

# Fulfillment and Complementarity: Reflections on Relationship in “Gifts and Calling”<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Pope Benedict XVI declared that “Dialogue is not aimless conversation: it aims at conviction, at finding the truth; otherwise it is worthless.”<sup>2</sup> Certainly, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ) intends to stimulate a dialogue of conviction with “‘The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable’ (Rom 11:29): A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (no. 4).” The tone of the document is honest, earnest, and genuinely seeking to advance understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. In reflecting further on dialogue between religions, Pope Benedict taught that “[we] will learn [our] own truth better if [we] understand the other person,” “look for what is positive in the other’s belief” and allow our limited understandings to be corrected by encounter with the other’s beliefs.<sup>3</sup> This stance is reflected in “Gifts and Calling” (G&C), whose tone is consistently respectful of Judaism and the Jewish dialogue partners that the document surely intends to engage. We see this through the text’s engagement with Jewish sources, the honest statements of an historically painful relationship (§§6, 14) and the direct recognition of the *Shoah* in various places in the document (§§1, 6, 8, 40, 47). It is significant that G&C explicitly acknowledges the history of Christian violence toward the Jewish people, particularly in the light of recent 50th anniversary discussions about *Nostra Aetate*, which have noted that *Nostra Aetate* was remiss in this regard.<sup>4</sup> G&C is genuinely struggling to honor the integrity of each tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks are due to my colleagues in the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations who provided advice and guidance on an early draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Mary Religions—One Covenant Israel, the Church and the World*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999) 112.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>4</sup> For example, a variety of plenary speakers at the October 2015 Ethel Lefrak Triennial Conference on the Holocaust at Seton Hill University noted this lacuna in *Nostra aetate*. See the forthcoming vol-

I approach the document, therefore, from the perspective of the care that must be given to cultivating authentic relationships. We can recall the turmoil that occurred when the March 1964 draft of what became *Nostra Aetate* was eviscerated by the Second Vatican Council's Coordinating Commission—gone were the rejections of deicide and the blood curse, and the rejection of collective responsibility was oddly limited. Most significantly, a hope for the conversion of “that [Jewish] people into the fullness of the people of God established by Christ” was added.<sup>5</sup> As is well known, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel famously declared that he would rather go to Auschwitz than convert. There was a monstrous sense of betrayal. Archbishop of Westminster John Heenan implored the fathers to reject the new text in favor of the prior text; he declared: “It is impossible that one would not notice how this version differs in tenor and spirit. For, the present declaration is less kind, less gracious, less friendly.”<sup>6</sup> But when the Great Debate, which was forcefully led by American bishops, was over, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee was so moved that he wrote that the “positions [were] articulated with such friendship, indeed, fraternal love, as to make clear that a profound turning point had taken place in our lifetime.”<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, G&C wants to honor the many types of friendship that have developed between Jews and Christians in the post-*Nostra Aetate* decades. The document believes in nurturing the turning point that Rabbi Tanenbaum observed: “The bonds of friendship forged in the meantime have proved to be stable, so that it has become possible to address even controversial subjects together without the danger of permanent damage to the dialogue” (§10). On the basis of the document's claim to sound friendship, it is worthwhile to interrogate its use of the theologically-freighted words “fulfillment” and “complementarity” as strategies or concepts to describe the relationship between Catholics and Jews. Are these Christian soteriological and anthropological terms the best approaches to “theological questions pertaining to Catholic-Jewish relations,” or are they so coded with a binary approach to relationship so as to render them obsolete and to risk subverting the very laudable goals of the document?

The authors of G&C intend to cultivate an authentic relationship and presume a firm foundation for so doing (even acknowledging the reality that this is a relatively recent foundation in a two-thousand-year-old relationship). I, therefore, wonder if there are “limit” or “meta” questions for the document as it seeks to

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ume based on the conference: Carol Rittner, R.S.M., ed., *The Holocaust and Nostra Aetate: Toward A Greater Understanding*. (Greensburg, PA: Seton Hill University, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> See the Council's Coordinating Commission's September 1964 draft at <http://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/second-vatican-council/na-drafts/1027-draft1964sept-1>. See especially paragraph five.

<sup>6</sup> See the address of His Excellency John Carmel Heenan at <http://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/second-vatican-council/na-debate/1020-v21964sept29b#Heenan>.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Tannenbaum, “Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal: A Jewish Viewpoint,” in Judy Banki and Eugene Fisher, eds., *A Prophet for Our Time: An Anthology of the Writings of Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 85, excerpted at <http://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic>.

raise complex and sensitive theological issues on the foundation of fifty years of transformed relationship. How can a relationship of friends and equals—which G&C sees as complementary (§§13, 31)—be defined theologically? Further, how can that relationship be nurtured if the parties harbor any sense of their own superiority in the relationship? The document seems to want to define the Catholic-Jewish relationship as one of equals but the use of fulfillment language throughout calls into question whether it really envisions a relationship between equals. Additionally, as we will see below, the use of “complementarity” compounds the difficulty. As in the movements of a symphony, G&C includes distinct leitmotifs in need of a resolution. The many allusions or direct references to Rom 11:20 (e.g.: §§18, 27, 35, 36, 38, 39, 43) constitute one leitmotif: the Jewish people are in a unique and salvific relation to God. The second leitmotif, though, is that the Christian “new covenant” fulfills the promises of the “old covenant” (e.g.: §§27, 30, 33).

### **Fulfillment and Relationship**

G&C §4 cites the 1974 *Guidelines*’ critically important instruction that Christians “must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience.”<sup>8</sup> The unqualified and undefined language of fulfillment seems to make it difficult to leave room for Jewish self-definition. G&C’s fulfillment language raises for me the necessity of a dialogue about basic theological terms before we can move forward with the weighty questions raised in the central sections, three through six, of revelation, the relationship between “old” and “new” testaments and covenants, salvation, and mission.<sup>9</sup> How does each community understand “covenant” and its role in the life of faith? Is “salvation” a term that is equally illuminating for both communities? How does each community think theologically about eschatological matters? Are there significant differences between a realized eschatology and a futurist realized eschatology when it comes to fulfillment? Are we asking our dialogue partners if our theological and religious vocabulary resonates with their religious and theological concepts? This is nowhere more important than when we discuss mission and bearing witness to the faith (§§40-43). Partners in relationships—particularly those described as “complementary”—must be able to navigate their questions of identity in two distinct but related ways. Each community must allow for each other’s internal self-definition. Then, there will need

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<sup>8</sup> See the first document from the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4* at <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/vatican-curia/277-guidelines>.

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough discussion of theological terms in need of clarification in “Gifts and Calling,” see Philip A. Cunningham’s essay, “Gifts and Calling: Coming to Terms with Jews as Covenantal Partners” in this issue of *SCJR*. In the same issue, see also William Madges, “Covenant, Universal Mission, and Fulfillment.”

to be some agreement on key terms or these friends and these partners will end up in misunderstanding and confusion.

The document immediately recognizes the historical disparity of the relationship in terms of temporal power and numbers (§1). This recognition is essential for any theological attempt to define Catholics and Jews as friends and as equals. The historical asymmetry must always remain in view because it impinges in a visceral way on the extremely difficult theological questions at the heart of the document. From a historical perspective, *Nostra Aetate* §1 introduced the Catholic Church to interreligious dialogue using epistemological claims about the unity of knowledge and about God as the source and goal of all people; it did so while posing fundamental existential and religious questions that constitute, as the section notes, the “unsolved riddles of the human condition.” Following in this trajectory, G&C needs to allow those questions of theological anthropology, teleology, morality, and theodicy to be defined by each community on its own terms as a basis for authentic friendship and a dialogue of equals. Without such clarity on both sides, the theological convictions in the two leitmotifs of G&C risk damaging the bonds of friendship and pressing those bonds of equality into a new asymmetry that will resonate loudly with the pre-*Nostra Aetate* era.

In 2001, Cardinal Kasper, reflecting on *Dominus Iesus*, famously declared that not “everybody needs to become a Catholic in order to be saved by God...God’s grace, which is the grace of Jesus Christ according to our faith, is available to all. Therefore, the Church believes that Judaism, i.e. the faithful response of the Jewish people to God’s irrevocable covenant, is salvific for them, because God is faithful to his promises.”<sup>10</sup> This statement seems to uphold the symmetry and equality of authentic friendship. However, Kasper explains that the “new covenant” and the “old covenant” “stand with each other in a relationship of promise or anticipation and fulfillment.”<sup>11</sup> Even such an explicit statement as Kasper’s concerning the salvific character of Jewish covenantal life is complicated by a relationship of fulfillment. Kasper, however, qualifies “fulfillment” with “relationship,” “promise,” and “anticipation,” thus sounding an eschatological note. Placing fulfillment in an eschatological key creates a measure of theological and religious humility that provides space and time for pursuing difficult theological questions in the dialogue.

G&C also offers an eschatological perspective and in §36 makes some important acknowledgements: “that Jews are participants in God’s salvation is theologically unquestionable but how that can be possible without confessing Christ explicitly, is and remains an unfathomable divine mystery.” This last phrase crucially recognizes that there are limits to our understanding that will only be made clear at the eschaton. It suggests that the binary thinking that afflicts us today will not prevail eschatologically.

Does the release of this document, then, signal that a time has come when Jews and Christians can try to go beyond what so often ends up as binary think-

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<sup>10</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> ILC meeting, May 1, 2001 New York City (see *Speaking Truth in Love*, 237)

<sup>11</sup> *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today*, Forward xiv.

ing—the thinking represented by “fulfillment”—when we are not clear about each other’s terms?<sup>12</sup> Can we, from the poverty of our finite perspectives, begin to imagine a different option in an eschatologically renewed relationship to the divine? This thought experiment would be verifiable only at the end of days, but engaging in such an exercise might help us to avoid inadvertent theological hubris and unintended claims of superiority that would damage our carefully cultivated friendship and undermine claims to mutuality in relationship. Such futurist eschatological<sup>13</sup> thinking might also help us both preserve yet enrich our distinctive identities as we strive for the conviction and truth of dialogue that Pope Benedict recommended. That G&C in §31 favorably cites the 2001 PBC document “The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible”<sup>14</sup> as allowing each community’s mutually irreducible readings of scripture seems to open space for such eschatological imagination.<sup>15</sup>

Eschatological provisos and exercises in theological imagination are important for specialists in the dialogue as they plumb the difficult theological questions examined by the document. But we also must pay attention to how our conversations are heard in the concrete circumstances of pastoral life and religious education. We have to be committed to finding a coherent way to explain to preachers and teachers that the Catholic Church teaches both the “universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ” and that the Jewish people are saved by God without belief in Christ (as the document notes in §37).

Let me focus for a few moments on section four—the relationship between the testaments and covenants. The document labors consistently to maintain “fulfillment” as distinct from “replacement” and “supersession” (see especially §30). This is a laudable effort but it does create some ambiguity. For instance, we have different images in §27 to explain the relationship between the covenants. The paragraph begins with the direct statement, “the covenant that God has offered Israel is irrevocable.” Two sentences later, however, we have a statement that explains that the earlier covenants are not revoked by the New Covenant but fulfilled by the New Covenant. The New Covenant “fulfills,” “confirms,” and “perfects” the covenant of God with Israel. These are strong terms that seem to contradict the titular premise of the document. On the other hand, the same paragraph states that the New Covenant is “never independent of the Old Covenant” and offers the image that the New Covenant is “grounded and based on” the “Old” Covenant. Thus, the document attempts to maintain the integrity of the “Old” Covenant. The authors of G&C labor to provide a positive theological ar-

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<sup>12</sup> The inclusion of Jewish consultants in the final preparations of the document could suggest that a new stage of collaboration even in the writing of documents is at hand.

<sup>13</sup> For an exemplary instance of an act of eschatological imagination, see John E. Thiel, *Icons of Hope: The “Last Things” in Catholic Imagination* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> See, The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001) at

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_2002021\\_2\\_popolo-ebraico\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_2002021_2_popolo-ebraico_en.html).

<sup>15</sup> §22.

ticulation of the post-Vatican II relationship between Catholics and Jews that honors the new relationship of friendship and that allows for both self-definition and the development of some shared vocabulary. It is undeniable, though, that some juxtaposed phrases and images result in ambiguity regarding the two leit-motifs of the document—the unrevoked covenant and the same covenant as fulfilled by the Christian New Covenant. A laudable effect of the document is that both Catholics and Jews can now pose questions of the document and seek ways to resolve the ambiguities.

### Complementarity and Relationship

I opened this essay by asking if “fulfillment” and “complementarity” are the most felicitous terms with which to pursue a theology of the Catholic-Jewish relationship. The ambiguities raised with the use of “fulfillment” are redoubled when faced with the concomitant use of “complementarity” in the document. From a stance of complementarity, a number of other questions flow concerning other metaphors such as “cornerstone,” “foundation,” “elder brother,” the idea itself of a “unique theological relationship,” and “intrinsic relation.” Complementarity is often understood as a mode of thinking that frames relationships such that each party to the relation is defined in essentialist terms with each side of the relationship having fixed roles.<sup>16</sup> Though G&C uses “complementarity” only twice (§§13, 31), it does so by quoting Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (§249).<sup>17</sup> It is important to recognize the context of both partial uses of the quotation, which have the effect of invoking papal authority. Section 13 is the concluding paragraph of part one of “Gifts and Calling” (a summary of post-*Nostra Aetate* efforts at reconciliation) and it quotes all but the first two sentences of *Evangelii Gaudium* § 249. Section 31 is at the midpoint of part four, “The Relationship between the Old and New Testament and the Old and New Covenant”—a quite complicated and important theological analysis. The text in §31, however, quotes only a few words, including “rich complementarity.”

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, the Church has often described the relationship between men and women as well as their respective theological value in terms of distinct roles predicated on natural law. The roles are thus essentialized—they are unchangeable and given by God—and the relationship is one of complementarity. As an example see Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women’s Experience*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1988), 125. In her essay, “Justice as the Mark of Catholic Feminist Ecclesiology,” Susan Abraham writes, “. . . the theology of the ‘eternal feminine,’ . . . is shored up by the dominant cultural ideology of woman’s nature and biological/essential difference from man. The idea of the ‘eternal feminine,’ therefore, is the basis of gender essentialism, which is the idea that women and men have ‘essences’ that are eternal and immutable. See Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley, eds., *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 207. In this same volume, Laura Taylor explains that in *Mulieris Dignitatem* Pope John Paul II taught that “human nature is embodied in two distinct but equal forms—male and female. In turn, the male and the female are called to integrate what is masculine and what is feminine into a relationship of complementarity.” See Taylor, “Redeeming Christ: Imitation or (Re)Citation?” in *Frontiers*, 128.

<sup>17</sup> See [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

The entire quotation from *Evangelii Gaudium* §249 is as follows:

God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word. For this reason, the Church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism. While it is true that certain Christian beliefs are unacceptable to Judaism, and that the Church cannot refrain from proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there exists as well a rich complementarity which allows us to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God's word. We can also share many ethical convictions and a common concern for justice and the development of peoples.

In §13, the authors of "Gifts and Calling" offer their concluding remarks of a review of the past fifty years of relations between Catholics and Jews. Their use of *Evangelii Gaudium* follows earlier statements in that section such as "Christians and Jews are irrevocably inter-dependent," "Jews and Christians can enrich one another in mutual friendship," and "without her Jewish roots the Church would be in danger of losing its soteriological anchoring in salvation history and would slide into an ultimately unhistorical Gnosis." The quotation from Pope Francis is taken from the third section ("Relations with Judaism") of part four ("Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace") of the fourth chapter of EG titled "The Social Dimension of Evangelization."

"Gifts and Calling" would have benefitted from quoting the entire section of EG because the two elided sentences clearly support the document's teaching that God's relationship with the Jewish people is ongoing. They would also reinforce the authors' hope for a deepening friendship characterized by mutuality ("the Church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism"). By not quoting those positive affirmations from EG, "Gifts and Calling" risks an essentialized understanding of "complementarity," which would undercut the authors' apparent purposes.

Though the authors of G&C, especially given the use of EG §249, most probably intend "complementarity" to be understood as "mutual friendship," the use of complementarity, especially in conjunction with the ambiguous use of "fulfillment," is problematic because it implies relationships that are not fundamentally mutual. Complementarity almost always reinscribes an unequal power dynamic. One side of the relationship, the "weaker" or "lesser" party fixed in a particular essence, needs to be completed by the other side. Further, it is not always clear if the more powerful party in the relationship is fruitfully changed by relationship with the other. Given the historical asymmetry in the Jewish-Christian relationship, Christian theology that purports to heal wounds cannot risk using imagery that implies that Judaism needs to be completed by Christianity. Christopher Pramuk states the case about essentialism well in an essay reflecting on how Thomas Merton and Pope Francis consider gender issues. It is worth quoting at length:

As Merton sees it the problem of essentializing differences goes well beyond a problem of messaging; there is a deeper refusal involved, a refusal to fully see and encounter the other, to know and seek to love the other as a whole person, in all their beauty and complexity. Here is the corner into which we constantly paint ourselves: when you nail somebody to a singular definition, a static essence—male/female, black/white, gay/straight, priest/laity, Christian/Muslim, Hindu/Jew—there can be *no room for change*, no room for growth, no room for dialogue, no room for error, and perhaps above all, no room for mercy. In short, depending on your essence, *you are either innocent or guilty*, never both. There can be no room for freedom or discernment before God in the secret places of conscience. There can be no room for love.<sup>18</sup>

Innocence, guilt, love (or the lack thereof)—essentialism leaves no space for ambiguity and enforces an unnatural clarity. “Gifts and Calling” very clearly labors to move beyond the history of contempt and supersessionism. It explicitly recalls and repudiates the Christian theological history of anti-Judaism that assigns guilt to the Jewish community for the crime of deicide. It would be an uncharitable reading of the document to assume anything other than an honest effort to heal division. The document does seek to have Christians encounter Jews and “to know and seek to love the other as a whole person.” Indeed, the entire document is a celebration of the new post-*Nostra Aetate* relationship. The Christological challenge (how does Jesus Christ remain universal savior?<sup>19</sup>) produces a soteriological and anthropological conundrum, however. Why must one party to the relationship be fulfilled explicitly by the other party to the relationship? Why must there be fulfillment of this one-sided nature if the other is loved in all her integrity? How is that mutual? Is not one’s own internal integrity, wholeness, and completion in the divine presence fulfillment enough? How can an insistence on fulfillment in complementarity maintain the distinctive wholeness and integrity of the other?

Theories of gender complementarity suggest a comparison that will elucidate the deep concern about using the imagery of complementarity and fulfillment as a description of the relationship between Christians and Jews. The comparison of a theology of fulfillment to describe the relationship between Jews and Christians to a theology of gender complementarity calls into question claims of wholeness and mutuality between Christians and Jews.

Women are classically perceived in Christian theology as incomplete without men. In his June 1995 letter to women at the US Bejing Conference,<sup>20</sup> Saint Pope

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<sup>18</sup> Christopher Pramuk, “God Accompanies Persons: Thomas Merton and Pope Francis on Gender and Sexual Diversity,” *Merton Annual* 28, (2015): 71-87, 77. Pramuk includes a footnote at the end of the cited paragraph referring to Merton’s journal entry of January 31, 1965. Pramuk notes that “all manner of dangerous ‘isms’ or phobias of the other” are attributed by Merton to “the logical consequence of an essentialist style of thought.”

<sup>19</sup> Though see G&C, §24.

<sup>20</sup> Saint Pope John Paul II, “Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women,” §7, June 29, 1995 at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_29061995\\_women.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html)

John Paul II notes that: “The creation of woman is thus marked from the outset by *the principle of help*: a help which is not one-sided but *mutual*. Woman complements man, just as man complements woman: men and women are *complementary*. Womanhood expresses the “human” as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way” (§7; emphases in the original). Because the man was alone, the woman was created to help him. Does this mean that there is a divine utilitarian motive to be read into Gen 2:18? Are women secondary to men because they were created merely to help the lonely man? Is their utility only to help the man, the prior creation in this telling, succeed? The pope asserts that “womanhood” and “manhood” are equally human but the assertion falls flat in the ontological dualism that undergirds his position.

According to John Paul’s Beijing letter, “when the Book of Genesis speaks of ‘help’, it is not referring merely to acting, but also to being. Womanhood and manhood are complementary not only from the physical and psychological points of view, but also from the ontological. It is only through the duality of the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’ that the ‘human’ finds full realization” (§7).

Yet, Catholic feminist theological anthropology has demonstrated time and again that such dualism is damaging to both men and women.<sup>21</sup> Neither men nor women are whole when understood in complementary molds. When people are reduced to labels, as Pramuk notes, identity is static. Relationships are frozen in the power relationships that are determined by the ontologically defined identity of the persons involved. Neither party to the relationship can achieve full personhood or full humanity. The first feminist critiques described the isolation of women into one sphere of human existence: the private, the domestic, the emotional, and the immanent. Men were understood to occupy the public, rational, and transcendent spheres. Rosemary Carbine notes that John Paul’s Beijing letter “elaborates a ‘different but equal’ theological anthropology that, in fact, leads to a ‘different and unequal’ status for women.”<sup>22</sup>

What then happens if we take the spousal metaphor so embedded in Christian language for describing the relationship between church and Christ and apply it to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in terms of gender complementarity? Judaism would be the woman in the relationship. The presumed particularity of Judaism relegates it, as a woman, to the domestic sphere, to immanence, and to homebound rituals. As woman is to be a help to man, Judaism is to be a help to Christianity. The woman is completed (fulfilled) by the man. Judaism is completed (fulfilled) by Christianity. We can retain the spousal metaphor and think of how the homebound wife supports the success of the man. Or we can also think of Judaism in this relationship as the mother who gives birth to a new life. Yet, the child will grow and surpass the parent. Whether imaged as spouse or mother, Judaism, the woman, is marginalized to the private, domestic sphere—hidden as it were. Christianity is the dominant partner in the relationship, the one

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<sup>21</sup> Carr, *Transforming Grace*, 122; Michele Saracino, “Moving Beyond the ‘One True Story’” in *Frontiers*, 9ff.

<sup>22</sup> Rosemary Carbine, “Artisans of a New Humanity” in *Frontiers*, 179-180.

occupying the public, universal sphere. With little or no opportunity to emerge from the shadow of Christianity, Judaism is truly in a different and unequal status in the relationship.

A feminist theological lens helps us to see how “Gifts and Calling” risks essentializing Judaism and Christianity. Judaism, different and unequal, is the utilitarian helper or partner for Christianity. In §13, the document declares that “without her Jewish roots the Church would be in danger of losing its soteriological anchoring in salvation history.” While the necessity of understanding the Jewish roots of Christianity is critically important to the contemporary relationship between Jews and Catholics, this particular statement, along with the invocation of “complementarity” in the following sentence, leaves the impression that the current role of Judaism is simply to serve as a soteriological foundation to leaven Christianity. The partners are unequal.

Something similar is repeated in §33: “the Church without Israel would be in danger of losing its locus in the history of salvation.” Judaism provides a service to Christianity. G&C continues by attempting to provide an equal service for Judaism on the part of Christianity: “Jews could with regard to the Abrahamic covenant arrive at the insight that Israel without the Church would be in danger of remaining too particularist and of failing to grasp the universality of its experience of God.” This sentence sounds alarms. Could the phrase “would be in danger of remaining too particularist” be a veiled accusation of legalism or insularity? Is the Church once again suggesting that Judaism is blind to the truth of its own scripture? One hopes this is not the case, but such statements create interpretative difficulties as they do not square with the document’s general affirmations of the integrity of Jewish life and of a relationship that is genuinely equal and mutual.<sup>23</sup>

G&C suggests that the soteriologically oriented relationships it describes indicate the “interdependence” of Judaism and Christianity. One has to wonder, however, what “interdependence” means for the writers because the utilitarian imbalance in the relationship that can be detected in the document does not support a robust understanding of whole and equal partners engaged in a relationship of mutuality. Though the document uses some variation of “mutuality” or “mutual” eight times and uses “friend,” “friendship,” or “friendly” eight times, I remain concerned that the focus on fulfillment and complementarity undercuts the genuine celebration of and concern for the new relation between Jews and Christians, post-*Nostra Aetate*. Elizabeth Johnson writes:

Out of women’s self-understanding comes a different alternative from either dependency or detachment, namely, the coinherence of autonomy and mutuality as constitutive of the mature person. . . . The vision is one of relational autonomy, which honors the inviolable personal mystery of the person who

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<sup>23</sup> For another exploration of the risk of misinterpreting Judaism from a Christian theological point of view, see Adam Greggerman, “Jewish Theology and Limits on Reciprocity in Catholic-Jewish Dialogue,” in *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 7:1 (2012).

is constituted essentially by community with others. . . . The particular pattern of relationship consistently promoted in feminist ethical discourse is mutuality. This signifies a relation marked by equivalence between persons, a concomitant valuing of each other, a common regard marked by trust, respect, and affection in contrast to competition, domination, or assertions of superiority. It is a relationship on the analogy of friendship....<sup>24</sup>

Theories of essentialized complementarity do not support an anthropology of wholeness that yields the type of relationships envisioned by Johnson. The integrity of one's autonomy is a necessary condition for authentic mutuality. Without it, attempts at mutuality or interdependence will produce asymmetric relationships. It is the particular responsibility of Christians because of the long teaching of contempt against Jews to guard against theological and moral asymmetry in the new relationship. "Autonomy and relatedness are not mutually contradictory, but grow in direct proportion to each other."<sup>25</sup> Catholic theology needs to discover a language that will allow for the full flourishing of its own identity without dampening the full flourishing of its apprehension of Jewish identity. As Christopher Pramuk noted, in order for there to be room to love, roles cannot be essentialized, defined in static terms, and designed to benefit the religious reality of one side of the relationship.

In an essay that explores the relations among Jews, Christians, and Muslims through the prism of the "common father" Abraham and "our not-in-common mothers,"<sup>26</sup> Nancy Fuchs Kreimer provides an additional perspective about how relationships can be deformed with claims of superiority and exclusion. Her survey of classical and contemporary interpretations of the Hagar and Sarah narrative demonstrates the destructiveness of asymmetric relations, whether the cause is gender, patriarchy, or claims of religious superiority. The biblical story of Hagar and Sarah sets up one of them to fail. One must be the villain and one the heroine.<sup>27</sup> Fuchs Kreimer explains that the New Testament writings of Paul co-opt Sarah for Christians and therefore also claim the election of the children of Sarah while designating the Judaizers (Jewish Christians) as children of Hagar who should be excluded from the community.<sup>28</sup> Catholic theologies of fulfillment and complementarity risk fostering the same co-opting of Jewish identity and the same exclusion by using Judaism as a tool in their narrative of salvation. Instead of surrendering to the divisions embedded in the original story of Hagar and Sarah, Fuchs Kreimer presents alternatives that allow the children of Abraham,

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<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 68.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Phan, "Jesus as the Universal Savior in the Light of God's Eternal Covenant with the Jewish People: A Roman Catholic Perspective," in Mary C. Boys, ed., *Seeing Judaism Anew: Christianity's Sacred Obligation*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 134.

<sup>26</sup> Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, "Abraham and His Family at the Interfaith Border Edge: Asking the Overlooked Question of Gender" in Catherine Cornille and Jillian Maxey, eds., *Women and Interreligious Dialogue*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

Hagar, and Sarah to see themselves today as pilgrims walking together toward something new<sup>29</sup> while preserving distinct identities—the first step toward genuine mutuality.

“Gifts and Calling” exhibits an earnest and honest concern for friendship between Judaism and Christianity and a genuine concern for the spiritual integrity of Judaism that is undeniable and laudable. The authors intend the document to be a catalyst for discussions that will continue to strengthen the new bonds between Catholics and Jews. Ambiguous theologies of complementarity and fulfillment, unfortunately, lead away from the goal of mutually enriching friendships because the sides are never equal. The scattering of positive words in the document such as “mutual,” “friend,” and “interdependent” masks the consequences of the essentialized use of fulfillment and complementary for soteriology and theological anthropology. One has to ask if fulfillment may be just another word for supersessionism. Surely our Christian theological imagination can do better. Is there a way to salvage the language of fulfillment and complementarity so that when it is used we can recognize actual mutuality between friends and pilgrims concerned for the reign of God in their distinct ways? The answer is beyond the scope of this paper but will require additional explorations that plumb a variety of power relationships within Catholic theology.

Lastly, if it turns out that fulfillment language is as far as Catholic language can go as it teaches that both Jews and Christians are equally embraced by the covenanting love of the divine, then it is imperative for theologians to find ways to translate an inevitably technical language into pastoral use so it does not become in practice the replacement position that is so clearly rejected by G&C. Theologians must continue to refine the meaning of “fulfillment” to prevent any minimizing or rejection of Jewish life and practice from being part of their interpretations of the word. They must make this rich and complicated theology of the Jewish-Catholic relation accessible and practical at the level of preaching and pastoral practice. If “Gifts and Calling” provokes such work, it will have successfully inaugurated the next stage in Jewish-Catholic reconciliation. Perhaps it will also have stimulated a new sense of solidarity such as that envisioned by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb and songwriter Linda Hirschhorn as they consider Hagar and Sarah:

We will not survive as strangers;  
We must speak each other's name.  
We must tell each others' stories,  
make each other strong,  
and sing the dream of ancient lands  
where both of us belong.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 105-107.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 98.