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*Doing Theology in the Context of the Gift and the Promise of Nostra Aetate*¹

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¹This essay enlarges my keynote address of the same title given 27 October 2010 for the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations, held at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, PA. I am grateful to my respondents, Philip A. Cunningham, Edward Kessler, and Barbara U. Meyer, to members of the audience, and to email correspondents for enabling me to rethink some points and clarify others. I have chosen to preserve the oral character of the presentation for this publication, rather than to erase its oral roots. This essay is dedicated to Walter Cardinal Kasper who could not be present at the Annual Meeting. He has done more, I believe, than any other Catholic leader, to ensure both that the dialogues continue and that our theological and doctrinal positions become more nuanced and refined as we continue to recognize the religious other as God's gift and to learn how to live together the promise of God's reign inspires. I have read Cardinal Kasper's "Foreword" to *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships*, edited by Philip A. Cunningham, Joseph Sievers, Mary C. Boys, Hans Hermann Henrix, and Jeaper Svarvik (Grand Rapids, MI, and Rome, Italy: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/ Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011). Later citations are to the typescript of the "Foreword."

Nostra Aetate and the trajectory in Catholic teaching that it started have truly been a gift to those of us who do theology in and for the Catholic Church. The present essay focuses on responses to three theological problems that are central in the *Nostra Aetate* tradition. First, Christology—reflection on who Jesus was and is for us—and Mariology—reflection on Jesus' mother and her significance—seem inevitably supersessionist. I want to show how some of us Christian theologians have sought to avoid the trap of supersessionism in these areas. Second, there is the problem of how to understand the relationship between Catholic claims regarding the irrevocable covenant God made with Israel and the universality of salvation God wrought in Jesus. I suggest that we Catholic theologians should dissolve this problem logically, not resolve it theologically. Third, some have suggested that a recognition of authentic religious diversity which underlies a commitment to true interreligious dialogue should weaken our commitment to our own particular traditions.² I disagree and show how what we have to be and to do in order to engage in the dialogues, called for by *Dialogue and Proclamation* § 42, show that this alleged problem is a pseudo-problem.³

² See Robert McKim, *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) or Richard Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreements," University of Rochester, as at <http://www.ling.rochester.edu/~feldman/papers/reasonable%20religious%20disagreements.pdf>.

³ I take it for granted that readers of this journal need neither another rehearsal of the history of Jewish-Christian relations over millenia that provide the context for theological work and the hope for reconciliation in general; nor of the *Nostra Aetate* tradition (that stream of documents on religious diversity and Jewish-Christian relations from the Holy See) in particular; nor of the variety of positions Jewish and Christian thinkers have taken on these and other issues in the dialogue. This article is selective, not exhaustive, and thus deals only with a few of the rich variety of views that participants in Jewish-Christian dialogues have articulated on these problems. I do not mean to slight those whose works I do not deal with in this essay; I am arguing a case for a position that has not, so far as I know, been articulated by participants in the dialogue; I engage only with a few scholars to help make this case. Finally, I

I write as a Roman Catholic theologian who has not been a participant in the Jewish-Christian dialogues, but who has been deeply influenced by scholars working in other traditions. My work focuses more on resolving problems rather than explicating, exploring, and reforming a doctrinal system. My approach is rooted in an Anglo-American philosophical approach that values logical and linguistic analysis.⁴ I see actions (such as speech acts) and practices (i.e., patterns of actions such as discourse practices) as prior to texts.⁵

Mariology and Christology in a Post-Supersessionist Mode

How to understand the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is, perhaps, the most long-standing problem in Christian theology. The most common view is that Christianity supersedes Judaism, the New Covenant replaces the Old. That

will not comment on Benedict XVI's so-called "gaffes." These misunderstandings and failures in clarity and communication need to be contextualized in the main thrust of his theological work and his leadership that supports good relationships in politics and theology between Catholics and the Vatican with Jews and Israel. See, for example, Hans Herman Henrix, "Pope Benedict XVI and the Jews: a relationship under suspicion?" *Israel Affairs* 16:4 (October 2010) 535-61.

⁴ This is not to separate theological from philosophical work, but simply to locate the philosophical orientation that will become evident later in this essay. While theologians seek to write logically and rationally, few theologians utilize this "analytical" approach in philosophy and may find it strange and the argument in the second section about a technical issue in logic awkward. And while philosophers do work with theological propositions, many of those trained in Anglo-American analysis tend to do "analytical theology" that is ahistorical, a position with which I am not sympathetic.

⁵ Hence, unless one first understands the action a speaker or writer performs in uttering or authoring a text and the reactions that the utterance or text provokes, one cannot understand the significance of a text. While I am not a "practical theologian" in the sense that is now emerging among Christian theologians, my problem-solving approach tends to begin with analyzing practices—including the practice of doing theology—before turning to theoretical reflection.

supersessionism⁶ is unacceptable today is, I believe, due as much or more to the interactions of those engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogues around the globe for the past 50 years than to the efforts of Christian theologians working primarily within the Christian theological traditions.

According to Christian feminist theologian and historian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, the root of supersessionism and anti-Judaism is a myth of pristine Christian origins. She argues that the more one thinks that the earliest Christian group gathered around Jesus was perfect (even if later corrupted), the more one tends to presume an adversative relationship between Jesus and his followers and Jewish leaders and

⁶ A commentator on this essay has pointed out that there is a difference between “hard” supersessionism that sees Christianity as a replacement or displacement for Judaism and a “soft” supersessionism that sees Christianity as an improvement on Judaism, suggesting Karl Rahner’s concept of “anonymous Christians” as an example of the latter. However, Rahner’s first and most basic thesis is that “Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men [sic], which cannot recognize any other religion besides itself of equal right” (*Theological Investigations*. Vol. 5, *Christianity and The Non-Christian Religions*. [London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1966] 118). In other words, Christianity is not one tradition one among many. Nor is it a valid, but incomplete, religion. Rahner maintained that God’s communication is addressed to all people because of the universal import of the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While Judaism may not be an invalid religion in Rahner’s view, it is certainly less valid than Christianity and the covenant universal rather than particular. While this approach may be softer in its supersessionism than others, Rahner’s approach renders Judaism an anonymous outpost of Christianity and dependent on it. His work has been criticized from both more traditionalist and more progressive theologians. For a summary, see Terrence W. Tilley *et alii*, *Religious Diversity and the American Experience: A Theological Approach* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2007) 64-79 *et passim*. Later in this essay, I make the claim that Rahner’s type of position on religious diversity—inclusivism—is in fact supersessionist with regard to Judaism. I think it a “soft” supersessionism, but one that leaves the fundamental problem of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity basically intact.

Judaism⁷ and a supersessionist view of Christianity. She argues, however, that her own project of feminist interpretation and reconstruction *rejects* the myth of a pristine earliest Christianity, and hence is not anti-Jewish or supersessionist.⁸ She also claims that the Jesus movement was not unique but was one of a number of “Jewish liberation movements” in the Second Temple period.

Whether one accepts all the aspects of her reconstruction of Christian origins, her rejection of belief in a “pristine primitive Christianity” is very plausible. After all, Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter denied him, and most of the other disciples ran off when the Romans executed him. The identification of the Jesus-movement as “perfect” not only runs afoul of the witness of the New Testament, but also leads ineluctably to see previous forms of Judaism and subsequent forms of Judaism and Christianity as imperfect, preliminary, or corrupt. It leads to envisioning “one shining moment,” at least, when things were right. Whether that “right religion” continued in the emergent church or was “lost,” only to be rediscovered in the 16th or 19th or 20th centuries, postulating a pristine perfection so idealizes a moment in time that that moment supersedes any other moment, past or future.

But avoiding buying into the myth of a “golden age” of Christianity is only a beginning. A further problem is understanding how Jesus the Christ can be said to be truly human

⁷ See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2000) 128-44.

⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, 153-54. She argued against some critics who claimed that Christian feminist interpretations of early Christianity as “egalitarian” —allegedly in sharp contrast to the ambient cultures—were anti-Jewish. Schüssler Fiorenza did concede that some of her language in her landmark book, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), might have led to a misinterpretation of her views, and that some of the “Jesus and women” writing that others had done led unwittingly to anti-Jewish or supersessionist writing.

and truly divine while avoiding supersessionism. I want to suggest that my colleague, Catholic feminist theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson, has carved out a path forward for a non-supersessionist Christology through her non-supersessionist approach to Mariology.

Johnson published *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*⁹ in 2003. Her creative work has both negative and positive moments. Negatively, she argues against the pattern of male-created gender dualism that underlies much of traditional mariology. In addition, much traditional theology attributes to Mary some attributes that properly belong to God as the Holy Spirit. Traditional mariology symbolizes Mary in ways that she becomes “a stopgap for a patriarchal view of God.”¹⁰ More positively, in place of a “patronage” model of Mary as the heavenly intercessor for Christians, she proposes a “companion” model of Mary as a “first century Jewish woman living a hard-scrabble life in a land violently occupied by a foreign power”¹¹ who was “graced by the Spirit”¹² and is remembered as friend of God and prophet, “truly our sister.”

As does recent work on Jesus,¹³ Johnson’s work focuses neither on what the historical Mary was actually like nor on a theology that glorified Mary, but on the Jewish woman as she was remembered by those who formed the early Christian

community, the historic Miriam.¹⁴ Recognizing that both nascent Christianity and rabbinic Judaism were “children of second temple Judaism, born into their separate trajectories after the disasters of 70 c.e.,”¹⁵ she shows that mariology could avoid supersessionism. Christianity is not the fulfillment of earlier Judaism. Rather, early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism—the root community for all subsequent Judaism—carry on in disparate ways the ancient Abrahamic tradition. Mariology that avoids the excesses of piety that make Mary practically divine and recognize her true solidarity as a young Jewish woman with her companions past and present, Jewish and Christian, needs not support supersessionism.¹⁶

Inspired by—among other things—Johnson’s theological work and the historical investigations of James D. G. Dunn, Larry Hurtado, and Daniel Boyarin,¹⁷ I attempted to write a

¹⁴ The difference between “the historic Jesus/Mary” and “the historical Jesus/Mary” is crucial. While using different methods and formulating their goals differently, the quests for the *historical* Jesus sought to figure out who Jesus “really” was. But what made and makes Jesus significant is not who he “really” was or who he thought himself to be, but the *historic* importance of him and the community of disciples that made a *historic* contribution to the world. While she does not use this particular language, Johnson’s method is to consider “Mary remembered,” i.e., the *historic* Mary.

¹⁵ Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Author’s Response,” 179. While the exact shape of the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity is subject to much debate, Johnson aligned her views with the approaches that see both traditions as disparate developments of the covenantal tradition.

¹⁶ Johnson wrote *Truly Our Sister* as a way to flesh out Mary as a member of the communion of saints, an investigation she undertook in *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1998). In Johnson’s view, the communion of saints is the company of all those who are friends of God and prophets, past and present.

¹⁷ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003). Boyarin’s work is arguably the most radical of the three. For present purposes, the ways that

⁹ New York and London: Continuum Publishers, 2003.

¹⁰ Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Author’s Response” [to a review symposium on *Truly Our Sister*], *Horizons: Journal of the College Theology Society* 31:1 (Spring 2004) 177.

¹¹ Johnson, “Author’s Response,” 175.

¹² Johnson, “Author’s Response,” 181.

¹³ See James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making Volume I* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003); also see Terrence W. Tilley, *The Disciples’ Jesus: Christology as Reconciling Practice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008) 40, 50-58.

Christology that avoided supersessionism. My 2008 book, *The Disciples' Jesus: Christology as Reconciling Practice* begins neither with ascertaining what the historical Jesus was actually like nor with the later doctrinal affirmations that saw Jesus as God incarnate, but with the community of disciples that imaginatively remembered him by engaging in the reconciling practices they learned from and with him. The true historic significance of Jesus is found in the community of disciples committed to realizing, insofar as God empowered them to do so, God's own reign by engaging in the practices of reconciliation recorded in the Christian scriptures.¹⁸

Boyarin had argued that Jewish monotheism had room for a "second power in heaven," God's logos or wisdom, "who mediates between the fully transcendent Godhead and the material world."¹⁹ This power may have been an energy or a personalization of God rather than a distinct entity. Yet it is plausible that members of the early Jesus-movement came to see that God was acting in and through all of Jesus' activity. This could lead them to envision him as a heavenly power become flesh and to worship him as an incarnation of the divine. This worship emerged, on Hurtado's view, long *before* the church became separate from the synagogue.²⁰ The

the relationships between "Jews" and "Christians" were negotiated and renegotiated is less important than the claim that the "two powers in heaven" theology has at least some antecedents, if not a fully developed theology, in the late Second Temple period even though its clearest written attestation may have a second century provenance, and that Jesus' followers could adapt it before or after his execution.

¹⁸ The basic practices are those that Jesus and his disciples engaged in together: remembering, exorcising and healing, teaching, forgiving, and keeping and rejoicing in table fellowship. These practices are the practices of God's reign, the practices that instantiate God's reign in practice.

¹⁹ Tilley, *Disciples' Jesus* 61 quoting Boyarin, *Border Lines* 30-31.

²⁰ Hurtado finds that worship of Jesus as God's agent began at least shortly after Jesus' death (and resurrection – an historic act of God even if not precisely a historical event; see *Disciples' Jesus* 262, 271-77). Given Boyarin's

development of orthodox Christology, then, was not the imposition of "external" Greek philosophical categories on an earlier Jewish faith, but the adaptation of images and theories in the ambient Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures to understand and correct the worship *praxis* and *theoria* of the earliest Jewish Christians.²¹

If this historical analysis is at all on the right track, then two things follow: first, a recognition that because early Christians were Jews, distinct from but in continuity with other Jewish groups in late Second Temple Judaism, Christian practice and theology is unalterably rooted in Judaism²² and at root *not* supersessionist, *but a creative adaptation of a form of monotheism later rejected by the rabbinic tradition*; second, that if any tradition is "supersessionist," *all* traditions that emerged in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 c.e. are "supersessionist."²³

reconstruction, I find it possible, even plausible, that such imagery and devotion arose during Jesus' lifetime among monotheistic Jews.

²¹ Mark Smith has suggested in correspondence that the later conciliar developments of claims about Jesus' divinity go far beyond the "two powers in heaven" approach. However, I take the conciliar *regula fidei* not as fundamentally assertions about Jesus the Christ, but as guides to or rules about what *not* to say about Jesus the Christ and the triune God. While even on this view, there would still be tensions and disagreements about how God could be incarnate, it is not clear to me just where those tensions would lie. The Christian traditions always run the danger of docetism and Christians often talk of Jesus almost as "God disguised" in a human body. I think this popular docetism is the root of more disagreement than carefully articulated understandings of the early creeds. See *The Disciples' Jesus*, 214-34.

²² See Dermot Lane, "The Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Progress Report," unpublished typescript, 13.

²³ I place "supersessionist" in scare quotes here because I find neither Judaism nor Christianity technically superseding the covenantal tradition, but as developing that tradition in distinctive ways. As Edward Kessler reminded us, the component of supersessionism that is missing in such "odd" usage is the *anti Judaeos* strand of Christian supersessionism. Again, the precise historical developments that led to the parting/partitioning of the ways and the acceptance of Jesus as divine agent are beyond the scope of this paper, but

Christology and Mariology are two of the most difficult stumbling blocks for Jews and Christians. But the Jewish-Christian interactions undertaken under the inspiration of the *Nostra Aetate* tradition have inspired theologians like Johnson and me to seek to formulate versions of these classic doctrines in ways that eliminate unnecessary parts of the problem. We theologians are in the debt especially of those who have engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogues for that inspiration. Others will have to judge whether we have both succeeded in being faithful to our own Christian traditions and successfully avoided the supersessionist trap.

The Irrevocability of the First Covenant and the Sufficiency of Salvation in Jesus the Christ

“God does not take back the gifts He bestowed or the choice He made” (compare Rom 11:28). This affirmation made in § 4 of *Nostra Aetate* has generated substantial, substantive theological discourse. The root question is how are Christians to affirm both the continuation of God’s covenant with the Jewish people and the uniqueness and sufficiency of Jesus the Christ? If the First Covenant is abrogated or superseded in a New Covenant with salvation wrought in Jesus Christ, then how can the affirmation of *Nostra Aetate* §4 stand? If the First Covenant is not abrogated, then that covenant is sufficient: so how can claims for the universal salvific mediation of Jesus Christ be tenable? Here is a difficult dilemma for Catholic theology.

Although I cannot claim to know all the possible solutions to this problem, I argue that the dilemma should be

also treated ably by numerous authors, e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways* Second Edition (London: SCM Press, 2006) and *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2010). The theological point is that both are “daughter traditions.” Whether one, both, or neither are “legitimate” is another matter; my own view that “both” are legitimate should be obvious.

dissolved logically, not *resolved* theologically because the theological positions are unsatisfactory.²⁴ What are the parameters? First, a Catholic theologian cannot say that the covenant with the Jews is abrogated. Second, a Catholic theologian cannot say that all faith traditions are on par with one another.²⁵

A number of theological positions attempt to incorporate these principles. Cardinal Kasper, for example, has taken a very nuanced position. He wrote, “The New Covenant for Christians is not the replacement (substitution), but the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. Both stand with each other in a relationship of promise or anticipation and fulfillment.”²⁶ Both post-Second Temple traditions—nascent Christianity and rabbinic Judaism—are legitimate. In detailing this position—in reliance, of course, on documents from the Holy See—Kasper makes three very important moves. First, he focuses not on what God does as much as what we are and do: we Jews and Christians are people of the covenant. We are to act in our distinctive but not separate ways for “*teshuvah*, repentance and reconciliation.”²⁷ Taking this approach requires both personal and epistemological humility—a point I will return to later. We Jews and Christians cannot see the picture from God’s side. But we can see it from ours, jointly yet distinctly, and can hear and respond

²⁴ One reader has suggested that I could make this point more easily if I just noted that we don’t understand how the two claims are related and wait for an eschatological resolution. But (a) that doesn’t seem to be what theologians mostly due, at least Christian ones; (b) we need to show that the two claims are logically compatible because we would be incoherent to wait for God to show two claims that are logically incompatible to be both true. Hence, even if we wish to take that eschatological route, this exercise defends the cogency of doing so by showing that the claims are *not* logically incompatible.

²⁵ These sentences could be phrased in many different ways and some theologians would want much more elegant propositions. Nonetheless, I believe these two claims carry the key issues in a clear and understandable way.

²⁶ Walter Cardinal Kasper, “Foreward” to *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today*, 6 (typescript).

²⁷ Kasper, “Foreward,” 10 (typescript).

to the commandments. Second, Kasper recognizes that conversions between the traditions can occur, but that these are individuals' responses to individual witness. Kasper eschews institutionally organized proselytism, which would imply the superiority of "our" tradition over "yours." Third, Kasper takes a multiple-covenant approach. In this Kasper sees a trajectory in the covenants God made with or through Abraham, Joshua, Moses, Ezra, Jeremiah—and for Christians, through Jesus the Christ.

Some might read this view as supersessionist. But such a reading fails to recognize the epistemic humility in the position. Kasper does not say that God has made a New Covenant *simpliciter*. He says that the New Covenant is *for Christians*. This is an important distinction. One cannot claim that this New Covenant supersedes the Old Covenant unless one presumes to see things from God's point of view. No, what Kasper is doing is to recognize that we cannot in the face of the other warrant a claim to *know* the mind of God. We can have *some* justification for our views about what God wants if we Jews and Christians *together* recognize God's call to holiness and justice, to repentance and reconciliation. That justification grows even stronger if we include other monotheists, e.g., members of the Muslim traditions, in that agreement. But Kasper also recognizes, along with the Pontifical Biblical Commission, that both Christian and Jewish traditions have possibly true and irreducible interpretations of the "Old Testament."²⁸

Yet an obvious objection arises. If Christians believe that God has fulfilled the Covenant in Jesus, how is this different from supersessionism? Can we leave Jews and others "outside the truth" in a false understanding of the Covenant?

²⁸ Kasper, "Foreward," 7 (typescript) commenting on the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001) §22.

Would that not be immoral?²⁹ Should we Christians not proselytize? As a Catholic theological position, to suggest that there is no mission to the Jews as to other peoples is at best controversial.³⁰ Before turning to showing how to respond to those questions, I'd like to consider a different approach to the covenantal issue, that of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.

Rabbi Sacks's 2002 book, *The Dignity of Difference* was criticized for being relativist. Critics said he reduced the Jewish tradition to one among many equally valid positions. Sacks responded in the second edition (2003) by clarifying some language. He argues that the covenantal tradition moved from the universal covenant with all humanity to a particular covenant with a particular people. God demands that this people, Israel, be different. In doing so, God is "teaching humanity to make space for difference. God may at times be found in human other, the one not like us. Biblical monotheism is not the idea that there is one God and therefore one gateway to His presence. To the contrary, it is the idea that the unity of God is to be found in the diversity of creation."³¹ Sacks claims that the

²⁹ This sort of objection is raised most cogently by Paul Griffiths in a number of publications, not directed to Judaism particularly, but to Christian attitudes to non-Christians generally.

³⁰ See, for example, Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Covenant and Mission," *America Magazine* 21 October 2002; as at http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2550. He responded to "Reflections on Covenant and Mission," by Consultation of the National Council of Synagogues and the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, USCCB August 12, 2002; as at <http://www.ccjr.us>. The document incorporates, from the Catholic side, much of Kasper's position. Dulles claimed "Covenant and Mission seems to imply that conversion to Christ, baptism and adherence to the church are no longer considered important for Jews....The document *Covenant and Mission* does not forthrightly present what I take to be the Christian position on the meaning of Christ for Judaism."

³¹ Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* Second Edition (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2003) 53; emphasis removed.

Covenant God made with the Jews is not universal or exclusive. Other peoples and other faith traditions can also provide ways to God. He writes, "According to Jewish teaching, therefore, one does not have to be a Jew to serve God."³² He denies the claim that monotheism entails one path to salvation.³³ "God is God of all humanity, but between Babel and the end of days no single faith is the faith of all humanity."³⁴ Because the tradition is fundamentally ethical, Judaism especially can recognize the worth of other faith traditions that observe the commands of the universal covenant God made with Noah: "prohibitions of idolatry and blasphemy, murder, theft, sexual transgression and wanton cruelty to animals, and the positive command to institute a system of justice."³⁵

But if we are to accept Sacks's view are we not either endorsing a *form* of relativism despite Sacks's claims? Is his position not vulnerable to a claim from Christians that Jesus the Christ is the completion of the universal covenant with humanity? Might Christians use Sacks's work to claim that the covenant with the Jews be considered one of many particular instantiations of the universal covenant, all of which are fulfilled in God's final, New Covenant in Jesus the Christ?³⁶

³² Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, 20.

³³ Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, 20.

³⁴ Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, 55.

³⁵ Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, 20.

³⁶ As Kasper's view can be read as supersessionist, Sacks's view can be read as relativist. However, I do not think such readings are the only readings, or the correct ones. For Sacks, first, the Noahite framework rules out some ideologies. Within that framework we may disagree about what constitutes sexual transgression or what system of justice should be instituted. But we cannot avoid questions of justice or eliminate moral claims from our stances on sexuality and sexual acts. Second, Sacks is not arguing this position from God's point of view, but from the particular commitments of Judaism as he understands them: the Noahite covenant is with all humanity, the tower of Babel does not represent a loss of unity but a gain in diversity, the Mosaic covenant is with the Jews, and from this perspective God in God's wisdom has created a world of difference and thus given dignity to difference.

Like Kasper's, Sacks's approach is epistemically humble. Epistemic humility does not imply relativism. Relativism contrasts with a particular form of universalism that goes beyond the logical claim that if one proposition is true, then its contradictory is false. It seems so obvious that either God does or God does not save the Jews only through Jesus Christ. If we accept that point, then we must go further and construct some theory of the covenantal relationship that takes one or the other of these propositions as true and shows why this approach should not be offensive to those who hold the other, for example, "fulfillment" rather than "supersession."

Relativism, on the other hand, says that a proposition is true relative to each believer, that there is "truth for me, and truth for you," or each tribe, "truth for us, and truth for you." "You think Jesus saves, and I think the covenant is valid. Well, whatever!" This is not Sacks's position. There is only one truth, but that truth, a divine or heavenly universal truth, is accessible only in particular human and earthly languages and contexts.³⁷ What is relative is not truth, but our claims to know what is true. For example, Sacks finds the Noahite law to be a basic expression of truth, but how we can discern what it means in practice, in the earthly, not heavenly realm? This requires the sort of epistemic humility that enables us to treat the other as a source of insight. Is a particular temporal and earthly articulation in

³⁷ Philip Cunningham reminded us that we have many stories, many narratives to articulate the shape of our history. The question, to my mind, is the criteria for discerning good stories. For present purposes, I find three. First, do not tell a story as if it is the final story. None of our stories—and our stories of God's dealing with humanity especially—are ended. The stories go on. We cannot tell a final story. Second, do not tell a story that does not have a positive place for the other. If we dismiss or disrespect others, we may even dehumanize them. Such stories are not acceptable. Third, do tell stories that inflame the passions for truth and justice. Our stories need to lead us to act to overcome the evils that afflict the world. For a further discussion of criteria for truth and truthfulness in faith claims—including narratives—see my *Faith: What It Is and What It Isn't* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), especially 102-28.

accord with the eternal and heavenly law? How would we support such a claim except in dialogue with others who can support our insights and challenge our oversights? I believe that this is not relativism, but rather “perspectivism” or “particularism” rooted in the humility that we finite and conditioned creatures using our diverse languages do not and cannot warrant a claim that has absolutely true propositions that express infinite and universal truth unless all conditioned creatures assent to it, in which case it becomes “virtually unconditioned” or as warranted as possible—a position that we can only approach in this world, but never reach.

But here and now we can *hope* that our finite articulations are faithful to the Infinite One. We can work together to refine our witness as we value and listen to the witness of those who differ from us as we seek from our particular locations to be faithful to the Ubiquitous One. We can pray that our shared work can bring us different folk together to understandings and articulations of the truth of the Faithful One. If I understand Sacks correctly, then this sort of humble epistemic practice is *emet*, not propositional truth but faithful truthfulness, lived out in justice, and leading to the reconciliation—*not the abolition*—of difference in particularity and perspective. But how can we live out that hope if we have to accept or reject the claim that salvation for Jews comes through Jesus?

To be altogether too brief, it seems to me that there is no way to show whether a view of one universal covenant, a universal and a particular covenant,³⁸ many covenants, or

³⁸ Sacks finds the primal covenant universal and the covenant with the Jews particular and subsequent. This seems to be almost the opposite view of Joseph Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI) in his 1998 book, *Many Religions – One Covenant: Israel, the Church and the World*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999). In a provocative passage, then Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, “Thus the Sinai covenant is indeed superseded. But once what was provisional in it has been swept away, we see what is truly definitive in it. So the expectation of the New Covenant, which becomes

different particular ways to live out the covenant with the divine, is the right or better way to think about this issue. And I think this a good thing and not relativism! But to show that I must first make two detours: into the more general issue of religious diversity and into a response to the problem of evil.

First, Christian theologians have offered three types of theories to solve the problem of religious diversity by answering the more general question for Christian theology: how can we account for God’s salvific will being effective beyond the community of the baptized?³⁹ No one denies that God *can* save any person God wants to save—to deny this would be to deny divine omnipotence. The classic theological problem for Christians is to say *how* God can save those who live in other religious traditions. Exclusivist positions claim that salvation is

clearer and clearer as the history of Israel unfolds, does not conflict with the Sinai covenant; rather, it fulfills the dynamic expectation found in that very covenant” (70-71). Whereas Sacks sees the particular covenant as part of the diversity treasured by the One who creates a diverse world and who has first a universal covenant, Ratzinger seems to see the universal as emergent from, as a clarification or purification of, the particular covenant with the people God chooses. A colleague, who has studied Ratzinger’s work more extensively than I, has told me that he cannot figure out whether Ratzinger’s view is of a single covenant or multiple covenants. I incline to interpret Ratzinger as opting for the “single covenant” view, a covenant that is fulfilled in the universalization of the covenant through God’s act in and through Jesus the Christ, but incipient even in the “New Covenant” in Jeremiah (see Ratzinger, 53 commenting on St. Paul) because Ratzinger finds the “Old” and “New” Covenants “indivisible” (28).

³⁹ Those whose lives are shaped in other profound living faith traditions do not aim at ends (*teloi*) that are even analogous to the Christian *telos* to “know, love, and serve God in this world and be happy with Him forever in the next,” as the Baltimore Catechism put it. Jews and Christians can and should engage in the reconciling practices that constitute the anticipation in the present of the future reality of God’s reign. But Jews and Christians do not all understand that “future” in the same way. Some theologians even find that the forms of life that constitute the faith traditions and their visions of human destiny are incommensurable. See Terrence W. Tilley *et al.*, *Religious Diversity and the American Experience*, chapters seven and eight.

accomplished only for those who believe in the name of Jesus Christ. Various inclusivist positions find that participating in other religious traditions can be effective and graceful paths to salvation. Pluralist positions effectively relativize all the traditions by finding that people will be saved no matter what tradition they follow if and only if they follow their tradition well.⁴⁰

Some pluralists use the modern Kantian split between the noumenal and the phenomenal many to explain religious diversity. The One Beyond the Many, the God beyond all gods, is unknowable in his/her/itself, but appears partially as the gods of the many religious traditions. This form of modern pluralism, however, turns out to be not only relativist, but also exclusivist in that it minimizes the particularity and specificity of the various great faith traditions in favor of a “correct” universal philosophical picture. In effect, this sophisticated form of relativism is unacceptable to both Jewish and Catholic theological traditions. The inclusivist theories, such as the notion of “anonymous Christians” propounded by Karl Rahner, S.J., are supposed to be satisfying mediating positions. However, not only do they fail to resolve the impasse, but also they turn out to be exclusivisms with a happy face.⁴¹ And exclusivisms do not solve the problem, but merely restate the problem.⁴²

⁴⁰ Obviously, these brief characterizations need to be nuanced and qualified. Another categorical scheme can be found in Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

⁴¹ This is the view implied in Tilley *et al*, *Religious Diversity and the American Experience* which not only argues for abandoning the exclusivist-inclusivist-pluralist schematic, but also prefers a non-foundationalist, practical approach to interreligious interaction in terms discussed below.

⁴² Evangelicals Clark Pinnock and Herold Netland, Catholic Gavin D’Costa, and others, have pioneered an approach that can be called “open exclusivism” which avoids some of the problems classic exclusivisms have created, especially with regard to salvation for Jews. I have argued that D’Costa’s view—and by extension the Evangelicals’ view—is functionally inclusivist. See Tilley *et al*, *Religious diversity and the American Experience* 85-92, 196-97.

When we consider the hard case of the relationship of the Jewish and Christian covenant(s), exclusivist and inclusivist positions seem to be two forms of supersession even if they have happily left behind the *anti-Judaeos* rhetoric of the past. The pluralist positions are “supersessionist” in a different way, claiming in effect a position superior to and beyond any particular religious tradition, all of which may be useful, but none of them more nearly true or effective than any others. Pluralism is effectively relativist. Much more could be said to develop this point.⁴³ In sum, it seems that turning to the general theories fails to account theologically for Judaism without disrespecting that faith-tradition (inclusivism or exclusivism) or to account theologically for Christianity without disrespecting the faith-tradition that finds Jesus Christ both necessary and sufficient for salvation of all people, even for those who know nothing of him or who explicitly reject—for good reasons or weak ones—the Christian tradition (pluralism). The turn to the more general theories of religious diversity does not help solve our problem.

So, for the second “detour,” consider an analogy. I argue in my 1991 book, *The Evils of Theodicy*,⁴⁴ that building theories, that is, theodicies, to show how an all-loving, all-powerful, and all knowing God can allow evil in the world turns out to be part of the problem, not part of the solution to the actual problems of evil. Attempting to explain God’s reasons for allowing evil in the world creates myths that make God ultimately responsible for evil. These myths, I argue, are both epistemically arrogant in that they claim to know God’s reasons and also create a world that denies the existence of social evil or social sin. Those are the *evils of theodicies*.

⁴³ See the remarks of Gavin D’Costa in his review of *The Catholic Church and the Jewish People: Recent Reflections from Rome* edited by Philip A. Cunningham, Norbert J. Hofmann SDB and Joseph Sievers (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007) in *Modern Theology* 25.2 (June 2009): 349-352. This not only “is a debate that has hardly begun” (352), but also one whose resolution requires breaking through the impasse described here.

⁴⁴ (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991).

I also argue, however, that—in contrast to theological theodicies—logical *defenses* show that we *can* believe without contradictions two propositions that *seem* contradictory: that God is omniscient, omnibenevolent, and omnipotent, and that there is profound evil in the world. My point was and is this: we can affirm the reality of God and recognize the reality of evil even though we do not have—and I would say cannot have—a theory to explain why God allows evil in the world. Barbara Meyer has helped me to see that especially in the wake of the *shoah*, the evils of theodicies should be obvious. To attempt to explain why God “allows” or “wills” genocide cannot but run afoul of the problem of evil. The stories we need to tell (see n. 37 above) can be evaluated by just how they empower us to imagine ways of opposing all injustice and inhuman violence, including especially the violence of genocide.

What we have to do is to show that two claims are compatible. These demonstrations are “defenses.” One such defense is the free will *defense*—which is *not* a free will *theodicy*.⁴⁵ A theodicy offers a *theory* to explain why God allows evils.

⁴⁵ For a fuller, rigorous exposition of this defense, see Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Plantinga restates his argument and responds to criticisms in numerous subsequent articles, but the basic point of the defense remains intact.

Plantinga’s version of the defense relies on “possible world metaphysics.” As the metaphysical claims only enter into the debate to back Plantinga’s warrants, if a non-possible worlds approach can be developed—and I think it can—then the basic shape of the defense can be accepted as possibly true. In point of fact, I do not accept the usual articulations of the free will defense insofar as they are thought to entail “possible world metaphysics.” I am developing my reasoning for this view in a paper currently under construction. I find a somewhat different approach more compatible with the Catholic tradition, but the clarity of the free will defense and the possibility of restating it in a broader way allows me to use it here. My first attempt at developing this approach is “Toward a Creativity Defense of Belief in God in the Face of Evil,” *Physics and Cosmology: Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Natural Evil*, ed. Nancey Murphy *et al.* (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory Press, 2007) 195-215.

A defense simply shows that two propositions *p* and *q* are logically compatible. The defense does not explain what God does, but simply shows that the believer is not irrational in holding both propositions.

The logic of the free will defense is clear and compelling. First, consider two propositions:

- p* God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent.
q There is genuine evil in the actual world.

The “problem” of evil is that these propositions seem incompatible, contradictory. But it is logically the case that if there is a *possibly* true proposition *r* that combined with *p* entails *q*, then *p* and *q* are not contradictory, but compatible. So consider *r*, which would do the job:

- r* All the genuine evil in the world is the result of the choices of creatures with free will.

Now the point is that *r* has to be *possibly* true, not *actually* true. I can even think *r* is false while recognizing that it could *possibly* be true. Fallen angels and human beings are free creatures. As social, political, and personal evils result from human sin or error, perhaps natural evil results from demonic sin or error. So *r* asserts a very traditional Christian position about the causes of actual evil. But why think *r* is possibly true? Couldn’t God know how to make free creatures not produce evil?

But consider s:

s An omnipotent God cannot make creatures such that they always freely choose the good.⁴⁶

What *s* does is to show that it is logically contradictory to think God can control the choices of free creatures. God could make creatures always choose the good or God could make creatures free. In the former case, God is in control and the creatures cannot really be free; in the latter, the creatures are free but God cannot be in control. So since *s* must be true (a logical point), *r* is possibly true, and so *p* and *q* are both possibly true and compatible with each other. We may believe in *p* for one set of reasons and in *q* for another set of reasons and *p* and *q* are compatible with each other. Put together *p*, *q*, *r*, *s* and the conclusion is obvious: even an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God could not make the world such that *God* could make it both *with* free creatures who are free and *without* evil.⁴⁷ Hence, the problem of evil is dissolved.

We can do something similar to dissolve the covenant dilemma. Here's how. First, we formulate the problem in two propositions that seem to contradict each other:⁴⁸

m God's covenant with Israel is neither revoked nor replaced by the New Covenant.

⁴⁶ Of course, it is possible that all humans would freely choose the good. But that would be *their* choice, not God's; and to suggest that such a state of affairs actually obtains seems incredible.

⁴⁷ Of course, some irrationalists would say that God is beyond logic and can do even what's logically impossible. But that would entail that any proposition about any state of affairs could be both true and false at the same time. If we claim that God can do what is logically impossible—or that propositions about what God can do are not subject to logic—then we cannot say anything at all about God, hardly a position that evokes reverent awe for whatever both did and did not create the universe.

⁴⁸ I recognize that these propositions may need more precise formulation than I give them here, but I would claim that the strategy I display here is at minimum on the right track.

n The universal salvation in and through Christ Jesus fulfills the Old Covenant in the New.

These propositions seem contradictory as Christian theologians play out their implications. Either the New Covenant succeeds the Old or it does not. "Fulfillment" may be a nicer way of saying it, but supersession is the fact of the matter. If the New supplants the Old, then the Old is replaced. Alternatively, if the New does not supplant the Old, then the New is not universal. Jews are saved through the old covenant. Diversity may be a nicer way of saying it, but relativism is the fact of the matter. So here's a dilemma, one analogous to the problem of evil.⁴⁹

But consider *o*:

o The New Covenant fulfills but does not revoke or replace the Old Covenant.

Logically, *m* plus *o* entails *n*—allowing that the terms in each proposition are synonymous. Therefore, *m* and *n* are compatible if *o* is possibly true. Both *m* and *n* may be true, even if the reasons we have for them are different from each other.

But why believe *o* is possibly true? Isn't this just the problem restated? This is where charitable interpretations of positions like Sacks's or Kasper's or the theologies of religious diversity can function to show that *o* is possibly true. They can function with regard to *o* as *s* does to *r*: they show that *o* is possibly true.

⁴⁹ The analogy lies not in the contrast between good and evil, but in the apparent contradiction between two claims. The point is formal: there is a contradiction between two claims. The point is not material, i.e., a contradiction between good and evil or between two competing goods.

Such views may have theological problems. All we need is that one or more of them are possibly true for them to show that *o* is also possibly true. We cannot, perhaps, decide on theological grounds whether Kasper's or Sacks's or even Ratzinger's or a whole host of other positions are the best formulations of the relationship of religious traditions in general or the Old and New Covenants in particular. But all we need is for one of these theories to be possibly true to do the work of showing that *o* is possible, and so we can reasonably believe both *m* and *n*.

Again, we do not have to accept any of these theories as *actually* true or even the most likely true theory if any one of them is possibly true—and it seems to me that almost all of them are *possibly* true, even if they are as implausible (to me) as the claim that all natural evils are caused by demonic defalcations. The issue is not *plausibility*, but only *logical possibility*.

The problem of the relationship of Christianity and Judaism cannot, I think, be solved in a *systematic theoretical* manner. Epistemic humility with regard to God and evil is a virtue, a virtue with regard to the Old and New Covenants. Without epistemic humility, we almost inevitably slip into a disrespect for one tradition or the other. Systematic theological approaches tend to supersessionism or relativism even if they avoid—as I think Kasper and Sacks do—those extremes. But we don't have to choose among them if all we need is for one of them to be possibly true. Theological theories can be taken as humble, purely speculative hypotheses which help us defend against the appearance that *m* and *n* are incompatible. We can believe both. We don't need a theory to show that we can, but only reasons to believe each and a defense of their compossibility.

My point is this: some questions cannot be answered. How good is God? How high is up? When did you stop loving

the spouse you love? By their very form they show the questions are confused.

“Why does God allow evil in the world?” However much we might want a theoretical answer to this question, as a request for information, it is confused. As a cry of the heart, it requires hearty fidelity, not theoretical words which fail to comfort the afflicted. To “solve” the “problem” of evil is to mistake what is at issue; the problem needs to be dissolved, not resolved. Similarly, to insist on one theory to solve the problem of how the First Covenant and the New Covenant are related is confused. The issue for Catholic theologians in particular is to affirm both God's irrevocable covenant with the Jews and God's salvation of the world in Jesus the Christ. That's the point. The problem again needs to be dissolved, not resolved. The theories are explanations, speculations, human constructs that seek to understand the ways of the One whose ways are beyond our ways. They are useful means, hypotheses to help *dissolve* the problems, not *resolve* the problems as if we could have a “God's eye” view of the whole terrain.

The Virtues of Dialogue

A few pages ago, I wrote this sentence: “How would we support a claim except in dialogue with others who can support our insights and challenge our oversights?” I intentionally did not use the terms “argument” or “discussion” or “debate.” I used “dialogue” to invoke the dialogues envisioned in *Dialogue and Proclamation* § 42. The way to recognize constructively our differences is not to abolish them by problematical systematic theologies or to ignore them as unimportant. Rather, we should embrace our differences and engage in dialogue.

Dialogue among faith traditions and proclamation of our own tradition “are both oriented towards the communication of

salvific truth" (*Dialogue and Proclamation* § 3).⁵⁰ Dialogue takes four forms. The *dialogue of life* is the very practice of living together, supporting each other in a local context of religious diversity. The *dialogue of action* is the practice of collaboration across faith traditions to work for justice and development for all people. The *dialogue of theological exchange* is the practice of seeking to understand more clearly our own heritage and to appreciate others' heritages as well—and, clearly, we can learn much about our own tradition by listening to and appreciating the testimony and criticism of others. The *dialogue of religious experience* emerges in the practice of sharing spiritual values and practices across traditions, as when Jews and Christians pray in each other's houses—or in Yankee Stadium⁵¹ (cf. *Dialogue and Proclamation* § 42). Just as we cannot explain the mystery of how God deals with evil, so we cannot explain the mystery of how God saves all that God wants to save. But we can continue the dialogue. We can have hope that God saves because we agree that God wants all humanity to live in and live out God's reign.

The most effective form of dialogue and proclamation is witness. Our practices, including the practice of believing, are our primary form of witness. There's a saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. It is relevant here: "Preach the Gospel always; if necessary, use words." As Cardinal Kasper noted, proselytizing Jews is not the point of Proclamation. Yet witness of each to the other is always relevant and proper. The practice of dialogue is the kind of witness that is "staying at the table" in

⁵⁰ Cf. <http://www.vatican.va/>; accessed 20 October 2010. I find this 1991 instruction of the Pontifical Commission for Interreligious Dialogue a key pillar in the *Nostra Aetate* tradition.

⁵¹ On September 23, 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, a "multi-faith Prayer for America" service held in Yankee Stadium. In addition to political leaders, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Protestant, Hindu, Greek Orthodox, and Sikh faith traditions prayed with the 15,000 gathered in the stadium and uncounted numbers of others who were at televised broadcasts in parks in Staten Island and Brooklyn.

co-operation with those who disagree with us. These practices instantiate the more adequate and practical, not theoretical, response for Christians to account for the enduring value of the First Covenant and for Jews to recognize the fulfillment Christians see in the New Covenant as not supersessionist. We need no theory to explain "how God works" and "what God's plan is" in order to be in dialogue and solidarity with others who differ with us.

To engage in these dialogues requires virtues. One list is: epistemic humility, fidelity to one's own tradition, an open-mindedness that recognizes that "the teachings and practices of the other religion[s] are in some way related to or relevant for one's own religious tradition," empathy, and hospitality.⁵² These are the virtues that we need to sustain our engagement in the four forms of dialogue prescribed by *Dialogue and Proclamation*.

Virtues are not either/or conditions, but abilities that we develop as people of the covenant in dialogue with each other. We learn how to go beyond mere tolerance in *the dialogue of life*. We may begin with "tolerance," but as the face of the other shows us their need, they can also show us God. Building the other up, feeding them when they are hungry, caring for them when they are ill, and building institutions that provide for food, clothing, shelter, and work help us develop virtues beyond "tolerance" in engaging in this dialogue. The *dialogue of action* is the work for justice. In my less-than-humble opinion, a crucial test of our virtue of our open-mindedness is our support for the Islamic Center at 51 Park in New York City. Opponents seem to forget that Muslims were killed on 9/11 by other Muslims; that

⁵² In *The Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2008) 4-6, Catherine Cornille identified five "essential conditions" for "constructive and enriching interreligious dialogue." I follow Cornille's "conditions" but think they are far better understood as "virtues." I owe the reference to Mara Brecht, a Ph.D. student in theology at Fordham.

Islam is diverse; and that just as Jews and Christians seek places to remember, to communicate, to grieve, and to worship in the wake of that terrible attack, so do Muslims. We may disagree about that building, but the way to resolve that disagreement is the virtue of respect for the dignity of difference and the support for the other. *The dialogues of experience and theological exchange* are instantiated most particularly by the witness of those who have for fifty years engaged in multi-tradition dialogues, in interreligious theologizing, and in the tasks of comparative theology. This work is a lasting witness to the theological world. The interreligious workers pray with and for each other, think and rethink in response to each other, and carry on with intellectual humility, honesty, courage, and steadfastness in their own traditions⁵³ while being faithful to each other as people of God's covenanting love.

Conclusion

We who do theology in other parts of the vineyard have a great debt to the inter-religious dialogues. For teaching us the importance of avoiding supersession. For witnessing to us the virtues of the dialogue, especially the virtue of humility with each other and before God. For exploring how we can relate to each other despite our differences about the covenant. But we theologians try to pay such a debt by doing theology in a non-supersessionist mode as a way forward for our own Christian

traditions—as I have tried to demonstrate in the first part of this essay. Those of us who do philosophical theology try to pay our debt by using our skills for analyzing what people do as they work through problems—as I have tried to do in the second part of this essay. And those of us who are philosophical theologians interested in the problems of religious epistemology reflect on how we can properly engage in authentic dialogue while remaining faithful to our epistemic and religious commitments to our own traditions—as I have tried to explore in the final section of this essay. We are indebted as theologians in particular communities to those who work in the various forms of dialogue because they continue to show us in practice how to engage in dialogue, and how to continue interacting together as God's people, people whose core witness to all God's people shows how God's realm has many mansions, diversely decorated, but all of them God's houses which God empowers us to occupy.

⁵³ Students in the School of Theology and Ministry at the Jesuit University of Seattle, lay ministry students from the Catholic Archdiocese study together with ministry students from ten other Christian denominations from Baptist to Unitarian-Universalist. I met with a group of them recently and to a person they affirmed that the diversity of the student body brought them to be more, not less, committed to their own traditions—in their view, in contrast to their colleagues in mono-denominational seminaries. Mara Brecht, in an ethnographic study mentioned earlier made the same point regarding a longstanding, but unofficial dialogue group composed of Jewish, Christian and Muslim women. Dialogue leads to steadfastness at least as often, I'd say, if not more often than to conversion or infidelity to one's home tradition, *pace* McKim and Feldman (see note 5, above).