

Jew and Gentile in the Church Today

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WE KNOW THE JEWS today as a gathered and not merely a scattered people. This is one sign that the times of the Gentiles are running out. Another is the increasing hostility toward Jews and Christians around the world, as well as the appearance in history of empires of evil that systematically assault both them and the worldview they represent. The advance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ toward the furthest corners of the world, the great apostasy that has been taking place for some centuries now in the remnants of Christendom, and the turmoil in the Church itself are also important signs, not to speak of the global assault on the unborn and on children, an assault of demonic power and proportions that cries out for judgment. But if the times of the Gentiles are beginning to run out, the prospect also appears of a new openness to the Gospel among Jews themselves, and this itself, insofar as there is evidence of it, is a crucial sign.

There is some evidence of it, whether of the kind recounted by Roy Schoeman in *Salvation is from the Jews*, or of the kind that appears in messianic Judaism, or of the kind that brings Jews and Christians together, despite their differences, in circles such as those created around *First Things*. There is evidence of it in the academy also, where figures such as Jesus and Paul are examined in their first-

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century Jewish context by Jews and Christians together, continuing a path signposted by Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and made more promising by the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. And, though we are only in the early stages of that emerging openness, real questions are being raised for the Church. Is it not confronted with the need to reckon with something that, for many centuries, it has been convenient largely to ignore, that the Gospel of God concerning his Son, and the power of salvation at work in that Gospel, is "for the Jew first and then also for the Greek"? Is it not faced, in a more pressing manner, with matters related to the faith of Jews and with questions about the flourishing again of the natural branches of the cultivated olive tree, the tree into which the wild branches of the Gentiles have slowly been grafted for some 2000 years now? Must it not give thought to the prophecy of Paul that only thus is "all Israel" to be saved?

But how is the Church to reckon with it? Some say that the right way is simply to make itself much more friendly to the Jews, as indeed it has been doing, and to build on St. John Paul II's apology in 2000 for Christian complicity in crimes against Jews, precisely by defending them instead and (*pace* John Paul) by not trying to convert them. Jews in general tend presently to be happy with that, of course. Others say that it behooves the Church to be much more intentional, in a thoughtful and sensitive way, about the conversion of the Jews. Still others have begun to focus on how Jewish believers in Jesus can be properly integrated into the Church as Jews and on how the Church itself needs to adapt to and benefit from their presence and participation.

This last, the Church from Jews and Gentiles (to borrow the title of Erik Peterson's pre-Holocaust exposition of Romans 9–11), is what chiefly concerns us here, though the exercise I have in view is little more than some ground clearing that still seems to be necessary.



The ground clearing in question is related to the premature death of supersessionism. Horror at the Holocaust and a wounded conscience, newly cultivated friendships with Jews, scholarly and religious dialogue with Judaism, the cultural circumstances of the emergent messianic Judaism movement, and the postmodern elevation of identity politics have combined to produce a climate, particularly in the Protestant sphere, of anti-supersessionism. This climate is also felt in the Catholic Church and must be addressed in a Catholic way.

Let us recall, with Schoeman, the *Postulatum pro Hebraeis* that was presented at the First Vatican Council, having been signed by a majority of its bishops. It is significant that this document presents the goal of the mission as a “completing and crowning, not changing, [of] the Mosaic religion” through Jewish embrace of Jesus as the Messiah. It thus acknowledges that the Gospel belongs to the Jewish people first of all, though it does not pass over the fact that they have, partly of their own volition, endured a wait “no less futile than long” for their proper share of its benefits. This *Postulatum* was itself an early sign of the times.

A century later, the Second Vatican Council, occupied as it was with *ressourcement* and with putting the Church in a new and more positive relation to fellow travelers in the modern world, produced *Nostra Aetate*, in which it reaffirmed “the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham’s stock.” This declaration, like *Dignitatis Humanae* and much else from that Council, was and remains controversial, and one of its controversial aspects lies in the fact that some of its drafters and not a few of its interpreters wished to make use of it to lay much more stress on the *Postulatum*’s “not changing” than on its “completing and crowning.” Some of them have gone so far today as to suggest that there is no need for Jews to embrace Jesus, not at least until the Parousia, whenever that may be. Like their Protestant counterparts, they too regard traditional supersessionism as a fault. Traditional missions they regard as a fault, at least where Jews are concerned. Facilitating respect for the Jewish people is enough.

Supersessionism, or replacement theology, is disavowed for presenting the Church as the new people of God, a people that, like Jacob, has snatched away the inheritance of Esau—that is, of the “perfidious Jew.” It is disavowed for providing the germ cell line in the history of ideas and cultures that leads eventually to the horror of the Holocaust. In the Protestant sphere, though not ordinarily in the Catholic, it is now attacked with abandon.

Take, for example, a recent article by Joel Willitts entitled “Jewish fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) in Post-Supersessionist Water.” On one level, it is an unremarkable product of a certain kind of new-perspective scholarship, the kind that insists that we must read the New Testament without the distorting spectacles of law–Gospel dualism, spectacles that taught us to see Torah observance as a kind of Jewish Pelagianism. When we do that, we will recognize instead that Torah observance is just what God always requires of Jews, including Christian Jews.

The Jewish Christian lives under the Gospel of Moses as well as the Gospel of Jesus, while the Gentile Christian lives only under the latter. The renewed covenant effected by the Messiah is enjoyed differently by the believing Jew and the believing Gentile.

On another level, it displays an astonishing vigilantism with a postmodern twist. Willitts speaks of the need to receive the New Testament as an ethnic document that, read as such, will “correct a *deep seated sin* within the Christian tradition” and lead to “a universal ecclesiology that celebrates diversity, fights cultural hegemony and supports diverse ethnic expressions of faith in Jesus.”¹ He thinks even Protestant repentance of supersessionism half-hearted, since most still suppose that “the ritual requirements of the Torah have been *either* annulled *or* rendered irrelevant and ultimately unnecessary.” Thus, the Jew is excluded, qua Jew, from Christian community. This deep-seated sin of exclusivity, and the law–Gospel dualism that underlies it, goes back all the way to the Fathers and to the apologists before them. The real Reformation has yet to happen.

From a Catholic perspective, this radical anti-supersessionism appears highly hubristic. It attempts to “out-Luther” Luther, positing itself as finally recovering the true Gospel, which has been buried under the said sin for 1900 years. The Catholic, for his part, is not looking for some lost truth that long ago was replaced by a lie. He is all for a respectful *ressourcement* and a prudent *aggiornamento*, but he cannot accompany those who are on a vain quest for the historical Jesus, the real Paul, or the authentic church of some hoary past or freshly imagined future. In the Eucharist, he is already in the company of Jesus and all the saints, past and present.

But what of the anti-supersessionism that does not carry this postmodern baggage or share the same hyper-Protestant instincts? In *Searching Her Own Mystery*,² the messianic rabbi Mark Kinzer has recently attempted a more respectful exchange with Catholics on matters ecclesiological. Kinzer also wants to see an ecclesiological revolution, one based on a properly Jewish view of the Messiah and on the primacy of the *ecclesia ex circumcisione*. The *ecclesia ex circumcisione*

¹ Joel Willitts, “Jewish fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) in Post-Supersessionist Water: Messianic Judaism within a Post-Supersessionistic paradigm,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016), [researchgate.net/publication/306529323_Jewish_fish_ICHTHYS_in_post-supersessionist_water_Messianic_Judaism_within_a_post-supersessionistic_paradigm](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306529323_Jewish_fish_ICHTHYS_in_post-supersessionist_water_Messianic_Judaism_within_a_post-supersessionistic_paradigm).

² Mark S. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015).

is the firstfruits of Israel as it enters upon its promised destiny, while the *ecclesia ex gentibus* is the firstfruits of the Gentiles as they are joined to Israel and participate in its inheritance. This distinction, which is adopted from the Catholic Church's Commission for Relations with the Jews, is (in Kinzer's scheme) governed by five principles:

1. the perpetual validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people;
2. the perpetual validity of the Jewish way of life rooted in the Torah as the enduring sign and instrument of that covenant;
3. the validity of Jewish religious tradition as the historical embodiment of the Jewish way of life rooted in the Torah;
4. the bilateral constitution of the *ekklesia*, consisting of distinct but united Jewish and Gentile expressions of Yeshua-faith;
5. and the ecumenical imperative of the *ekklesia*, which entails bringing the redeemed nations of the world into solidarity with the people of Israel in anticipation of Israel's—and the world's—final redemption.³

In *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, Kinzer already argues that “the Jewish *ekklesia* serves the wider Jewish community by constituting its eschatological firstfruits, sanctifying the whole and revealing the eschatological meaning of Jewish identity and destiny,” and conversely by “linking the redeemed of the nations to Israel's corporate life and spiritual heritage, thereby enabling Israel to fulfill its mission as a light to the nations.”⁴

The Catholic's difficulty with all of this begins at principle 2. The Catholic does not believe that “the Jewish way of life rooted in the Torah” is, in the sense Kinzer intends, “the enduring sign . . . of [God's covenant with Israel].” He does not believe there have ever been two materially distinct *ecclesiae* or two peoples in one ecclesial body, or that there ever could be. He does not see the Church as centered on Torah-observant Jewish Christians who have effectively replaced Torah-observant Jewish Jews as the true representatives of the commonwealth of Israel. Needless to say, he does not believe that the Jerusalem Council established or approved such a view. He does believe that Jew and Gentile in the Church bear witness together, both to the wider Jewish community and to the wider Gentile world, as one people with one covenant and one set of covenantal

³ Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2005), 264.

⁴ Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, 264.

obligations. He believes what the Church believes. And the Church, as *Nostra Aetate* says, “believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself” (§4).



Kinzer’s more complex proposal invites a more complex response. But first, we should pause to take account of the complexities in anti-supersessionism as such.

On one approach, the new covenant is seen as a more perfect form of the old covenant, an alteration or mutation that is operative within it, not alongside it or in place of it. The old covenant remains in force; the “new” covenant simply redirects it from within to the fulfillment accomplished by Jesus. On the basis of the achievements of Jesus, it is a covenant in which Gentiles may now participate as Gentiles, but with their own distinct covenantal arrangements. (That, or something like it, would seem to be Kinzer’s view.) On another approach, the new covenant is complementary to the old, rather than an alteration. In other words, there are two parallel covenants, one applying to Jews who do not believe in Jesus and one applying to anyone, Jew or Gentile, who does believe in Jesus. The believing Jew participates in both, while the believing Gentile participates in the latter only. As regards the believing Jew, he must live according to Torah and should, as far as possible, respect rabbinic custom. (This view is not, in its practical effects, very different from the first.) On a third approach, it is supposed that there is no new covenant, at least not for Jews. The new covenant that Christians refer to is, at best, a complementary Gentile way of talking about and exercising faith in the God of Israel, and Jews who take up with it are forsaking Judaism. (That is the view from outside.)

It is still more important, before going further, that we make distinctions between supersessionisms. The right way to do that is to talk about covenants first and peoples afterward. For, in the biblical sense, it is a covenant that makes a people. The debate about supersessionism or replacement theology is bedeviled by an unfortunate reversal of the proper order here. If supersessionism is taken (with Bruce Marshall, among others) “to denote the belief that the church has taken the place of the Jews as the elect people of God”⁵ and that

⁵ Bruce Marshall, “Christ and the Cultures: The Jewish People and Christian Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 81–100, at 82.

the Jews, qua Jews, are therefore no longer elect, the whole conversation gets off on the wrong foot. Or rather, it does not really get off at all, for this contradicts the fact that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable, and so it must be rejected. What makes a Jew a Jew? It is being a physical descendent of Abraham, called to walk according to Torah so as to inherit the promises made to Abraham, Moses, and David. It follows that Jews, Christian or otherwise, are called to walk according to Torah. Case closed. We will have, somehow, to fit the Gospel of the new or renewed covenant into that. But this is wrong. It is the covenant itself, and the Gospel in its covenantal dimensions, that must come first. Only then can we answer questions about the people of God.

Now, we may call “hard” supersessionism the view that the Mosaic covenant has been abrogated in such a fashion that its beneficiaries, the Jews, are today without a covenant and are no longer God’s people. In its harshest form, they are regarded as deserving of both divine and human disapprobation in perpetuity. We may call “soft” supersessionism the view that the old covenant has been renewed in Christ and, in the process, thoroughly revised. The “old” here is understood first of all as the Abrahamic covenant, which, for a time, took the Mosaic form, but has now been fulfilled and transformed in a messianic way. Because this fulfillment and transformation is eschatological, inaugurating but not yet fully delivering the kingdom of God, the Mosaic form, though superseded, does not disappear from history completely, but continues (*sans* temple and cult) to shape the life of Jews who are not baptized, preserving them as a people until they are baptized. It does not further shape the life of baptized Jews, however, except in the same way that it shapes the life of baptized Gentiles, by virtue of that which it supplies for messianic transformation. As for these Gentiles, they are full and equal members now of the people of God.

In its softest form, the last part of this looks a bit different: because God wills to preserve the Jewish people as such, and because Jewish Christians continue to belong to that people—to Israel according to the flesh as well as to Israel according to the Spirit—the Mosaic form of the covenant may continue to shape even baptized Jews in a manner distinct from baptized Gentiles, albeit not in an obligatory fashion or in any way that effectively divides them from the latter. This is the sort of thing one finds in Lawrence Feingold, for example, who allows that Jewish ceremonial law has not been deprived of all utility in the present age: “The obligatory quality of those rites

has passed away, but their prophetic, typological, and revelatory value remains”⁶ and may, or even should, be deployed in suitable ways. Matthew Levering, more cautiously, also makes allowances here (see below).

Of hard supersessionism, we must admit that individuals and cultures have adopted this view across the gamut of Christianity, but the Church never adopted it in any valid doctrinal or moral decree, nor could it. Of soft supersessionism, we must say that it is simply Catholic orthodoxy, though its softest form has at times been forbidden, notably by the Council of Florence. (That forbidding was not directed against Christian Jews per se, mind you, but against Judaizing practices among Gentiles; likewise in the more lenient *Ex Quo Primum* of Benedict XIV.) Of anti-supersessionism, we must say that it is being urged on the Church in contradiction of orthodoxy. That some Catholics who are zealous for *Nostra Aetate* have joined the anti-supersessionist camp changes nothing on that score.

Why must we say that it contradicts orthodoxy? Because the teaching of the Church leaves no doubt about the fact that the Gospel and law of Jesus supersede the gospel and law of Moses, rather than merely existing within or alongside the latter. Similarly, it leaves no doubt that the unity of Jew and Gentile in the Church is the kind of unity to which N. T. Wright refers when he insists, against his anti-supersessionist Protestant colleagues, that “Abraham has *one* family, not two or more.”⁷ There are not, and cannot be, in that one family, some who are under the law and some who are not. For, in Christ, all have died to the law and passed beyond its reach by passing into the fullness of him who has made himself its true expression—no, into the fullness of him of whom the law itself was merely a partial and preliminary expression. Their unity is not a unity in spite of their differentiated ritual obligations, but rather a unity that removes such differences. To insist on Torah observance as that which continues to mark out the Jew qua Jew, even in Christ, is tantamount to insisting that the Jew has not, like the Gentile, received the benefits of baptism.

⁶ Lawrence Feingold, *The Messianic Kingdom of Israel*, vol. 3 of *The Mystery of Israel and the Church* (St. Louis, MO: Miriam Press, 2010), 239.

⁷ N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 1432.



Against this, appeal is made to the Jerusalem Council, the results of which are said to be that Gentiles were permitted to live for the most part as Gentiles, adherence to basic biblical morality and separation from idolatry aside, while it was presumed that Jews would continue to live as Jews, keeping to the old patterns of Torah observance, table fellowship with Gentiles aside. Paul, it is further said, kept to these patterns himself, though doggedly insisting on the exception clauses. Was that not the point of his public exercise in purification as recounted in Acts 21?

Let me offer a brief rejoinder with regard to Paul first. Paul did not, as his enemies charged, “teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs” (Acts 21:21). He did, however, tell them that they were not under the law, that no one is saved by the works of the law, and that circumcision in itself is no longer a sign of salvation. It is not possible to confine the purview of these claims to Gentiles, which means that there was a moment of truth in what his enemies were saying. Had there not been, the whole business would certainly have blown over. Indeed, pursuing him back to Jerusalem with charges that he himself had, and likely would, violate the laws and the customs would never have made any sense. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, in Paul’s various formal defenses against the charges brought against him from Jerusalem, he makes no attempt to present himself as Torah-observant, but appeals rather to the resurrection of Jesus as being the decisive factor in the whole dispute. And, writing to the Romans during his imprisonment, he says of the turmoil there: “I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened” (Rom 10:2).

As for the council, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem made no pronouncement about what Jewish believers ought to do, the question being what Gentile believers ought to do. Yes, of course, if the former were not still living according to Torah, the question would not have arisen, at least not in that form. But the Jewish Christians, especially in Jerusalem, were living, as the Fathers later observed, through a transitional period, the period between the resurrection of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Jesus. The temple still stood and witnesses were required in its precincts. Paul’s successful argument about the liberty of the Gospel and the radically new situation under the new covenant notwithstanding, and Peter’s

own argument about the passing of the distinction between clean and unclean notwithstanding, no one was yet requiring Jewish believers to resettle themselves entirely in circumstances and in a situation that could be fully manifest only to the next generation, the generation in which the prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled. For now, they were only being asked to set aside whatever got in the way of acknowledging that the people of the new covenant were to be a people and a church *ex gentibus* as well as *ex Iudaeis*. There is nothing here at all about an *ecclesia gentium* and an *ecclesia Iudaeorum*.

This is the line followed up to the Council of Florence, and the line still being followed today. What was already clear to Paul, at least, and beginning to become clear to Peter, would soon become clear to all. According to *Cantate Domino* (1442):

[The Church] firmly believes, professes, and teaches that the matter pertaining to the law of the Old Testament, of the Mosaic law, which are divided into ceremonies, sacred rites, sacrifices, and sacraments, because they were established to signify something in the future, although they were suited to the divine worship at that time, after our Lord's coming had been signified by them, ceased, and the sacraments of the New Testament began; and that whoever, even after the passion, placed hope in these matters of the law and submitted himself to them as necessary for salvation, as if faith in Christ could not save without them, sinned mortally. Yet it does not deny that after the passion of Christ up to the promulgation of the Gospel they could have been observed until they were believed to be in no way necessary for salvation; but after the promulgation of the Gospel it asserts that they cannot be observed without the loss of eternal salvation.⁸

This last remark does not address the situation of people outside the Church, but of people inside it, people who turn back from what has become clear. Nor does it mean that the old precepts cannot be observed by anyone for any reason. It means that they cannot be observed as necessary for the sake of salvation or in any fashion that competes with the precepts of the new law. Or so the Church went on to say. While "the Church of Christ has the power of renewing the obligation to observe some of the old precepts for just and serious

⁸ H. Denzinger, *The Sources of Christian Dogma*, no. 712.

reasons, despite their abrogation by the new Law" (*Ex Quo Primum*, §63), the old precepts have no force in the Church in their own right.

In other words, the abiding content of the Jerusalem Council was distinguished from its temporary or transitional content. The abiding content was the unity and equality of Jew and Gentile in Christ, and the need for Gentiles to acknowledge Christ by separating themselves from pagan worship and immorality, yet without taking up the burden of the ceremonial and juridical law of Moses. All this was directly stated. The temporary or transitional content was not stated, but implied. Jewish believers also could live to a large extent as they were accustomed to living, though they must give up one of the very things that the ceremonial law was designed to effect, their separation from Gentiles. From Paul's point of view, as Acts 21 suggests, there was good prudential reason for this compromise. In Jerusalem, while the old temple stood, there was need for Christian witness in its precincts; and in every synagogue in the empire, as in every Jewish home or quarter, there was need for Christian witness by Christian Jews willing and able to live freely for Christ's sake in the pattern of life Jews had learned from Torah while belonging primarily to that community of holy fear and joyful expectation that was the Eucharistic community of the apostles.

Viewed in the Pauline way, of course, there still are good prudential reasons, and mistakes were made in later centuries through a failure to recognize that. These mistakes were sometimes grave mistakes, alien to the Gospel and injurious. But their correction does not lie, as the anti-supersessionists would have it, in the theologically devastating error of telling Christians that there are two forms of the covenant simultaneously in force and that Jews are subject to both while Gentiles are subject to but one. Whether this is construed as the privilege of the Jew or the bondage of the Jew makes no difference. It is rightly forbidden by Florence. There has been a change of mediator, and hence a change in the covenant. There has been a change in the priesthood and a change in the law. There is a new temple and a new offering, and a new way of realizing the deepest aims of the law. The Mosaic form of the covenant has been superseded.



But have the people of Israel been superseded by the Church? Here we must not be hasty. Yes, in that the earthly city or commonwealth has been superseded by the heavenly, and the longed-for peace of Jeru-

saalem by the peace of what Augustine called “that most orderly and harmonious society to be enjoyed with God and mutually in God.”⁹ This *societas* includes the people of Israel—or will do, when all believing Israelites, having passed under the rod that is now in the hand of Jesus rather than Moses, have been saved—but it is not limited to them. But the people of Israel have not been superseded by the Church in the sense that, while this commonwealth is now spiritual Israel, the Israel of God, the true seed of Abraham, the royal priesthood and proper kingdom of God, it is not this in replacement of Israel *kata sarka* any more than it is this merely as an extension of Israel *kata sarka*. Israel *kata sarka* is still being called to it and still being gifted with the pattern of life derived from Torah that is able to, and ought to, prepare it to welcome its true messiah. God, as the *Postulatum* insisted, as Erik Peterson also insisted,¹⁰ is still waiting for the Jews.

This is not so very difficult to understand. Since it pleases God to inaugurate his kingdom in a fashion that permits not only a transitional period before the temple is removed but also an entire missionary age—an age in which what is old, though it is always becoming obsolete, persists alongside what is new—in the times of the Gentiles, the Mosaic form of the covenant still bears directly on those Jews who have not yet come into the Church. It has been deprived of its legal force, but it has not been deprived of its instructive power. It no longer determines the people of God as such, but it still marks the Jews as those with a vocation to be the people of God and to share in his kingdom. To say that it still has work to do outside the Church is entirely orthodox. To say that, inside the Church, it binds Jewish Christians as the proper form of their covenant faithfulness is, and for a very long time has been, heretical.

As for Jews who are disciples of Jesus, they are indeed the first-fruits of Israel *kata sarka* in and for Israel *kata pneuma*. But they are not themselves (as Kinzer seems to think) that in which Israel *kata pneuma* essentially consists. It consists in Jesus Christ and in the image-bearing humanity, Jew and Gentile, that is shaped around him by the Spirit of glory through and for the great thanksgiving. It consists in the Church.

There is, I fear, a debilitating eschatological deficit in the anti-supersessionism that teaches obligatory Torah observance, a deficit that

⁹ *De civitate Dei* 19.13.1 (translation mine).

¹⁰ Erik Peterson, *Theological Tractates*, ed. and trans. Michael Hollerich, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 52.

is also a sacramental one. For, where there is lacking a proper Eucharistic theology—one that acknowledges that the stuff of this world, bread and wine, is actually transubstantiated into the body and blood of him who is the very ground of the world to come—there is also lacking a solution to the problem. How shall we deal with the new covenant in the blood of Christ, except to say that it either abrogates the old covenant entirely or somehow reduplicates it for Gentiles, who receive it in a watered-down form? The former is rejected as the evil of supersessionism. The latter leads to talk of twin *ecclesiae*, in one of which the precepts of the old law remain binding and necessary for the fulfillment of Jews, while in the other, they remain either the disdain of Gentiles or, perchance, that which makes Gentiles jealous.

Where the eschatology is Eucharistic, however, it is understood that Israel *kata sarka* and Israel *kata pneuma*—the Church of Jesus Christ—coexist. They coexist in the overlap of the ages, which intersect in the Eucharist. One is appearing, the other disappearing. Here, abrogation and non-abrogation are not mutually exclusive alternatives; both are real, but in their different ways. Abrogation belongs to the Church because, in the Church, the old has given way to the new. Non-abrogation belongs to Israel according to the flesh, while God waits.

Now, that may leave more room for peculiarly Hebrew forms of Christianity than some have supposed, more than the Church itself has yet seen fit to recognize, but only on the premise on which Levering insists: that the Jew, like the Gentile, is fulfilled by sacramental union with Jesus; that Jew and Gentile both share, and in the same way, in the living Torah that Jesus is; and that both are equally beyond the reach of the old law.¹¹ As Feingold also reminds us, the Mosaic law was never meant to be an end in itself. Even the Jew “can no longer be bound by a ceremonial law partially designed to separate Israel from the nations until the Messiah had come, as well as to prefigure His coming.”¹² Continuing to incorporate such prefiguring as is compatible with his coming, and only such prefiguring, is the room of which I speak, and there is room for healthy theological and liturgical debate about what that entails in practice.

Neither Feingold nor Levering, if I understand them, means to sublate the Jew in a Gentile culture; nor do I, since the Church is not

¹¹ Matthew Levering, “Aquinas and Supersessionism One More Time,” *Pro Ecclesia* 25, no. 4 (2016): 397n5, 400–401.

¹² Feingold, *Messianic Kingdom*, 219.

a Gentile culture. The Eucharist is not a Gentile version of Pesach or of Shabbat, any more than baptism is a Gentile version of circumcision. The Eucharist *is* Pesach, and its celebration is Shabbat. Baptism is circumcision, a “circumcision” of the whole person through putting off the old man and putting on the new. The one rite cannot be laid alongside the other as if both were mere cultural artifacts. Their coexistence is not of that sort. The one can be produced only out of the other, taking up the other in transformation. The same must be said of the people of the covenant. There are not two peoples who coexist alongside each other in the Church, and the Church does not simply coexist alongside Israel *kata sarka*. The Church exists in a glorious *conversio*. It exists eschatologically. Is that not what the soft supersessionist wants to say?



So much for ground clearing. The times of the Gentiles, I repeat, are running out. God has unfinished business with the Jews, whose time ran out already in AD 70, or rather it would have but did not, because God prepared for them a place in the desert so that he could take up that business. He intends now, so Paul tells us, that the Jews should be made jealous of his mercy to the Gentiles, of his riches in the Church he has formed from Jews and Gentiles. He also intends, in his own good time, or so the prophets tell us, that these newly jealous Jews should be tested and proved a second time, with a different outcome. The venomous hatred that sought in the Holocaust to destroy them utterly did not and will not prevent that.

In this context, questions are rightly being asked, though they are not always being asked rightly, about the role of Jews who already believe in Jesus and who already belong to the Church. One role, surely, is to help reform and revitalize the Church, as Thomas Aquinas suggests, and another is to welcome fellow Jews into the Church. Yet this they cannot do by attempting to be fully Torah-observant in the old and ordinary sense, when they are called to a new and different observance as Christians. Those who try to contribute in that way are likely only to remain isolated both from non-Christian Jews and from Christian Gentiles, from their own people *kata sarka* and from their new people *kata pneuma*. They can and should contribute, rather, by embracing their Christian liberty to be, like Paul himself, all things to all people, with the hope and privilege of using all means to save some.

I dare say this is what they are aiming at, where they are Catholic, or mean to be Catholic. If so, they should have the encouragement of the Church, encouragement to make use of the precepts of the old law in properly Christian ways, though not in the sub-Christian way of those who forget that they have died and risen with Christ in baptism and that they do so again and again in the Eucharist. Together with their Gentile brethren who never had the law, they are released from it through participation in the new law of Christ and of the Spirit, the law of liberty. Once the nature of this encouragement is clear, it need not and should not exclude circumcision, as it did in an earlier era. It need not exclude an approved Eucharistic rite for Hebrew Catholics and a sacramental practice that is still more attuned to the old Shabbat sensibilities and to the rich symbolism (already present but sometimes muted) of the old covenant feasts and other sacramentals (not sacraments) than is either the *Novus Ordo* or the traditional Latin Mass.

This sort of thing can serve the whole Church, combating the Marcionism that still assaults her, though I think it must somehow (I do not know how) be distinguished from the liturgical rites that accommodate various graftings from the Gentiles if it is to do that effectively. It must also, as far as possible, rise above the controversies that still swirl around the *Novus Ordo*. There must be nothing Ebionite about it, of course, and it should tend to the dignity of the Tridentine Mass, but in a manner that is accessible to those whose habits of prayer were formed in the synagogue. By the grace and power of God, it may serve also for the conversion of Jews and the completion of "all Israel." That certainly is my own hope. For, it is not the gathering of Israel back to the land that ultimately matters, but the gathering, there and everywhere, of Israel to her God and his Christ.