English translation in *Origins*, 4 July 1985, vol. 15, no. 7, 102-7, and *USCC Publications*, September 1985.
- 11 The response of the International Jewish Commission for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) may be read in *CHRISTIAN JEWISH RELATIONS*, vol. 18, no. 3, September 1985, 74-6.
- 12 For the idea behind this chart, now much expanded, I am indebted to Jacqueline des Rochettes, 'Evolution of a vocabulary: a sign of hope?' *SIDIC*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1975, 21-4.
- 13 Portions of this discussion on the 'Notes' are adapted from my article, 'The Second Vatican Council and the Jews: twenty years of dialogue', *Jewish Monthly* (New York), October 1985.