**Lightning Apologetics**

***cont’d from last week…Final Part.***

… Any Catholic who stubbornly denies that Jesus is the Son of God will be excommunicated from the Church and be in danger of eternal punishment in hell, unless he retracts. Conversely, a Jew who professes Jesus is the Messiah will be cast out of the Synagogue as Zolli was. Orthodox Jews of today believe their own ancient doctrines as completely and firmly as Catholics hold to the teachings of the Church.

It is necessary to point out, for the sake of peace, that although Jews repudiate Jews who have become Christians, they teach plainly that non-Jews who believe in the one God of heaven and earth and do his will can enter eternal life, even though their understanding of the one God is somewhat spoiled by their notions concerning Jesus and his mission.

Zolli’s daughter, not a convert, asserted in defense of her father, “I don’t feel that my father’s conversion was a betrayal of the Jews. The fact that he could spend 40 years teaching Judaism proves the profound connection between the two religions.” Zolli himself said sadly, “I continue to maintain unchanged all my love for the people of Israel; and in my sorrow for the lot that has befallen them, I shall never stop loving the Jews. I did not abandon the Jews by becoming Catholic.”

“Once a Jew always a Jew” is a shibboleth too often quoted by well-meaning Jews as a sort of proof that a Jew cannot in his heart of hearts ever become a Christian. When Israel Zolli was asked whether he still considered himself a Jew he answered with the same expression, but explained it in its deeply correct significance. “Did Peter, James, John, Matthew, Paul and hundreds of Hebrews like them cease to be Jews when they followed the Messiah and became Christians? Emphatically, no.”

A Jew who accepts the Messiah today remains just as much a Jew as he would expect to remain if and when he were to accept a Messiah as some distant future coming. In other words, a Jew who accepts Jesus as his Messiah accepts a Jew and himself remains a Jew. This may sound strange and even heterodox to Catholics who have only a surface knowledge of Jewish prophetic history and Catholic teaching concerning it. A Jewish convert takes as his Messiah the Jew Jesus, who traces his ancestry back to King David without a break: Can anyone be more Jewish than that? The convert accepts a Jewish Messiah who proved his mission was from God by doing the hundreds of things the prophet said he would do, chief among them his unquestionable and numerous miracles and his resurrection from the dead. His miracles are continued and multiplied in his Church even up to the present moment. Has any Messiah ever done the like: Could any Jew do anything greater to put the seal of God on his teachings?

When a devout Jew becomes a follower of Jesus he changes neither his nationality, which is Hebrew, nor his religion, which is Judaism. Well, then, what does he do? He merely brings his religion to completion, as Zolli pointed out: He plucks the ripe fruit from the tree that was planted by God. This is why the former Rabbi was able to say that he had not given up the Synagogue for the Church, that the one could not exist without the other. This is also why he repeated correctly, “Once a Jew, always a Jew.”

If there is any notion that must be stressed both for Christians and Jews it is that Jesus did not give to the world a new religion, but only a New Covenant or Testament concerning the Old Religion which He Himself had given to the Jews. God’s very nature forbids His giving to the world at any time at all more than one religion or one way of life and worship.

As an important side note: According to biographer [Judith Cabaud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Cabaud), in 1944, while conducting a [Yom Kippur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur) service, Zolli [allegedly experienced a mystical vision](http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=4533) about [Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus). Shortly after the end of [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), he and his second wife (his first wife had died years before) converted to [Roman Catholicism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism). He went to the [Gregorian University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_University), where he was baptized by Mgr. [Luigi Traglia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luigi_Traglia) in the presence of Father [Paolo Dezza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paolo_Dezza); his godfather was [Augustin Bea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustin_Bea). Zolli was christened **Eugenio Maria Zolli** in honor of [Pope Pius XII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XII), who was born Eugenio Pacelli. He did this because the Pope had done so much to save many Jewish people during the war. The ceremony was done with much publicity.