

Pluscarden Pentecost Lectures for 2004

THE EVANGELICAL CHALLENGE: THREAT OR GRACE?

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The Evangelicals and the Jewish People

It is impossible to reflect on the Evangelical phenomenon today without addressing the subject of Israel and the Jewish people. This issue has major political relevance with the policy of the Bush Administration in the Middle East being influenced by the so-called “Christian Zionism” espoused by many American Evangelicals.

The Evangelicals and the Jewish People

A deeper reflection on Evangelicals and the Jewish people requires some examination of the history of Evangelicalism. The Protestant Reformation did not lead immediately to any rethinking of inherited Christian attitudes to the Jewish people. Sixteenth-century Protestants still thought as the Catholics before them that God had rejected the Jewish people on account of their rejection of Christ. The first questioning of this unofficial tradition began in some Calvinist circles in the early 17th century, no doubt because of their greater attention to the issues of election and predestination. It seems that the first Christian centre to promote a positive view of the role of the Jews was the Moravian community at Herrnhut in Germany under the leadership of Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700 – 60), with Zinzendorf even dedicating a part of his castle to the use of the *Juden Kehilla* (the church of the Jews).

However, it was really only in the 19th century that Protestant attitudes to the Jewish people began to change in a significant way. A new interest in biblical prophecy concerning Israel formed part of a renewed focus on eschatology provoked by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. The period between 1820 and 1840 saw major developments in this area. Interestingly, it was in 1827 that a young French Jew, Théodore Ratisbonne, was converted to the Catholic faith, later becoming the founder of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion (1843), an order called to witness to the faithfulness of God in his love for the Jewish people¹. It was in 1840 that a Protestant bishopric (Anglican – Lutheran) was

¹ His younger brother, Alphonse, followed him in baptism (1842) and helped his older brother in the foundation of the Fathers of Sion (1852).

established in Jerusalem, with the appointment of a Jewish believer, Michael Solomon Alexander, as first bishop. This decision of the British and German governments played a part in John Henry Newman's journey to the Catholic Church.

First, however, a Scottish pastor in London, Edward Irving, translated with commendation the work of an anonymous Catholic scholar, writing under the name of Ben Ezra, in fact the Jesuit Fr Lacunza, under the title *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty* (1827). This book resurrected the pre-millennarian eschatology of the Fathers of the first three centuries in the context of a revalidation of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the return of the Jews to their land and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth. It is difficult to evaluate the influence of Irving on the Scottish Church at that time (he was soon expelled from the ministry for his teaching on the sinless Jesus taking on sinful human flesh in the Incarnation), but in the decades following there was a growing interest in the Presbyterian Church in the biblical promises concerning the people of Israel. Thus a book entitled *A Course of Lectures on the Jews*, contains a series of twelve lectures given by different pastors in Glasgow in 1838. Of these, the last two address the future: No. XI on "The Future Prospects of the Jews – Restoration to their own land – universal conversion to the faith of Christ" and no. XII on "Immediate duties of the Christian Church in relation to Israel – answer to objections". The immediate duties are as follows: "1. to be humbled and ashamed and filled with true repentance in the presence of God, for her long neglect of, and opposition to his people. 2. active exertion in behalf of the conversion of Israel."²

However, a much greater influence, though not immediately, was exerted by the teaching of John Nelson Darby, an Irishman who was one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren in the late 1820s. Darby's teaching eventually found its way into the footnotes of the Scofield Bible later in the 19th century and thence into the minds of an increasing number of Evangelical believers. Much in Darby's system was totally innovative, particularly his belief in a rapture of the saints before Christ's millennial reign. But for our purposes, he took up the received separation of the Church from Israel but in a new context of restoring to Israel the prophetic promises of the Old Testament. But Darby did this by

² *A Course of Lectures on the Jews*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1840), pp. 445, 447. These two duties are followed by four more practical steps: 1. to supply the house of Israel with the word of God in their own tongue. 2. The faithful preaching of the Cross. 3. the importance of oral or written discussion. 4. earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit to enlighten, regenerate, and sanctify the Jewish mind." (pp.455 – 461).

separating the destinies of Israel and the Church: Israel's destiny is on earth fulfilling Old Testament promises and the Church's destiny is in heaven fulfilling New Testament promises. The Jews were set aside, in Darby's view, because of their rejection of the apostolic preaching, and then begins the age of the Church. With the removal of the Church to heaven in the "rapture", Israel's time-clock begins to tick once more, and the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises to Israel starts to take place. This is the scenario that has been welcomed by the vast majority of American Evangelicals, and that has produced best-selling books like Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the series of end-time novels by La Haye. Darby's teaching had the merit of rescuing a whole section of Old Testament prophecy from virtual irrelevance, but it did so at a terrible price. For it canonized a judgmental separatism, based on the idea of the failure of each God-given dispensation and in particular of the "ruin of the Church", so that the destiny of the Church, separated from that of Israel, is reduced to the "rapture/salvation" of individual believers.

From the late 19th century, the Evangelical movement increasingly took Darby's eschatology on board, through its dissemination in the footnotes of the Scofield Bible – which was the King James version with Scofield's footnotes. Evangelicalism thus became increasingly pre-millennial in eschatology and pessimistic in relation to this world and its future, processes strengthened by the turn to fundamentalism in the early 20th century. However, it should be borne in mind that one cannot simply equate all Evangelicalism with fundamentalism and Christian Zionism, nor is belief in a prophetic future for the Jews limited to Darbyite dispensationalists.

Several elements were developing together. There was a growing Evangelical interest in Old Testament prophecy concerning the Jewish people, the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. This led to the holding of conferences on Biblical Prophecy, particularly in North America between the 1870s and the 1910s. There was a rising Evangelical interest in evangelization of the Jews, leading to the formation of several Evangelical missions to the Jews, especially from 1880 onwards. There was also a growing interest among Jewish Christians in at least some maintenance of Jewish identity within the Church. This led to the foundation of the Hebrew Christian Alliance in Britain in 1867, and that of the American Alliance in 1915.

The growing Evangelical interest in the Jewish people was thus closely connected with a focus on biblical prophecy. The political events of 1917 (the Balfour Declaration in favour of a homeland for the Jews), of 1948

(the establishment of the state of Israel) and of 1967 (the Israeli capture of East Jerusalem that placed the whole city under Israeli control) were understood by many Evangelicals as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy and by the more fundamentalist as a confirmation of the rightness of their Zionist vision.

However, not all Evangelical Christians share these views about the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, whether in a dispensationalist form or not. A few years ago, a Messianic Jewish magazine from Israel devoted an issue to the theme of Eretz Israel, the land of Israel³. The majority of contributors believed that the return of the Jews to the land is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. But one Evangelical contributor from Britain, Colin Chapman, disagreed, writing: “My fundamental disagreement with Christian Zionists is that they do not seem to me to take seriously enough the question: “What difference did the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus make to traditional Jewish hopes and expectations about the Land and the People?”⁴ I would add to the transformation in Christ the difference made by the resurrection. Chapman thus took strong objection to patterns of interpretation that jump straight from the Old Testament to present-day application without passing through Jesus Christ. We will return later to this point.

The Messianic Jewish Movement

Mention of the Hebrew Christians leads on to another component in the contemporary situation, the Messianic Jewish movement. Among the less well-informed this is sometimes assumed to be identical with the organisation Jews for Jesus. In fact, the Messianic Jewish movement is distinguished by the formation of congregations of believers in Jesus committed to a Jewish identity and Jewish life-style. By contrast, Jews for Jesus is a body committed to the evangelization of Jews, and for them the issue of where Jewish converts find fellowship is largely a secondary concern. The Messianic Jews see themselves as a reappearance of a Jewish expression of the body of Christ (or as they would say “the body of Messiah”). They typically say: why should a Jew who comes to faith in Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world have to stop being Jewish and be assimilated to a Gentile religion? The first believers were Jewish, and in no way ceased to be Jews.

³ *Mishkan* 26 (1/1997).

⁴ Colin Chapman, “One land, Two Peoples – How Many States”, *Mishkan* 26 (1/1997), p. 11.

The Messianic Jewish movement as a dynamic movement stems from the USA in the late 1960s, when many young Jews were brought to faith in Jesus through the Jesus movement. Counter-cultural and hippie in style, they wanted to follow their Messiah Yeshua, but refused cultural assimilation in Gentile churches. Because of these origins, the Messianic Jewish movement has had a largely charismatic character, which contributed significantly to its dynamism and impact. An estimate would be 70% - 75% charismatic in the USA, and 80% - 85% in the former USSR. In Israel, a small Messianic movement was already emerging as an indigenous missionary movement in Israeli society, and here the charismatic element is not so large (55% - 60%).

In fact, the theology of the Messianic Jews is mostly Evangelical. This is hardly surprising considering the fact that almost the only Christians showing interest in the contemporary relevance of Old Testament prophecies have been Evangelicals. Such a development might have seemed the obvious outcome of Evangelical interest in the Jewish people, for the biblical prophecies of return speak both of the physical return of the people of Israel to the land and to their return to the Lord and the gift of the Spirit⁵. But from another angle, the rise of the Messianic Jews has been a challenge to Evangelicals: for they expected Jewish converts to become zealous Evangelicals, not to be interested in remaining in any way Jewish, a desire that reignited fears of Judaizing, of seeking salvation through Torah rather than by faith. In fact, the assertion of an ongoing Jewish identity tends over time to lead to a greater appreciation for both tradition and for liturgy, both essential features of Jewish faith but both equally suspect to Evangelical Christians. The challenges the movement poses to Evangelical Christianity can be focused in the question: Does the Messianic Jewish movement have to become less Evangelical in order to become more authentically Jewish?

It should not be assumed then that all Evangelicals are strong supporters of the Messianic Jews. It is correct to say that the fellowship of Messianic Jews with Christians has been almost entirely with Evangelicals. This is also true in Israel, where there are some close associations between some Messianic Jewish congregations and some Arab – Palestinian Evangelical congregations. However, some major Evangelical organizations with Zionist sympathies, such as Christians for Israel and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, are so focused on helping the state of Israel, that they don't want much to do with the Messianic Jews, who are anathema to the Orthodox Jews and unpopular with many in the Likud coalition government.

⁵ E.g. in Jeremiah 32: 37 – 41; Ezekiel 11: 17 – 20; 36: 24 – 28; 37: 14.

Historic Church Re-Thinking

In the Evangelical world, the developments in their thinking concerning the Jews have focused on elements seen as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy, particularly their return to the land, and the establishment of the state of Israel. With the historic Churches, the change in relation to the Jews has been provoked almost exclusively by the Holocaust. In Europe especially, even though it took a few decades, the Churches had to address the question: how could such a horror take place in officially Christian Europe? What responsibility do Christians and the Churches carry for the possibility of this appalling tragedy? These are the questions that have increasingly led the Churches to repudiate the replacement theology, and the Catholic Church to produce para. 4 of *Nostra Aetate* (1965).

But the return of the Jews to the land and especially the establishment of the state of Israel have not been the subject of much mainline theological reflection. A book published by the World Council of Churches on *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* (1988) has this perceptive comment: “Nothing in the church’s tradition has prepared it for dealing with the State of Israel. Indeed, tradition has assumed as a matter of theological principle that a Jewish state was an impossibility: the Jews, we have taught, having rejected their Messiah and so their own inheritance, are condemned to wander the face of the earth in exile, until they turn to Christ or are confronted by him upon his return in glory. It is therefore not surprising that the churches have had difficulty in accounting for this phenomenon, and that no consensus has yet arisen concerning the State of Israel.”⁶

A Deepening Polarisation

This is the background to the current situation in which there is an increasing polarisation between conservative Evangelicals on the one hand and Christians from the mainline Churches on the other hand. The two groups are responding to two different though related historic events of the 20th century, the Evangelicals to the return of the Jews to the land and the establishment of the state of Israel, and the historic Churches to the Holocaust. The Evangelicals are focused on the fulfilment of prophecy, and the historic Churches are focused on the moral challenges arising from the absolute moral horror of the Holocaust. The opposition and mutual disaffection shows most clearly in respective attitudes to the

⁶ *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* (Geneva: W. C. C., 1988), p. 170.

current Israel-Palestinian conflict, but the conflict does not just concern political positions but extends to patterns of biblical exegesis and to eschatological beliefs.

The extent of this chasm hardly needs to be demonstrated, but it was very visible in a report in *The Tablet* of 1st May 2004 concerning a conference held in Jerusalem after Easter entitled “Challenging Christian Zionism: theology, politics and the Palestine-Israeli conflict”⁷. In this report, we read: “there is evidence that the influence of Christian Zionism is spreading into the mainstream Churches too. Parts of the British evangelical wing of the Church of England, the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches and the Dutch and South African Calvinist Churches have all been influenced by dispensationalism, which plays on the Western world’s residual guilt over the Holocaust and a lingering reverence for Jews as the Chosen People of the Old Testament.”⁸ This report illustrates the dangers of starting your analysis from apparent Israeli or Palestinian sympathies in the current conflict, and working back from there. Such a method leads to the false assumption that any position sympathetic to Israel is a result of dispensationalist influence. The Scandinavian Lutheran churches, especially in Norway and Finland, have their own heritage of biblical and theological understanding concerning the Jewish people that owes nothing to Darbyite dispensationalism. The Evangelical Anglican, who directs the Church’s Mission to the Jews in Jerusalem, Tony Higton, who believes the return of the Jews to the land is the fulfilment of biblical prophecy, is not a dispensationalist⁹.

The give-away phrase in this citation is “a lingering reverence for Jews as the Chosen People of the Old Testament”. This may be a position that Palestinian Christians are tempted to adopt in the midst of their present sufferings, but it is certainly not the position of the Catholic Church. First in the decree *Nostra Aetate* of Vatican Two, and subsequently in numerous statements of John Paul II as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it is clearly stated that the Jewish people have not been rejected or replaced by God, and that they are quite simply “the people of the covenant” in the words used in the penitential liturgy in St Peter’s in March 2000.

⁷ “Special Report” by Victoria Clark, pp. 36 - 37.

⁸ Art.cit., p. 37.

⁹ See Tony and Patricia Higton, *I Believe in Heaven on Earth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), Ch. 7: “Does modern Israel figure in God’s future purposes?”.

This represents in fact a quite remarkable transformation in Catholic teaching and understanding. While the second Vatican Council was the first occasion on which the Catholic Church had given an official teaching on the Jewish people, it was in fact reversing a long pattern of thinking in which it was commonly assumed that the Church had replaced the Jews as the chosen people, because of the Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah. Since then, the Catholic Church is beginning to think through the implications of this seismic shift! We see the fruit, for example, in the long document from the Pontifical Biblical Commission, published in 2002, entitled *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*. Among the “Shared Fundamental Themes” listed in this document is “The Election of Israel” with sections on the Old Testament and on the New (paras. 33 – 36).

While the Catholic Church can in no way accept the dispensationalism and the “rapture” teaching of Darby, this does not mean that the Jewish people do not play any role in Catholic eschatology. While it is true that the Catechism makes no reference to the return of the Jews to the land or to the establishment of the state of Israel, it does speak quite remarkably of the role of the Jews in relation to the second coming of the Lord. “The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by ‘all Israel,’ for ‘a hardening has come upon part of Israel’ in their ‘unbelief’ toward Jesus.” (CCC, para. 674). And later in the same paragraph, “The ‘full inclusion’ of the Jews in the Messiah’s salvation, in the wake of ‘the full number of the Gentiles,’ will enable the People of God to achieve ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,’ in which ‘God may be all in all.’” (para. 674). This statement is a first Catholic step in the recognition of the prophetic dimension to the Israel issue.

The transformation at Vatican Two has unleashed a major reassessment that is still far from complete. The age of polemics has given way to the era of dialogue. The beginnings of dialogue with the Jewish leadership have revealed the depths of Jewish suffering through the Christian centuries and the depths too of their resulting suspicion of the Church. This suffering included many episodes of compulsory attendance at anti-Semitic preaching, of “forced conversion”, and of severe punishment for any return by such “converts” to Jewish practice. The result is a widespread sentiment among Catholic scholars in dialogue with the rabbis that there should be no Catholic evangelization of the Jews. Some provide a theological backing for this position by arguing a “two-covenant view”, namely that Jews are saved through their covenant, and Christians are saved by the new covenant in Jesus. It is however highly

unlikely that the Magisterium will ever endorse such a position, for it flies so strongly in the face of the New Testament teaching that Jesus of Nazareth is the Saviour of all, Jew and Gentile alike.

The rise of the Messianic Jews has been accompanied by the rise of the Hebrew Catholic movement, that is of Catholics seeking to live their Catholic faith with a distinctively Jewish-Hebraic identity within the universal koinonia of the Catholic Church. The major vehicle for the Hebrew Catholics is the Association of Hebrew Catholics, founded by the late Carmelite convert, Fr Elias Friedman, though there is also a small group in Paris called “L’Association de Marie, Fille de Sion”, approved by Cardinal Lustiger. The most significant development for the Hebrew Catholics has been the nomination last year of their first bishop, Mgr Jean-Baptiste Gourion, OSB, as an auxiliary of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with full Episcopal powers for the governance of the Hebrew Catholics in the land of Israel¹⁰. The Hebrew Catholics have also received great encouragement from the canonization of Edith Stein [St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross], and from the Holy Father’s description of her as both “a daughter of Israel” and “a daughter of the Church”.

These developments throw a light on the question of Jewish conversion. It seems to me that the major point that is valid in the argument of those opposing all Jewish evangelism is the presupposition that Jewish converts must leave everything Jewish behind, and simply become Gentile Christians. The Jewish critics say that the conversion of Jews to Christianity destroys Judaism just as effectively as Hitler’s final solution. The new developments with the Messianic Jews and the Hebrew Catholics make an alternative possible: that is of believing in Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world, as Jews without being required to join a Gentile expression of Christian faith. Now, of course, such an answer to the Jewish objections depends on the question: how authentically Jewish are the Messianic Jews and the Hebrew Catholics?

The Prophetic and the Moral

As I have implied, the divide between the Evangelical and historic church sympathies in relation to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict can be seen in many ways as a conflict between the prophetic and the moral. The

¹⁰ Mgr Gourion has an interesting background. Born to Jewish parents in Algeria, he became a Catholic as a young man, and almost immediately entered the abbey of Bec in Normandy. He was one of the pioneers of the Catholic charismatic renewal in Normandy, and was soon sent to begin a new foundation at Abu Ghosh, which is an Arab village in Israel.

reasons for the absolute support of many Evangelicals for Israel are to be found in their convictions about biblical prophecy. The reasons for historic church sympathy for the Palestinians are to be found in their commitment to principles of justice and peace. The focus on prophecy leads to the Israel conflict being seen as totally unique without anything in common with other conflicts; while the focus on justice and peace leads to the Israel conflict being treated in exactly the same way as all other political, racial and/or religious conflicts.

Theologically, this tension represents another instance, a major instance, of the tension between the particular and the universal. Fr Francesco Rossi de Gasperis, SJ, an Italian Jesuit, who has taught for many years in the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem, has devoted much of his research and exegesis to the significance of the election of Israel and of Jerusalem. In this connection, he has written of the urgent need to bring together the “theocentrism of creation” with the “historical and Hebrew Christocentrism of the covenant”¹¹, that is the universalism of the creation and the historical particularity of the chosen people, centred on the particularity of Jesus. Ignoring either of these leads to major dangers. “that of regressively reducing history to the creation, the Song of Songs to the first eleven chapters of Genesis, according to a Gnostic universalism, closed and blocked by an idolatrous cult of justice; on the other hand, the danger represented by a particularistic and fundamentalist confessionalism – whether Jewish or Islamic, whether Christian or Catholic.”¹²

The only way that a bridge can be built between the opposing sympathies is to recognize the need for the prophetic and the moral to be held together. The Catholic Church has not ventured far down the prophetic road in relation to the people of Israel, constrained by the severe threats to the Catholic minorities in Arab and Muslim lands. But the foundational acceptance of the prophetic dimension is there in the Church’s recognition of the enduring election of the Jewish people and in the relationship between the entry of the Jews and the return of the Lord. This means that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has dimensions that are unique and are not present in any of the other war zones in the world. On this, the Evangelicals are right, though we will dispute many details of their prophetic interpretation. Here I think the Evangelical critic of any interpretation that bypasses Christ is right, but I believe that Colin

¹¹ Francesco Rossi de Gasperis, SJ, *Cominciando da Gerusalemme* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1997), p. 532.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 532.

Chapman drew the wrong conclusion that the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem have no theological significance for the future.

The return of the Jews to the land can be understood in a Christocentric reading of the Scriptures. The Babylonian exile can be understood as foreshadowing the “great exile” from the Jewish revolts until the establishment of the state of Israel, just as the destruction of the temple in 587 BCE can be understood as foreshadowing the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Both of these latter events are understood in some New Testament texts as being connected with the Christ event. The lamentation of Jesus over Jerusalem in Matthew 23: 37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!” leads into a statement about future desolation and his eventual return: “Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matt. 23: 38 – 39). In Luke 21, there is an association made by Jesus between “being led captive among the nations” and Jerusalem being “trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Luke 21: 24). These are difficult passages to understand, but they do suggest that the idea that there is nothing in the New Testament about Jewish banishment and the Jewish return to the land can be contested.

Returning to the relationship between the prophetic and the moral, we will want to insist that the prophetic dimension does not eliminate all moral requirements concerning justice and human rights. In fact, the prophetic promises to Israel are all contingent on Israel’s obedience to God’s commandments. In other words, even from a prophetic point of view, any flouting of moral principles by an Israeli government is counter-productive to the fulfilment of the divine promises. Fr Rossi de Gasperis who maintains that “The prophecy of the new covenant includes the promise of an historical return of the Israelites to the land promised by the Lord to their fathers”¹³ has also written: “If the land is a gift, as the book of Deuteronomy never tires of repeating, it makes no sense to speak of a ‘right to a gift’.”¹⁴

Finally, I want to raise a question about the Church’s diplomatic stance towards Jerusalem. The Vatican has articulated a stance that as the city of the three major monotheistic religions, Jerusalem should have an independent international depoliticized status. While this has been

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 218.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 219.

church policy for some decades, it is primarily a diplomatic stance not a doctrinal position, though it is grounded in moral concerns. But no Israeli government is ever going to agree to the internationalization of Jerusalem, Labour no more than Likud. The reason is that while Jerusalem is a holy city for all three religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam – it does not have the same significance for each. It has a unique significance for the Jews, because – at least for the Orthodox Jews - it is “the city of the great king” where the Messiah will reign. Jerusalem is at the centre of Judaism. “Next year in Jerusalem”, as the Jewish greeting goes. For Christians, it has been through the centuries the centre of the Holy Land, the city of the passion and crucifixion, of the empty tomb and of Pentecost. For most Christians, the importance of Jerusalem is connected with the past, not with the future. The Church’s concern has long focused on the preservation of the Holy Places associated with the life of Jesus. And for Islam, Jerusalem is not so central, ranking after both Mecca and Medina as holy cities.

The Church’s revised thinking about the Jews with the repudiation of replacement teaching calls in some way for a reinstatement of the future significance of the earthly Jerusalem. This means entering into the prophetic dimension, which would not seem to be possible without recognizing the unique place of Jerusalem for the Jewish people. This dimension should not just be the prerogative of Evangelical Christians. A scholar like Fr Rossi de Gasperis understands deeply the eschatological significance of the earthly Jerusalem. While Evangelical Christians find it hard to live with unresolved doctrinal issues, I am convinced that it will take some years of scholarly study, of prophetic insight and of profound prayer for the Catholic Church to come to a clarity about all these issues. It would be unwise to imagine that we can undo the work of sixteen or more centuries of replacement spiritualization in just one or two decades. But it is from the Evangelicals that this challenge comes most strongly, and for that we should give them some credit and not merely complain.