

Election, Covenant, and Law

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A New Atmosphere

EVERYONE RECOGNIZES that the Vatican Council II document *Nostra Aetate* marked a profoundly new era in Catholic–Jewish relationships. It is one of the few documents from the council that caught the Catholic Church unprepared. It has been observed that *Nostra Aetate* came both too late and too soon. It was too late to change the environment that led to the Shoah. It was too soon because there had not been that intensity of theological preparation for this turning-point declaration that had preceded the other documents of Vatican II.¹

This is not to say that there was no work being done by Jewish and Christian scholars before 1965. Many point to the years 1850–1910 as “the golden age of Jewish studies,” and the names of L. Zunz, A. Geiger, W. Bacher, S. Schechter, and H. Strack come readily to mind. The following decades produced men such as J. Lauterbach, L. Ginsberg, both I. and J. Heineman, J. Bonsirven, G. F. Moore, to be followed by an ever-increasing number of scholars, both Jewish and Christian, who were clearly aware of each other and occasionally collaborated. Nevertheless, the famous number 4 of *Nostra Aetate*, the pontificate of John Paul II, and the corresponding reception by the Jewish community along with their own initiatives have provided a stimulus and created a climate that promises to allow for a depth of mutual respect and collaboration hitherto unattainable.

¹ Cf. Thomas Stransky, “The Declaration on Non-Christian Religions,” in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John Miller (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1966), 335–48.

There is a way in which this new attitude can be summed up in the famous statement of Pope John Paul II delivered in the synagogue at Mainz, November 17, 1980:

The first dimension of this dialogue, that is, the meeting between the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God, [cf. Rom 11:29], and that of the New Covenant, is at the same time a dialogue within our Church, that is to say, between the first and second parts of her Bible. In this connection the directives for the application of the conciliar document *Nostra aetate* say: "The effort must be made to understand better everything in the Old Testament that has its own permanent value . . . since this value is not wiped out by the later interpretation of the New Testament, which, on the contrary, gave the Old Testament its full meaning, so that it is a question rather of reciprocal enlightenment and explanation."²

From a theological point of view the most challenging and important phrase in the above statement is the description of the Old Covenant as "never revoked by God," and second, the citation of the directives that speak of the "permanent value" of the Old Testament that "is not wiped out by the later interpretation of the New Testament." These statements challenge Christian theologians to look at the ambiguity in our present and past positions in this regard, to see and label positions that are supersessionist, but most of all to elaborate a theological position that takes account of the genuine newness of the New Testament while respecting the permanent value of the Old Covenant that has never been revoked.

This study is a step in such a theological task. It is a work of retrieval, that is, it attempts to look with new eyes at the three realities of Election, Covenant, and Law as they present themselves to a historical-theological investigation. For the most part I will restrict myself to the biblical text, though at times I will look at some representatives of the Christian tradition since their views on this particular issue reveal an understanding that we, at times, have lost. The next step called for in this process is a more direct reflection on the unrevoked Covenant with the Jewish people. I will offer some suggestions at the end of this study that may prove useful in moving ahead with "the meeting between the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God, and that of the New Covenant."

There will be four parts to this investigation. First, I will consider election (part I) and then covenant (part II). In part III I will reflect on Torah and its capacity in later thought to embrace the previous two realities.

² Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki, eds., *Spiritual Pilgrimage: Texts on Jews and Judaism 1979–1995: Pope John Paul II* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 13.

Finally, in part IV, I will reflect briefly on the notion of “new” and offer some suggestions for moving ahead toward a clarification of Christian thought on the relation between the Covenant, Old and New.

Part I: Election

Basic Convictions

There are two convictions that permeate the thought of Israel, though the chronology of their development to full clarity is still debated. The first is that there is one God and he is responsible for the existence of everything else. As Claus Westermann has expressed it:

The object of creation is without exception something outside the divine. The action of God as creator is directed exclusively to the world. God is outside creation; to be created means to be not—god.³

The second conviction is that this one God has chosen Israel as his people in a special way. This second tenet would be impossible without the first. To choose (*bhr*) implies the ability to single out one reality in preference to others.⁴ This is an action of the one choosing. For YHWH to choose a people implies that he has sovereignty enough to effect his will regarding the people of the earth. This is particularly clear in the Deuteronomic tradition, but it is expressed elsewhere as well:

Although the heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to YHWH your God (along with) the earth and all that is on it, yet YHWH set his heart on your fathers, loving them, and He chose their seed after them, that is you, from among all the peoples, as it is today. (Dt 10:14–15)

Now, if you really heed my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be to me a treasured possession out of all the peoples of the earth—for all the earth is mine. (Ex 19:5)⁵

Hear this word that YHWH has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:1–2)

³ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 26.

⁴ See Jan Bergman, Helmer Ringgren, and Horst Seebas, “*bachar*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 73–87.

⁵ For the difficulties of assigning a source to this part of the narrative, see John I. Durham, *Exodus* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 260.

These two aspects of Israel's thought are expressed by Martin Buber in the following way:

I see the soul of Judaism as turning round two centers like an ellipse.

One center is the fundamental experience that God is wholly raised above man, that his throne is out of the sight of man, and that yet He is present with these human beings who are absolutely incommensurable with Him in an immediate relationship, and that He is turned towards them. To know both at the same time in such a way that they cannot be divided from each other constitutes the life in the very heart of every believing Jewish soul.⁶

The last remark I wish to make here is of a more directly theological nature. All three of the terms—creation, election, and covenant—describe a free and unilateral action of God. This is even true, with some nuances, in regard to the Deuteronomic view that expresses an understanding of the Sinai Covenant that appears to be reciprocal.⁷ The unilateral action of God the Creator presents us with a special theological problem when we try to consider the manner in which God establishes a special relation with a people and with individuals within the people such as Abraham and David. How is it that God can establish a special, historical relation with some creatures and not with others, even if the relation is destined to become the means of having others one day share that relation?

The answer lies in understanding the different ways in which God can be present to his creatures. As Aquinas points out, God is present to his creation in three ways. He is present as cause of all that is; he is present as the object of knowledge and love in those human beings whose level of existence has been raised or intensified by grace; and he is present personally through the grace of union in the covenant between his eternal Word and the elect humanity of Jesus.⁸ Thus, the whole economy of salvation, which began historically in a particular way with the call of Abraham, is Christological. It is for this reason, as I hope to show, that a supersessionist view of the relation between the Jewish People and the Christian Church is theologically untenable. I wish now to develop the notions of election and covenant and then seek to demonstrate their Christological character.

⁶ Martin Buber, *Mamre: Essays in Religion*, trans. Greta Hort (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1946; reprint, 1970), 20–21.

⁷ I will treat this below.

⁸ *Summa theologiae* I, q. 8, a. 3, co. and ad 4, where he mentions the “singularis modus essendi Deum in hominine per unionem,” which he will consider in *ST* III, q. 2.

Election

Two realities stand on either side of covenant. Election is anterior to covenant, at least logically, and Torah follows from covenant and becomes in some way the summary of the reality of covenant. Very often, particularly but not exclusively in Jewish eyes, these “sides” of covenant become covenant itself. The first notion expresses God’s love for his people, and the second the people’s returning love for God.

In the canonical text, covenant begins with Noah, but election in the strict sense begins with Abraham—“in the strict sense” because election refers to God’s choice and formation of a people to be his own. This begins with the choice of Abraham as the father of the people, continues in the lives of those who follow him, that is, “the Fathers,” is concretized at Sinai, and then perpetuated by the prophets and kings who preserved Israel’s identity as a people constituted by a relation to God. We are dealing here with events that transpired in history, though their actuality remains quite impervious to the discipline of modern historiography. We are met with an action of God in history interpreted by an action of God in the composition of the subsequent tradition and its Scripture. This is what *Dei Verbum* (no. 2) meant by describing the “economy of revelation” as taking place “*gestis verbisque intrinsece inter se connexis*” so that “the works accomplished by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and the realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the works and bring to light the mystery contained in them.”⁹

The action of God by which he chose to establish and maintain a particular relation to a particular people manifests itself in a series of actions that are revealed to us in “words” that have an intrinsic connection with the works and bring to light the mystery contained in these works. The verb *bhr* is one of the words that mediate the mystery. There are other words that mediate this same mystery, which is a mystery precisely because it pertains to the one plan of salvation whose source and culmination is Jesus Christ. I would like to illustrate this by looking at the unique manner in which Israel used the spousal image to mediate an awareness of being chosen by YHWH to have a unique relationship to him. I then want to reflect theologically on this mystery of God’s choice.

⁹ This teaching is admirably summed up by Hans Urs von Balthasar: “The gradual clothing of the events within the folds of Scripture is not only an inevitable drawback (because the people of the Orient of that time did not know, in fact, an historiography in the modern understanding of the term), but assuredly also this corresponds unqualifiedly to a positive intention of the Spirit.” Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Il Senso Spirituale della Scrittura,” *Ricerche Teologiche* 5 (1994): 7.

*The Spousal Image*¹⁰

There is no evidence that any other people ever expressed its relationship to its gods in terms of a marriage relation.¹¹ No other god demanded absolute and exclusive fidelity: He was but one power in a large panoply of forces. No other god chose a people for his own as YHWH did Israel. The obligation of exclusive fidelity on the part of Israel and the promise of protection and care on the part of YHWH found its closest human counterpart in the marriage relation between man and woman. Thus, it is not surprising that terms that were originally applied to one of these relationships were easily transposed to apply to the other. I say “easily” because there is in the nature of the Hebrew language, especially as it became the vehicle of revelation, an innate capacity to form metaphors and analogies. It suffices for instance to consider the semantic field of the root *'hb*, which can be translated as “to love,” but which can be found operative in fields as diverse as romantic love and political alliance.¹²

The capacity to employ apparently extraneous material and to use language in this allusive way is well described by W. Norris Clarke:

There is an indispensable role played in our thought and language by those systematically vague and elastic terms that alone can catch the similarities and affinities running all up and down and across the universe, especially between the realms of matter and spirit, cosmos and psyche. This is the secret life of the mind nourishing all metaphor, poetry, and art: the insight into authentic similarities and affinities across the universe.¹³

In literary terms we are dealing with an “expansive” or “sunken image,” that is, an image that is latent and not explicitly articulated even while it is operative and determines the line of thought.¹⁴

¹⁰ In the pages which follow I am incorporating material from Francis Martin, “Israel as the Bride of YHWH: A Story of Sin and Renewed Love,” *Anthropotes* 16 (2000): 129–54.

¹¹ See, for instance, Elaine June Adler, “The Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage in the Hebrew Bible” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1990).

¹² One may consult, for instance, Luis Alonso Schökel, *Diccionario Bíblico Hebreo-Español* (Madrid: Trotta, 1994); and for a special accent on the political overtones, William Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 77–87.

¹³ William Norris Clarke, *The Philosophical Approach to God: A Neo-Thomist Perspective* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University, 1979), 52.

¹⁴ Still valuable for a discussion of the various functions of image is the study by René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), esp. ch. 15.

The remarkable interpenetration of images evoked by the vocabulary of covenant and marriage points to an intuition, deep in the heart and soul of Israel, that could discern an analogy between the relation of YHWH and his people and that of a husband and wife. Both were based on a choice, in that culture predominantly that of the husband, both demanded exclusive fidelity on the part of the one chosen. "Love," as covenant fidelity and as deep affection, characterizes the relation, and finally, infidelity is "faithlessness," "treachery," "adultery," and "profligacy." It is impossible for us to determine when and how this image-analogy first took root in Israel. It was based on a metaphysical intuition that arose as a metaphor and was developed by many users of the Hebrew language, some of whom are represented in the sacred text. Though it is impossible at this point to assess how explicit the terminological overlap had made the image, it is clear that the prophesying of Hosea brought this form of discourse to a critical mass and made of it a privileged symbol of YHWH's covenant choice and Israel's covenant responsibility.

Analogia Entis Historici

I wish here to initiate a discussion based on the insight into God's relation with Israel and then with the Church expressed by the general term "election." This necessitates an exercise in the "philosophy of the concrete." By "the concrete" here I mean the actually and uniquely existing *individuum*. Consideration of the concretely existing reality means, paradoxically, moving away from a determinedly anti-transcendent view of reality to one that is open to the possibility of creation. Only an understanding of creation can render the actually existing concrete reality intelligible. In addition such a move is in the direction of biblical thought since it is in the direction of giving primacy to that revelation of Being that has taken place in history. As John Paul II expresses it in *Fides et ratio* (no. 11):

God's Revelation is therefore immersed in time and history. Jesus Christ took flesh in the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4); and two thousand years later, I feel bound to restate forcefully that "in Christianity time has a fundamental importance."¹⁵ It is within time that the whole work of creation and salvation comes to light; and it emerges clearly above all that, with the Incarnation of the Son of God, our life is even now a foretaste of the fulfillment of time which is to come (cf. Heb 1:2).

The prime analogate of this revelation of Being is Jesus on the Cross as he is engaged in giving his life to the Father in an act of love. All the

¹⁵ Apostolic letter "Tertio millennio adveniente" (November 10, 1994), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87 (1995): 11, no. 10.

saving acts of God participate in this act, not only notionally but also in the order of being. This, among other things, is the foundation of what is called the “spiritual sense” of Scripture, which is based on the relation in being between an act of God in the life of Israel and God’s act in Christ.¹⁶ Jesus’ act of love on the Cross establishes a new order of being, expressed both seminally, in creation and the covenant, beginning with the call of Abraham, and eschatologically, in the final consummation when the plan of the Father to bring all things under Christ as Head (Eph 1:10) will be completely realized.

In order to try to render this mystery more intelligible it will help to look briefly at what is meant by participation. Gregory Rocca, paraphrasing Cornelio Fabro, states: “Participation is especially the ontology of analogy, and analogy is the epistemology and semantics of participation.”¹⁷ Participation is usually divided into predicamental and transcendental. In predicamental participation, two realities are said to participate in the same notion: One may be the exemplar of the other. In transcendental participation, one reality (God) possesses something *totaliter* (“Whatever is totally something does not participate in it but is essentially the same as it”),¹⁸ while another reality shares in that something but not essentially. Here there is efficient causality in addition to exemplar causality. Participation in this case involves a dependence in being between the first reality and the second. As the phrase cited above indicates, this second type of participation is the “ontology of analogy,” allowing God’s being to be correctly though inadequately spoken of on the basis of those perfections in creatures that participate, through God’s efficient causality, in something of which he is the ineffable exemplar.

¹⁶ While this is not the place to enter into a discussion of this point, it is important to note that the foremost proponent of the spiritual sense of Scripture in our time, Henri de Lubac, insisted that the “allegorical” or spiritual sense is found in the events: “Précisons d’ailleurs aussitôt que cette allégorie à découvrir, on ne la trouvera pas à proprement parler dans le texte, mais dans les réalités dont le texte parle; non pas dans l’histoire en tant que récit, mais dans l’histoire en tant qu’événement.” Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l’Écriture* (Paris: Aubier, 1959), 493. This whole passage, with its patristic quotations is well worth reading.

¹⁷ Gregory Rocca, “Analogy as Judgment and Faith in God’s Incomprehensibility: A Study in the Theological Epistemology of Thomas Aquinas” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1989), 537. Rocca is condensing the thought of Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et causalité selon S. Thomas d’Aquin* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1961), 634–40.

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Sententiae libri Metaphysicorum*, 1.10.154.

In the light of the Incarnation a new dimension of reality is made available to humanity. I would wish to call this “economic participation.” Just as transcendental participation is an ontological reality now seen because of the revelation of creation, so economic participation is an ontological reality because of that order of being brought about by God in the Incarnation. We have seen that Israel’s possession of a covenantal relation to YHWH is unique. Though it may not be apparent from certain of the verbal manners in which the relation is expressed, the use of spousal terms is inspired by the fact that, in faith, Israel knew itself to have a unique relation to the One who is God. Thus the history of Israel participates in and realizes in a proleptic manner the mystery of the Incarnation and its own highpoint in time: the death and resurrection of Jesus. There is thus an economic participation in which all God’s saving acts in human history are related to the supreme act, the Cross, which realizes and is *totaliter*, the economic action of God, the exemplar and instrumental efficient cause of all the other acts.¹⁹ Israel’s history is unique within world history because of the way her people relate to the Word Incarnate by anticipation.

The Jewish people were chosen by God that Christ might be born of them. Consequently, the entire state of that people had to be prophetic and figurative. . . . Thus too, the wars and deeds of this people are expounded in the mystical sense [spiritual sense] but not the wars and deeds of the Assyrians or Romans, although the latter are more famous in the eyes of men.²⁰

“Shadow, Image, and Truth”

I wish, in this section, to consider how the early Fathers and Doctors of the Church actually considered Israel. I do not claim that this view was universal or necessarily consistent, but the clarity and robustness of the understanding of Israel as a people chosen by God that emerge from the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, who is at once a disciple and a creative innovator of the teaching of tradition, can serve as an indication.²¹

In the introductory question to the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas asks the question: “Whether the Sacred Writings of this doctrine may be interpreted

¹⁹ Some of this is treated by Hans Urs von Balthasar in *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1963, 1994).

²⁰ ST I–II, q. 104, a. 2, ad 2, quoted in Matthew Levering, *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

²¹ I refer the reader to the study by Matthew Levering just mentioned and to Stephen Boguslawski, *Aquinas’ Commentary on Romans 9–11* (New York: Paulist Press, forthcoming).

according to many meanings?" ("Utrum Scriptura Sacra huius doctrinae sit secundum plures sensus exponenda?" ST I, q. 1, a. 10). The *sed contra* of his reply is taken from Gregory the Great's *Moralia*, 20, 1 (PL 76, 135): "Sacred Scripture, in its very manner of speaking, is above all other sciences because in one and the same word, while it narrates an event, it sets forth a mystery" ("Sacra Scriptura omnes scientias ipso locutionis suae more transcendit, quia uno eodemque sermone dum narrat gestum, prodit mysterium"). The two words "event" and "mystery" refer in turn to the literal sense, the event, and then the same event as it is now seen to have been a participated anticipation of the mystery of Christ. Augustine has much the same to say; "*In ipso facto* [the event itself], *non solum in dicto* [the text of the Old Testament], *mysterium* [the plan of God revealed in Christ] *requirere debemus*" (On Psalm 68, PL 36, 858).

Aquinas's own answer is basically the same. He responds that God is able to have not only words signify, as humans can do, but also "*res ipsas*," which must be taken to mean "events" and not merely "things." He then goes on to say that the first signification, that of the words, belongs to the first meaning (*sensum*) "which is the historical or literal meaning" (*quod est sensus historicus vel litteralis*). The signification by which "the realities signified by the words signify other things" (*res* [realities] *significatae per voces, iterum alias res significant* [the realities of the Christ event]) is called the "*sensus spiritualis*" "which is founded upon the literal meaning and supposes it" (*qui super litteralem fundatur et eum supponit*; ST I, q. 1, a. 10, c.). What Aquinas means in this same context by saying that an *argumentum* in theology can only be drawn from the literal sense can be grasped only by an understanding of what the medievals meant by *argument* and by an analysis of what Aquinas actually does in his own theological writings.²²

It is obvious that the context of the above discussion is that of the relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament, though, for Aquinas as for the tradition preceding him, the realities of the New Testament have their own way of signifying and containing the eschatological realities yet to come. The aspect that is highlighted in this latter understanding, what is referred to as the "anagogical" sense, even of New Testament realities, is the fact that what we now experience is a participation in what is present, though in icon, of what once was present in promise. This is the meaning of the rhythm expressed in Hebrews 10:1: "For the

²² For a more complete discussion of Aquinas's views and use of Scripture, see Wilhemus G. B. M. Valkenberg, *Did Not Our Heart Burn? Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (The Hague: Gegevens Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1990).

law, having a sketch (*skia*) of the good things to come, and not the image itself (*autēn tēn eikona*) of the realities." The law possessed a shadow or sketch, we possess the realities but "in icon," that is, we possess them, not according to their proper mode of existence, but rather in another mode, in signs and symbols, until we are with Christ in heaven.

This understanding of the Hebrews text was already expressed by Ambrose who spoke of: "shadow," "image," and "truth."²³ Such a view of history is the common denominator, in the Christian view, between Sacred Text and Sacrament, particularly the Eucharist. These partially fulfill the events of the Old Testament in the act by which Christ makes himself present "in icon," even as he anticipates the fullness of his presence "in truth." The theory of the spiritual sense of Scripture is based, not on a theory of text, but on a theology of history.

In appreciating the figurative role of the realities spoken of in the Old Testament, however, we must never overlook their intrinsic significance, what may be called the "religious sense" of the Old Testament. Anyone who has truly prayed the Psalms or considered the example of the great saints of the Jewish people appreciates that the more profound the grasp of these realities, the greater is the understanding of Christ.²⁴ Illustrative of the seriousness with which Aquinas takes the system of worship in Israel and the literal sense of the Sacred Text is his answer to the question, "Whether the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have a literal cause or only a figural cause?"²⁵ He states:

Just as the ceremonial law prefigured Christ so also did the narratives [historiae] of the Old Testament; since "all these happened to them as a figure" (1 Cor 10:11). Yet these had, besides a mystical or figurative sense, also a literal one. Therefore the ceremonial precepts also had their literal causes in addition to their figurative ones.

In the body of the article, he states that there were two reasons for the ceremonial precepts. One, the literal, "in regard to the divine worship to be observed at the time;" the second, figural as prefiguring Christ, "whether they concern Christ and the Church, which is the allegorical sense, or the way of life of the Christian people, which is the moral sense,

²³ On Psalm 43 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 64, 204): "Primum igitur umbra praecessit, secuta est imago, erit veritas. Umbra in lege, imago vero in evangelio, veritas in caelestibus."

²⁴ I am thinking for instance of the work of Paul Beauchamp, *L'un et l'autre Testament*, vol. 1, *Essai de Lecture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976); idem, *L'un et l'autre Testament*, vol. 2, *Accomplir les Écritures* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990).

²⁵ ST I-II, q. 102, a. 2.

or the state of future glory to which we are brought through Christ, which is the anagogical sense.”²⁶

Because of the influence of the *Summa fratris Alexandri*, Aquinas underwent a change of mind between his earlier work commenting on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and his own *Summa theologiae*. In this latter work can be found an extended Christian reflection on the Torah as well as on the mysteries of the life of Christ. With the exception of Francisco Suarez’s work, nearly eight hundred years were to pass before theology began to concern itself once again with these matters. There is, perhaps, one text that contains, once its full significance is appreciated, St. Thomas’s thought on the relation between the Jewish people and the Christian people. It is to be found in the third part of the *Summa theologiae*, in his discussion of Christ as the Head of the Church. In article 3 of question 8, he asks the question: “Is Christ the Head of all human beings?” Aquinas poses the following objection:

The sacraments of the Old Law [all the liturgical observances] are compared to Christ as a shadow to “the body” as it says in Colossians 2:17. But the Fathers of the Old Testament used these sacraments in their time as it says in Hebrews 8:5, “They used an exemplar and shadow of the heavenly realities.” Therefore they did not belong to the Body of Christ, and thus Christ is not the Head of all human beings.

Aquinas answers:

It should be said that the holy Fathers did not stop at the sacraments of the Law as mere things, but as images and shadows of future realities. For the movement toward an image, in so far as it is an image, is the same as the movement toward the reality as the Philosopher says in his work *On Memory and Recall*. And therefore, the ancient Fathers, by observing the sacraments of the Law, were brought toward Christ through the same faith and love by which we are still brought toward him. For this reason the ancient Fathers belonged to the same Body of the Church to which we belong.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., the *sed contra* and body of the article.

²⁷ I am indebted here to the study by Colman O’Neill, “St. Thomas on the Membership of the Church,” *Thomist* 27 (1963): 88–140. The latter part of Aquinas’s response is his translation. The notion that the Jews of Old Testament times belonged to the Body of Christ is not peculiar to Aquinas. Augustine says the same: “Nolite ergo putare, fratres, omnes justos qui passi sunt persecutionem iniquorum, etiam illos qui venerunt ante Domini adventum praenuntiare Domini adventum, non pertinuisse ad membra Christi. Absit ut non pertineat ad membra Christi, qui pertinet ad civitatem quae regem habet Christum.” *Enarratio in Ps. LXI*, 4 (CCL, XXXIX, 774).

There are two statements made here. One, that the grace of Christ has always been available and that it was mediated in a particular way to the Jewish people through fidelity to the enactments of the Torah. Second, that we have arrived now at a different stage of the divine economy: Recall the rhythm of “shadow–image–truth” mentioned above. I wish to cite some texts that will clarify this position and then move on to reflect on them in the light of a theology of history.

Aquinas makes a fundamental distinction between the *grace* of Christ and the *state* of the New Covenant. This distinction is implied in the above citation in which, after speaking of “images” and “shadows,” he nonetheless says that the “ancient Fathers were brought to Christ by the same faith and love” that we possess. This is particularly clear, for instance, in his discussion of the question of whether the liturgical enactments of the Old Law were figurative (*ST* I–II, q. 101, a. 2). In his discussion he first states that liturgical enactments are ordered to the worship of God and that worship has two dimensions: exterior and interior. Man, who is made up of soul and body, should worship with both these dimensions as it says in Psalm 84:3, “My heart and my flesh have exulted in the living God” (Vulg.). And, just as the body is ordered to God through the soul, so exterior worship is ordered to interior worship. Interior worship consists in the union of the soul with God through the mind and spiritual affection. Therefore, according to the manner in which the mind and affection of the worshipper are rightly joined to God, in that manner are the exterior acts of man applied to the worship of God.

Aquinas goes on to say:

In the state of future blessedness, the human intellect will gaze upon the very divine truth in itself. And therefore the exterior dimension of worship will not consist in any figure but only in the praise of God which will spring from interior knowledge and affection as it says in Isaiah 51:3, “Joy and gladness will be found in her [the restored Zion], thanksgiving and the sound of song.” [Note how Aquinas considers that the Isaiah text is not yet completely fulfilled.]

In the state of this present life we cannot gaze on the divine truth, but the rays of divine truth must shine on us through sensible figures as Dionysius says in chapter 1 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*. There is a difference, however, according to the state of human knowledge. In the Old Law the divine truth in itself was not made manifest and neither was the way to arriving at it yet opened up as the Apostle says in Hebrews 9:8. And therefore it was necessary that the worship of the Old Law be not only figurative of the future truth to be manifested in our homeland (*patria*) but also figurative of Christ who is the Way leading to that truth of the homeland. However, in the state of the New Law, this way

is now revealed. Therefore, this way should not be prefigured as though it were future, but it should be commemorated as something past or present, because now it is fitting only to prefigure the truth, not yet revealed, of glory as the Apostle says in Hebrews 10:1, "The Law has the shadow of good things to come, not the image itself of the realities." The shadow is less than the image in that the image pertains to the New Law, the shadow to the Old Law. (ST I-II, q. 101, a. 2, c.)

It is clear for Aquinas that the "state of the New Law" is the Catholic Church with its sacraments; how he would describe it in the post-Reformation era is another topic.²⁸ Aquinas sees the Church as the Body of Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, the place where the unrepeatable act of Christ on the Cross is "repeated" in sacrament and, in another way, in the life of the Church insofar as it is moved by the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation is the direct presence of God to history and the acts of Christ are the prime analogate and efficient and formal cause of all God's saving acts in Israel, as well as all the grace mediated through the God-given moral, liturgical, and legal enactments in the life of Israel.²⁹ This, as we have seen, makes the whole history of Israel a prophetic statement of God's plan. It is precisely because this people realizes and anticipates on its level of existence the mystery of the covenant sealed by God in the union of the Word with the humanity of Christ, that its way of life can mediate the grace of Christ before the state of the New Law exists historically.

An understanding of God's providential relation to history, that is, to the activity of human persons, enables us to grasp the overriding importance of the *unique*. Jean Lacroix once remarked that there is an interiority to history, a relation to God that is founded on the mystery of personhood and that makes every event and the whole sweep of human history only fully intelligible in terms of God's plan, his disposition or

²⁸ See O'Neill, "St. Thomas on the Membership."

²⁹ I realize that in perpetuating the classification of moral, legal, and liturgical laws I am not yet responding to Michael Wyschogrod's objection that this Thomistic distinction does not respect the unity of the Mosaic Law (*The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* [Northvale, NJ: First Jason Aronson Inc., 1996]). I can only say here that the audience indicated by certain laws in the Mosaic legislation is already a form of classification, perhaps according to importance. It is also possible that the removal of the Decalogue from the phylacteries was due to the fact that Christians used the practice to point out to the Jews that they had made a distinction in what is important in the Torah. See Geza Vermes, "The Decalogue and the Minim," in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 169–77. See further the remarks by David Novak cited further on.

economy within human dimensions.³⁰ I think philosophers such as Michael Wyschogrod would maintain that the entrance point of God into this economy is through his choice of a people whom he binds to himself in covenant in such a way that their acts, and therefore their history, have a particular exterior and interior relation to God.³¹ I would agree with this, and yet I would see this covenant relation, perpetuated as it is by generation (*toledot*) and by fidelity, as itself an anticipated and continued participation in the mysterious union of the Word of God with the humanity of Jesus Christ, himself a child of the covenant.

Part II: Covenant, The Center Concept

Closely allied to the concept of “choice” in the revelation made to Israel is the notion of covenant, *bērit*. There is scarcely a word more important in the whole of the Scriptures than is this word “covenant,” and yet there is scarcely a word more difficult to define.

It has become commonplace in biblical scholarship to point to the existence of a certain type of treaty or loyalty oath as providing the background category within which Israel understood its covenant relation with God.³² Research has uncovered what are probably two types of agreement between a superior ruler and his inferior. The first, made popular by George Mendenhall, is that of the Hittite Suzerain Treaty in which the Hittite overlord, after recording his benefactions bestowed upon his client, lists a series of stipulations with which the client must comply.³³ The second, treated at length by Moshe Weinfeld, is a loyalty oath exacted by the Assyrian monarch from his successor.³⁴ In both transactions, but especially in the first, the motive for fidelity is basically gratitude. It is easy to see how easily this was adapted by the thinkers in Israel to their situation. Though the stipulations are, in this case, divine law, they are viewed as being laid down by YHWH on the basis of his

³⁰ Jean Lacroix, *Histoire et Mystère* (Tournai: Castermann, 1962). I have developed Lacroix's thesis beyond his own statements in the light of recent Catholic thinking about the human person. One may consult Kenneth L. Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993).

³¹ Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith*.

³² For a discussion of these, see George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, “Covenant,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1179–1202; and Moshe Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy, Book of,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. Freedman et al., 168–83.

³³ See Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” and the literature given there.

³⁴ For the literature, see Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy.”

saving activity: "I, YHWH [his name], your God [his title], brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery [his benefactions]. You shall not have other gods besides me" (the first of the "ten words," the beginning of the stipulations (Ex 20:2–3)).³⁵

The "atmosphere" of the Hittite and Assyrian arrangements pervades much of the covenant dimension of Israel's thinking, although this only became apparent through modern scholarship. It is significant that two of the most recent authors to have considered the term directly agree, though they differ as to the etymology of the word, that *bērît* fundamentally implies a "determination" or "obligation" or "pledge" taken upon oneself (E. Kutsch) or even "imposition" or "liability" in addition to "obligation" (Weinfeld).³⁶

Although the term *bērît* signifies primarily the assumption of an obligation, we would be mistaken to abstract from it any notion of relationship. The obligations assumed are nearly all in a context of mutuality, though the level of this mutuality is distinctly asymmetrical. In fact, especially in the Priestly tradition, the notion of election itself, the act by which a special relation is established, is often expressed in terms of a *bērît*. Thus, the call of Abraham is presented in terms of both a command and a promise on the part of God (Gn 12:1–3, Yahwist), and this action of God, which grounds the whole process of the Christological dispensation mentioned earlier, is often referred to as a *bērît*. Only YHWH is bound by his promise, but he can make it contingent upon Abraham's obedience. A classical expression of the unilateral nature of the covenant made with the Fathers can be found in Psalm 105: 7–11:

He is YHWH our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He is mindful of his covenant for ever, of the word that He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which He confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an

³⁵ For an ample study following this approach, see Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant."

³⁶ See E. Kutsch, "berit, obligation," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. Claus Westermann and Ernst Jenni (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 256–66; Moshe Weinfeld, "berit," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol 2, 253–78. This accent is not unchallenged: see Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Hebrew Bible* (San Francisco: Harper, 1985), 25 n 10. See, however, Levenson's more favorable acceptance of Weinfeld's notion of a "Grant Covenant." Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 184–205; Jon D. Levenson, "The Theologies of Commandment in Biblical Israel," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 17–33.

everlasting covenant, saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance."³⁷

Norbert Lohfink points to the Priestly tradition which effects a theological structuring of Israel's history through a series of "divine promises that cannot be abrogated" and that are designated by the term *bērît*.³⁸ There is the promise to the whole human race made to and through Noah (Gn 9:9–17), and the promise made to Abraham (Gn 17:1–22), which also contains a blessing that affects the whole world: Both of these covenants have a "sign." Modeled on these is the covenant made with David, dramatically expressed in Psalm 89:3–4, a statement that includes the expressions "cut" (make) a covenant, "my chosen one" (*bēhīnī*), and swearing to David his servant: "You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your descendants for ever, and build your throne for all generations.'" Later, in verse 38, the moon is mentioned as a "witness" to God's oath, a sort of "sign."

Though the *bērît* in the Priestly tradition describes unilateral promises that sometimes are contingent upon an action on the part of the recipient of the promise, there are places where this contingency is tantamount to a reciprocal *bērît* on Israel's part. Thus we read in Leviticus 26:3–4 a line that is close to Deuteronomic thinking: "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit." In Deuteronomic thought it is clearer: There is something close to a mutual agreement:

This day YHWH your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances; you shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared this day, concerning YHWH, that He is your God, and that you will walk in his ways and keep his statutes and his commandment and his ordinances and will obey his voice; and YHWH has declared this day concerning you that you are a people for his own possession, as He has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, that He will set you high above all nations that He

³⁷ We may note here the accumulation of words and concepts that, besides the common "cut a covenant" (*karat bērît*), are associated with "covenant": universal reign ("his judgments are in all the earth"); "a word commanded" (*dābār šiuwvah*); "sworn promise" (*šēbū 'ātō*); "confirm as a statute" (*ya'ā mīdehā lēhōq*).

³⁸ Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 18. In the lines that follow I am indebted to this whole chapter, originally an essay by Lohfink.

has made, in praise and in fame and in honor, and that you shall be a people holy to YHWH your God, as He has spoken. (Dt 26: 17–19)

It is this same Deuteronomic tradition, however, that insists on the unmotivated love by which YHWH chose his people without previous merit of their own. It should be stated at the outset that this relation to himself established by God begins with a *choice*, one that is expressed in this tradition by combining the two words *hashaq* and *bahar*. The first word evokes the notion of an attraction, almost inexplicable, as in the text that speaks of victory in war, “and you see a beautiful woman and you become enamored of her [*hashaqta bah*] and you want to take her as a wife” (Dt 21:11), or again when Hamor is explaining to Jacob that his son is in love with Dinah: “[M]y son Schechem is enamored [*hashaqta napsho*] of your daughter” (Gn 34:8). The second word, *bahar*, is also a theological term characteristic of Deuteronomy, where it retains its meaning as: to choose out, to prefer. We have already considered Deuteronomy 10:14–15; we find the same thought in Deuteronomy 7:7:

It was not because you were more in number than any other people that YHWH set his heart upon you [*hashaq bakem*] and chose you [*wayibhar bakem*], for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because YHWH loves you [*mi'ahabat YHWH etkem*], and is keeping the oath which He swore to your fathers, that YHWH has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that YHWH your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

If the expression *hashaq* leads us into the heart of God and to his inexplicable and particular love, the term *bahar* introduces God and his activity into the very stuff of historical existence as an actor within human time. These are not merely metaphors, they are symbols embodying and pointing to a mystery beyond conceptualization but that, however, are founded on the fact that God is the Creator of the universe and has chosen to relate to Israel and to us in this way.

Let me conclude this section with a summary by Norbert Lohfink, whose work has been helpful in this area:

What are all the things that depend thematically on the word *berît*, “covenant”? The word ties together—to say it quite briefly—several Old Testament decisive themes in the biblical writings. Through the covenant with Noah and with Abraham, and through the making of

Old Testament covenants in the course of history, it becomes connected with the *portrayal of the entire course of the history of salvation*. Through the passage about Sinai and through Deuteronomy, it becomes connected with the entire *torah*. Through Jeremiah 30–31 and its textual parallels, it becomes a catchword for the “messianic” *promises*. As a designation for the decalogue or its first commandment, it evokes the core of the *relationship with God*.³⁹

Part III: Torah

The word “Torah,” which is found approximately 220 times in the Old Testament, has this in common with the word *berît*, namely, that the various contexts in which it is found serve to give it complex and multiple resonances that are in turn exploited by the sacred writers. It is another instance of the capacity to exploit “systematically vague and elastic terms,” to employ Clarke’s expression once again, in which there is as well, at times, a “sunken image.” If we assume that the basic original meaning of *tôrâ* is instruction, it is easy to understand how this sense, which could be applied to a mother’s *tôrâ* (Prv 1:8) as well as to that of the “teaching of the wise” (Prv 13:14), could apply as well to the instruction of the priests derived either from skill in the law or through some form of consulting God, to the whole of God’s teaching and law-giving, and, even more broadly, to the whole of God’s activity in regard to Israel as this is mediated to successive generations. Thus, Joseph Jensen can state: “If one begins with the assumption that *tôrâ* is basically ‘instruction’ in a fairly generalized sense, the derivation of the more specific meanings is not difficult to understand.”⁴⁰

I wish to present some examples of the ways in which *tôrâ* is actually used in the Old Testament. First, I will give examples from the wisdom usage and from the priestly vocabulary, and then I will look more specifically at the Deuteronomic understanding. This may not always reflect the chronology of the uses, but it does serve to give a notion of the aura the word brought with it for those who were familiar with the written tradition both in the later biblical period and in early Judaism. Though I will return to this point later, it is worth bearing in mind that of the 220 occurrences of the term *tôrâh* in the Bible, approximately 196 of them

³⁹ Lohfink and Zenger, *The God of Israel*, 26.

⁴⁰ Joseph Jensen, *The Use of Tôrâ by Isaiah: His Debate With the Wisdom Tradition*, ed. Patrick Skehan et al. (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1973), 27.

were rendered as *nomos* in the Septuagint. This surely expanded the resonances of this term among Greek speaking Jews.⁴¹

We have already seen some examples of *tôrâh* as instruction in the wisdom tradition. I wish to add just a few more:

My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live, keep my *tôrâh* as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart. (Prv 3:1–3)⁴²

My son, keep your father's commandment [*mišwah*], and forsake not your mother's *tôrâh*. Bind them upon your heart always; tie them about your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. (Prv 6:20–22; again the allusion to Dt 6:6–9)

In a legal setting, *tôrâh* can have the meaning of “regulation,” as when Leviticus speaks of the *tôrâh* of the burnt offering, or cereal offering.⁴³ Certainly the communication of *tôrâh* was considered to be one of the primary duties of the priests. This could refer to individual regulatory decisions, such as the ones just mentioned, or concrete decisions regarding the holy and profane, and the like. It seems that when Jeremiah speaks of the four categories of rebellious leaders, the third category, “those who dealt with the *tôrâh*,” refers to a particular division of Levites especially skilled in legal matters.⁴⁴ However, when other prophetic condemnations condemn the priests for having forgotten the *tôrâh* (in the sense of “ignoring” it: for example, Hos 4:6) or even for having done it violence (Zep 3:4), the reference is to the whole revelation of the will of YHWH and not merely to particular statutes: “the entire disclosure of YHWH’s will, already fixed in writing.”⁴⁵ This latter understanding seems to have been the most common one even before the advent of Deuteronomic thought, but it was certainly the enormous influence of the Deuteronomic view of *tôrâh* that

⁴¹ A rapid glance at the targumic usage seems to confirm the same tendency: *tôrâh* is rendered ‘*wr’yy*’.

⁴² The allusion to Dt 6:6–9 would hardly be missed, nor would the abundance of “legal” terms in a wisdom setting: This is not uncommon. See the list in Weinfeld, *berit*.

⁴³ Lv 6:9, 14, etc. This is extended by Ezekiel who speaks of the “law of the temple” (*tôrat habāyit*), meaning the regulations for the new eschatological temple.

⁴⁴ Jer 2:8. The text is: “The priests asked not, ‘Where is YHWH?’ Those who dealt with the law knew me not: the shepherds rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal and went after useless idols.”

⁴⁵ Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 138; cited in Weinfeld, *berit*, 1419.

served to confer on the term for later generations the sense of “the entire disclosure of YHWH’s will.”

The Deuteronomic viewpoint, which was elaborated by many who played a part in the construction of the book of Deuteronomy and supplied Deuteronomistic glosses in the preceding books, marked a turning point in the religious history of Israel. By summing up and furthering a theological outlook, the book of Deuteronomy was to offer a unified perspective on the whole of *tôrâh* and to enable subsequent generations to view many different aspects of YHWH’s revealed will as, in some sense, a whole.⁴⁶ In its present form, Deuteronomy presents Moses in the land of Moab, able to see the land promised by YHWH but forbidden to enter it, who now, in a last speech, presents the *tôrâh* he received from YHWH at Horeb but has kept until now, when the people are preparing to enter the land and need to know how to conduct themselves as a sedentary people with foreign and often hostile neighbors. Thus, at the conclusion of the statutes and laws enumerated from chapters 5 to 28 of Deuteronomy, we read: “These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh ordered Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant which he had made with them at Horeb” (Dt 28:69). In the view of Deuteronomy, then, the covenant was first made on the basis of the “ten words” pronounced on Horeb by YHWH:

He revealed his covenant to you and commanded you to observe it, the Ten Words which He inscribed on two tablets of stone. (Dt 4:13)

[After the incident of the golden calf,] He inscribed the tablets, as He had inscribed them before, with the Ten Words which YHWH had said to you on the mountain, from the heart of the fire, on the day of the Assembly. YHWH then gave them to me. (Dt 10:4)

YHWH then said to Moses, “Put these words in writing, for they are the terms of the covenant which I have made with you and with Israel.” He stayed there with YHWH for forty days and forty nights, eating and drinking nothing, and on the tablets he wrote the words of the covenant—the Ten Words. (Ex 34:27–28; a Deuteronomistic gloss on a text recording the same event of the golden calf)⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For a still valuable series of essays, see Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, ed. T. W. Manson et al., trans. David Stalker (London: SCM Press, 1953, 1956). The most adequate study for our purposes is that by Barnabas Lindars, “Torah in Deuteronomy,” in *Words and Meanings*, ed. Peter Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 117–36. For a consideration of the whole book, one may consult Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy.”

⁴⁷ The translation of these three texts is from *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

In two of the four texts just cited, we find the phrase “the words of the covenant.” In Deuteronomy 28:69, it refers to the whole of the legislation recorded in the preceding twenty-four chapters, while in the gloss on Exodus 34:28 it refers to “the ten words.” In general Deuteronomy tends to use the term “words” to describe the legislation it contains in order to give it the same authority as the “ten words.”⁴⁸ This identification of “words” and “covenant” is furthered in the Deuteronomistic tradition by the phrase “the book of the *tôrâh*” or even “the book of the *tôrâh* of Moses”:

Do not let this book of the *tôrâh* depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Jos 1:7–8)

Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to YHWH, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of YHWH had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the book of the *tôrâh* of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. (Jos 8:30–31)⁴⁹

Torah and Covenant

The linguistic usage to which I have just pointed lends weight to the assertion of Norbert Lohfink that in the Deuteronomistic tradition *bĕrît* becomes connected with the entire *tôrâh*. Actually the two realities become aspects of one thing: the relation between YHWH and his people. Abraham Heschel, one of the most revered of modern Jewish thinkers, sums up the rabbinic view of the relationship this way:

Saaida Gaon was correct in asserting that Israel is a people only by virtue of its Torah, that the only assurance for Israel’s peoplehood is the Torah. On the other hand, Rabbi Halevi reminds us, “If there were not Jews there would be no Torah.”⁵⁰

In order to understand how Deuteronomic usage had such an impact on subsequent Jewish life and piety, we must look first at the manner in which Deuteronomy uses the covenant formula of “belonging” and then consider the wisdom overtones in the Deuteronomistic presentation of *tôrâh*.

⁴⁸ See Lindars, “Torah in Deuteronomy.”

⁴⁹ The prescription that no iron tool touch the stones of the altar is found both in Ex 20:25 and Dt 27:5–7. It is a good example of the rewriting of the former material within Deuteronomy; probably for the author in this case, both these texts belong to the “book of the *tôrâ* of Moses.”

⁵⁰ Abraham J. Heschel, “God, Torah, and Israel,” in *Theology and Church in Times of Change*, ed. Edward LeRoy Long Jr. and Robert T. Handy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 71–90.

The Covenant Formula

In a very valuable study, Rolf Rendtorff has pointed to the fact that the covenant formula “to be a God/a people” occurs in three different manners.⁵¹

Formula A: “I will be a God for you.”

Formula B: “You shall be a people for me.”

Formula C: The two above statements are combined, though not always in the same order.⁵²

Formula A characterizes the first four books of the Pentateuch and belongs to the Priestly tradition;⁵³ *formula B* is found only in Deuteronomic material, which never has *formula A*;⁵⁴ and *formula C* is found twice each in the Priestly material and twice in the Deuteronomic material.⁵⁵ Moreover, the Priestly expression “to be a God for you” most often serves to express the *motive* of God’s action when the action is establishing a covenant with Abraham or promising him land (Gn 17:7b, 8) or, as is most often the case, in rescuing the people from Egypt: “For I am YHWH who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, *to be your God*; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lv 11:45, emphasis added; also 22:32–33, 25:38, 26:44–45; and Nm 15:41).

On the other hand, the Deuteronomic phrase places the accent on election. In one text the rescue from Egypt is motivated by God’s desire that Israel become his people: “But YHWH has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own possession, as at this day” (Dt 4:20). Often the Israelites are told that they must obey YHWH because they are a people holy to him: “You are the sons of YHWH your God; you shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. For you are a people holy to YHWH your God, and YHWH has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth” (Dt 14:1–2). The other three texts that speak of Israel’s becoming God’s people (Dt 7:6 [see above], 27:9–19, and 28:9–10) also place the accent on Israel’s obligation to obey because they are holy, chosen by God, to be his people. This,

⁵¹ Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, ed. David J. Reimer, trans. Margaret Kohl (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Eight times and Ez 34:24.

⁵⁴ Five times.

⁵⁵ Ex 6:7; Lv 26:12, and Dt 26:17, 19; 27:12 (13).

as Weinfeld points out, reverses the position of the Priestly tradition, particularly that of the Holiness Code.⁵⁶ There, the people are told that they should obey YHWH's commands in order to "sanctify themselves," while Deuteronomy places the accent on obedience to YHWH *because* they are holy, already consecrated by YHWH's choice. Rendtorff makes a similar observation: "The requirement (in Deuteronomy) to keep the commandments is therefore also an essential element in the narrower definition of what it means to be a people for God's possession."⁵⁷

With regard to the two-part or reciprocal formulae, we may note with Rendtorff that the two Priestly formulations serve to include between them the entire story of God's intention to save Israel (Ex 6:7) and the completion of the law-giving on Sinai (Lv 26:45). The two formulae in Deuteronomy occur in the latter part of the book. In Deuteronomy 26:1–19, we see how closely election and obedience are bound together:

Today you have obtained this declaration from YHWH: that he will be your God, but only if you follow his ways, keep his statutes, his commandments, his customs, and listen to his voice. And today YHWH has obtained this declaration from you: that you will be his own people—as he has said—but only if you keep all his commandments; then for praise and renown and honor, He will raise you higher than every other nation He has made, and you will be a people consecrated to YHWH, as He has promised.

In Deuteronomy 29:10–15, Moses is addressing "all the Israelites." After a brief historical prologue (recall the Hittite Covenants), he says to them in words that once again closely connect covenant and obedience to the prescriptions of the *tôrâh*:

All of you are standing today in the presence of YHWH your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, together with your children and your wives and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with YHWH your God, a covenant that YHWH is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that He may be your God as He promised you and as He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of YHWH our God but also with those who are not here today.

⁵⁶ Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy," 181.

⁵⁷ Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula*, 25.

After having considered the covenant formulae we should turn our attention now to another and different theological aspect of *tôrâh*, namely, the consideration of how *tôrâh* and wisdom relate.

Torah and Wisdom

There is, finally, one other aspect of Deuteronomy's outlook that is important to understand if we are to appreciate the global impact of this teaching on subsequent biblical thought and beyond. Deuteronomy presents covenant fidelity ("love") as the goal of YHWH's choice and rescue of Israel to be his people, and it also utilizes the latent potentiality of the treaty and loyalty-oath mind-set which surrounded Israel to cast its whole frame of thought in the form of direct address based on gratitude. This form of address along with the insertion of motivational material made it all the easier to provide the text with resonances of the Wisdom tradition and facilitate the intimacy with YHWH that Deuteronomy seeks to create. We might first note that those who administer law under Moses are described as "wise, intelligent, and experienced" men (contrast Ex 18:13–27).⁵⁸ Indeed, the very possession of Torah shows Israel to have been gifted by God with wisdom:

Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as YHWH my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (Dt 4:5–6)⁵⁹

We may note as well that in addition to the considerable amount of ethical material treated only in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom tradition, there is throughout Deuteronomy the presence of parenetic and didactic application of laws, that is, places where *tôrâh* is both promulgated and taught.⁶⁰ Take this example from the "law of release" (Dt 15:1–11):

[Law:] At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. [Explanation:] This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan

⁵⁸ For this insight and the remark about ethical material, see Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy," 181–82.

⁵⁹ Compare Jer 8:7–8: "Even the stork in the air knows its seasons; Turtledove, swallow, and thrush observe their time of return, but my people do not know the ordinance of YHWH. How can you say, 'We are wise, we have the law of YHWH?' Why, that has been changed into falsehood by the lying pen of the scribes!"

⁶⁰ See, von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, 11–24.

he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because YHWH's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. [*Casuistic exception:*] You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your brother owes you. [*Parenesis and motivation:*] However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land YHWH your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey YHWH your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. . . . If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which YHWH your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart, and you say, "The seventh year, the year of release is near," and your eye be hostile to your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to YHWH against you, and it be sin in you. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him; because for this YHWH your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

This approach to law, by an appeal to inner motivation and not merely the recitation of the stipulations, provides an example of *tôrâh* as instruction even within a legal context that is typical of Deuteronomy and of much of the *tôrâh*/instruction that depends upon this tradition. Particularly noteworthy is the accent on the "heart," a term important in the Wisdom tradition as well.⁶¹ It is likely that the expression "all the heart" was coined by the Deuteronomist, as well as "all the heart and soul" (Dt 4:29, 6:5, 10:12, 11:13), and that these expressions echoed wherever this mode of thought exercised influence in the biblical tradition. The same is true of the expression "circumcise the heart," which can be found in several places (Dt 10:16, 30:6; Lv 26:41; Jer 4:4; Ez 44:7, 9). I wish to consider this matter of the heart more at length, but I would first like to present some texts that reflect the heartfelt response in gratitude on the part of Israel for the gift of *tôrâh*. I will present some texts, particularly from the psalms, that embody and communicate that love.

⁶¹ For references, consult F. Stolz, "Leb, Heart," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 638–42.

Love of Torah

As is well-known, Psalm 119 is a hymn to God praising the Torah, promising fidelity, and looking for protection because of the *tôrâh* relationship initiated by YHWH.⁶² Here are some of its verses:

I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (v. 2.)
Give me understanding, and I will keep your *tôrâh* and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. (vv. 34–35)

At night, I remember your name, YHWH, and I keep your *torah*. (v. 55)

How I love your *tôrâh*! I ponder it all day long. (v. 97)

Let your face shine on your servant, teach me your will. (v. 135)

I long for your salvation, YHWH, your *tôrâh* is my delight. May I live only to praise you, may your judgments be my help. (vv. 174–175)

In addition, we have the unforgettable opening to the whole Psalter:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the *tôrâh* of the YHWH, and on his *tôrâh*, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Ps 1:1–3)

Many other biblical texts could be adduced, but allow me to cite a few rabbinic texts here as well.

Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai of the second century said, “It is written, *For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people* (Isa. 65:22). A ‘tree’ signifies the Torah, as it is stated *It* (that is, the Torah) *is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it* (Prv 3:18).” Now which was created for the sake of which? Was the Torah created for Israel or vice versa? Surely the Torah was created for the sake of Israel. Thus if the Torah endures for all eternity, how much more must Israel for whose sake it was created endure for all eternity.⁶³

⁶² For a discussion of this psalm, see Jon D. Levenson, “The Sources of Torah: Psalm 119 and the Modes of Revelation in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 559–74.

⁶³ *Ecclesiastes Rabba*, 1:4, 9, quoted in Heschel, “God, Torah, and Israel,” 84–85.

Then there is the dramatic statement of R. Ben Azzai: "My soul clings to the Torah; there is no time for marriage; may the world be maintained by others."⁶⁴

Another saying of Ben Azzai: "The words of the Torah are as joyful as the day they were given as Sinai. . . . For the essence of their being is given through fire, because "the mountain burned with fire into the heart of heaven" (Dt 4:11).⁶⁵

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: I sold you my Tora—it is as though I sold Myself with it.⁶⁶

[Rabban Yohannan ben Zakkai:] "If you have learned much Tora, ascribe no merit to yourself; for this you were created."⁶⁷

The New Covenant/Torah

Already, toward the end of Deuteronomy (30:1–14), there is a passage about restoration from exile that speaks of God himself circumcising the hearts of his people in order to obtain their obedience: "And YHWH your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live" (Dt 30:6). Jeremiah, whose teaching was profoundly marked by the Deuteronomic outlook repeats this prophecy in his own words:

Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know that I am YHWH; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart. (Jer 24:5–7)

We should note here how profoundly linked together are the actions of God who will build up and plant in his act of restoration and at the

⁶⁴ t.Yebam 8, 4, translated in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2, 767. B. Azzai is recorded elsewhere as embracing the traditional teaching on marriage, though he himself does not seem to have followed it. See also the beautiful Baraita cited by Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, vol. 1, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 359–60.

⁶⁵ *Leviticus Rabba*, 16, quoted in Shmuel Safrai, ed., *The Literature of the Sages*, vol. 1, *Oral Torah, Halakha, Mishnah, Tosephta, External Tractates*, sec. 2, *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud* (Assen/Maastricht/Philadelphia: Van Gorcum/Fortress, 1987), 103.

⁶⁶ *Exodus Rabba*, 33, quoted in Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages*, 1.

⁶⁷ *M. Avot* 2:8, quoted in Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages*.

same time give his people a new heart that they might know him: That is, they will experience him, recognize his authority, and be able to return his love with their whole heart. The result is a new, that is, a restored and interior, covenant sealed by a covenant formula of mutual belonging (formula C above).⁶⁸

We have finally the other Jeremian prophecy of a new covenant, one that figures large in the New Testament and echoes at Qumran:⁶⁹

See, a time is coming—declares YHWH—when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them out of the land of Egypt, a covenant which they broke, though I espoused them—declares YHWH. But such is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel after these days—declares YHWH: I will put my Teaching [*tôrâh*] into their inmost being and inscribe it upon their hearts. Then I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they need to teach one another and say to one another, “Heed [*dē’û*] YHWH”; for all of them, from the least of them to the greatest, shall heed [*yēdû*] me—declares YHWH. (Jer 31:31–4; basically follows the Jewish Publication Society translation)

Here, in the most explicit terms, we have a prophecy that states clearly God’s intention to provide his people with the interior principle of response without which they will be unable to keep his *tôrâh*. This is seen, as I have said, as the core of what God will do when he restores his people to their land. The same theme is repeated by Jeremiah’s younger contemporary Ezekiel, most particularly in chapter 36:24–27:

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my

⁶⁸ See Francis Martin, “The Humanity of Christian Mysticism,” *Cross Currents* (1974): 233–47; Hans Walter Wolff, “‘Wissen um Gott’ bei Hosea als Urform von Theologie,” *Evangelische Theologie* 12 (1952–1953): 533–54.

⁶⁹ Cairo Document 20, 12; 6, 19; and perhaps 1QpHab. This was one of several ways the covenant at Qumran was designated. See Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins: Studies in the Jewish Background of the New Testament*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1961, 1983), 91–92; J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea*, trans. John Strugnell (London: SCM Press, 1959), 113–14.

ordinances. You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.⁷⁰

Though this latter text does not mention Torah explicitly—the word is rare in Ezekiel—the notion is partially contained in the terms “statutes” and “ordinances.” Thus, the Deuteronomic accent on the “heart”⁷¹ prepared the way for the word of the Lord to come to Jeremiah and Ezekiel and announce his plans for the restoration of Israel and, as Christians understand it, the ultimate renewal of humanity. That this last goal is not foreign to the thinking of Israel herself is evident from the number of times Israel prays looking forward to the approach of the nations to YHWH. Let this text suffice:

There is none like you among the gods, my Lord, no deeds like yours. All the nations whom you have made will come and bow down before you, my Lord, and glorify your name. For you are great and a worker of wonders; you are God, you alone. (Ps 86:8–10)⁷²

Part IV: The Covenant Never Revoked and the Christian Torah

We have seen how the term *bĕrît* is associated with election and *tôrâh* and thus serves as a mediating concept, even if only implicitly, between these two. As Christianity and Judaism moved apart, these three terms were understood very differently. In these concluding reflections, I wish to consider the meaning of “new” as applied to the Christian understanding of the present dispensation or covenant and then point to some areas where further reflection is needed.

The first consideration concerns the manner in which the First Covenant is repeated and raised to a new level. The second is the question of how to describe the relation between what is usually called the Old Covenant, not revoked, and the New Covenant. The first question has to do with the “newness” of the Covenant, and the second with the perdurance of the people Israel.

⁷⁰ See also Ez 11:19. For the phrase “eternal covenant,” see Jer 32:40; Ez 16:60 and 37:26.

⁷¹ In addition to the texts already mentioned, see Jer 32:39–40: “I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts, that they may not turn from Me.”

⁷² For a complete treatment of this theme, see Lohfink and Zenger, *The God of Israel*.

The Meaning of "New"

The early Christian community referred to the dispensation of God under which they were living as a *kainē diathēkē*, a "New Testament." This expression is linked to Jesus' words at the institution of the Eucharist as recorded in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25 and is an allusion to the prophecy of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34. The same notion is equivalently present in Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24, which allude to Exodus 24:8. The term "New Covenant" and the concept are repeated elsewhere.⁷³ By using the term *kainos* rather than *neos*, the early Christian community expressed both continuity and discontinuity in a way adumbrated in Old Testament writings, which writings were nevertheless transcended by the event of Christ.⁷⁴ I would like to search for a way of understanding this relationship that preserves both continuity and transcendence.

It will help to recall here some of the teachings of Thomas Aquinas in this regard, first, that of the unique presence of God in Christ which makes of him the center of all history, second, his reiterated statements that the just ones in Israel possessed the same faith and love that we do, that they belong to the Body of Christ, and they are destined for and foretold the same eternal goal to which we still tend. The best description of the process by which the state of the New Law relates to the state of the Old Law can, I think, be found in a discussion of conversion by Bernard Lonergan who employs the term "sublation" and describes it in this manner:

What sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary, needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.⁷⁵

If we accept St. Thomas's view that there are two "states" of God's people, then the question is one of finding a way to describe their relationship. I am proposing the notion of "sublation" as described by Lonergan.⁷⁶ It is clear as well that St. Thomas's view of the special history of the Jewish people

⁷³ 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6,14; Heb 8:6–13; also Heb 7:22.

⁷⁴ Thus, von Rad can speak of the prophets looking for "a new David, a new Exodus, a new covenant, a new city of God: the old had thus become a type of the new and important as pointing forward to it." Gerhard G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

⁷⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 241.

⁷⁶ For another view, less speculative but very penetrating, see Robert Jensen, "Toward a Christian Theology of Judaism," in *Jews and Christians, People of God*,

accords well with what I have proposed above regarding “economic participation,” that is, that all the acts of God in history are related in a relation of dependence upon the Incarnation, with its prior anticipation in the covenant with Israel and its subsequent continuance on this new level in the existence of the Church, the Body of Christ. The question still remains as to how this understanding can be expressed, both philosophically and theologically, in such a way that both Jews and Christians can understand what is claimed as well as what is not eliminated. This is a task that still needs completion. I would suggest that Lonergan’s description is apt to describe the present relation between Covenants, Old and New. This description, however, must be elaborated into an understanding of history that respects the sublation or transposition effected by God within it while avoiding the pitfalls of a Hegelian theorizing.

Freedom, God’s and man’s, makes history. It is not the outworking of a system, but the mystery of an interaction and a plan that proceeds by *events* that are unique and yet related. In the Christian vision, Christ, both God and man, is source and ultimate consummation of that plan that is being worked out, first in shadow, now in icon, and finally in truth. The movement from shadow to icon is the movement from an anticipated participation in the mystery of Christ and his redemptive act, to the very historical presence of Christ. He is fixed now in the glory of the act of love by which he, in his own humanity, passed over to God and reconciled humankind to God and to itself, and yet he is still present to us. We possess “the very icon of these realities” (Heb 10:1). We possess the realities that are proper to that goal, yet we have them in symbol and word: the rays of divine truth reach us through sacramental signs.

In the action of God within the history of the people of Israel, as well as in its laws and liturgy and its great heroes, we see the converging point of world history. This action is then taken up by Christ in one historical moment, and the converging point is made irreplaceably and definitively dense: The act of God in history, in which all other acts find their ultimate meaning and source, is now itself present in a human being inextricably joined to God. For the Christian, the principle of economic participation is now present in time. Christ, the Son of Man, the Servant of God who “fulfills all justice” by giving flesh in a new way to the way of God with man, taking upon himself the sins of the people and through them the sins of the world, becomes Israel in a new and sublated manner. In the prophecy of Hosea the *people*, looking forward to restoration after suffer-

ing, say: "He will revive us in two days, on the third day he will raise us up to live in his presence" (Hos 6:2). The New Testament affirms this of the resurrection of Christ, because when Christ rose, all Israel rose. In Christ and in the Church all Israel, including its laws and way of life, continues to exist in a fulfilled, that is, a sublated, manner, and not as replaced.

If we take seriously what has been said about the Torah up to this point, and if we take seriously the Christian understanding of how the promise in the prophetic proclamation of the Deuteronomic teaching is understood to be fulfilled in Jesus and those joined to him, it is clear that we, both Jews and Christians, are being called to a profound reconsideration of each other, ourselves, and our mutual relationship. It has been my principal purpose to enter into a Christian rethinking of the role of Torah to aid in this mutual reconsideration by paying close attention to the text of the Old Testament.

Let us recall first the well-known words of *Nostra Aetate*, number 4:

Searching into the mystery of the Church, this sacred synod remembers the bond by which the People of the New Testament are spiritually joined with the stock of Abraham.

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.

"God does not repent of the gifts He made to the Jews and his calling of them. They still remain most dear to Him for the sake of their fathers" (see Rom 11:28–29).

We may also recall some of the words of Pope John Paul II. At the synagogue in Rome, April 13, 1986, on the occasion of his historic visit there, the pope first spoke of the millennial presence of Jews in Rome and then mentioned their sufferings during World War II and the fact of the Holocaust. He then went on to develop three points that follow from *Nostra Aetate*:

The *first* is that the Church of Christ discovers her "bond" with Judaism "by searching into her own mystery" (cf. *Nostra aetate*, no. 4). The Jewish religion is not "extrinsic" to us but in a certain way is "intrinsic" to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a relation which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our older brothers.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Fisher and Klenicki, eds., *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, 63.

We should recall here as well the words at the beginning of this essay that speak of a covenant never revoked and of a “permanent value” of the Old Testament that “is not wiped out by the later interpretation of the New Testament.”

But this does not yet answer the question of the continued existence of Israel. The Church has not replaced Israel; Israel has been fulfilled in the Church, and yet most of the Jewish people still find their identity relating to God through their ancient covenant that has never been revoked. From one point of view the resolution of this tension is eschatological. From another point of view this same tension is at least partially resolvable through a new mode of relating that undoes two millennia of fear and mistrust—an enormous spiritual task—and which, at the same time, forces us to a deeper discernment into the action of God in history, one faithful to God’s word and to a more profound and mutual understanding of our traditions. There are many fine examples of this kind of mutual rethinking, sometimes done jointly, sometimes done by one group or the other, but always with an awareness of a common task. We must continue to pray and to work for this mutual understanding. **N V**