

# **Are Jews in the Family of God?**

**A Critical Look at *Lay Witness*' article:**

**"All in the Family: Christians, Jews, and God"**

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## Introduction

There has been a lot of discussion the past few months on the Jews and the Old Covenant, especially since two committees of the USCCB chastised the Catholic and Jewish authors of the 2002 *Reflections on Covenant and Missions* document for saying that the Jews had their own covenant with God and therefore did not need the Christian gospel for salvation. Prior to this, the US bishops voted 231 to 14 in their June-August 2008 plenary session to delete a sentence from the 2006 *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, which erroneously stated on page 131 that the Mosaic covenant was still valid for the Jews. The Vatican affirmed the decision of the US bishops by issuing a “recognitio” of the change to the US catechism in September 2009. We might say that there has been a dramatic shift in the “Catholic-Jewish” dialogue, one that has not passed unnoticed by Jewish rabbis and leaders, particularly Abraham Foxman’s article in the *Chicago Jewish Star* of Sept./Oct. Previously Foxman had accused even the New Testament of being “anti-semitic.”

Jews are not the only ones worried about this major course correction in the Catholic/Jewish dialogue. Many Catholics who are partial to Jewish interests and who have been advocating a preferred view of the Jews on both the political and religious fronts are quite dismayed at the possible impact of these recent events. Two authors writing for *Lay Witness*, Michael Forrest and David Palm, have attempted to interpret the rectifications so that the preferred view is maintained despite the doctrinal corrections to the US Catechism and the *Reflections* document. The reader can immediately sense the authors’ imposition from the provocative title they chose for their article, “All in the Family: Christians, Jews and God.” Using the metaphor of a “family,” the title implies that the Jews, even though they have not converted to Christianity and do not accept Jesus Christ as God (the central tenet of Christianity), are nevertheless to be recognized as being within the divine or Christian family simply because they are Jews. As we will see, the authors insist that despite the fact that the Church has now officially affirmed that the Mosaic covenant has been superseded by the New Covenant, the Jews, only because they are Jews, still retain a special status with God and receive a special love from Him that he does not give to the rest of the human race. Additionally, the authors hold that the salvation of the Jews at large is guaranteed and will eventually be accomplished at some time in the future. Although the authors stipulate that Jews can presently have a more direct relationship with God by converting to Christianity, their main focus and teaching is that “Jews, as Jews,” or “Israel according to the flesh—the Jewish people” have a “special relationship” with God even if they do not convert to Christianity.

Is this teaching correct? If it is, then all of us should be following God’s lead by treating the Jews as a divinely privileged people who deserve more care, concern and protection than we give to non-Jews. Jews, simply for being Jewish, should be considered as part of the Christian family and be entitled to all the divine blessings and status that come with that privileged position. But if the authors are wrong, then they are promoting one of the most serious cases of racism and heresy that the Church has known in a long time.

Let’s go through their essay point by point to determine the answer to this question.

## “The Church Fathers Were Wrong About the Jews” Argument

**Forrest and Palm:** Since the days of Cain and Abel, a tragic pattern of fraternal conflict and strife has been repeated throughout salvation history. Unfortunately, the relationship between the children of Israel who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah (rabbinic Jews) and those children of Israel who do accept Him (Christians) has been no exception to the familial rule. In the early years, when those who did not accept Jesus were in the relative position of power, they sometimes severely persecuted the Christians (cf. Acts 8:1–3, Acts 12). According to Fr. Edward Flannery, “Jewish hostility in the early period was...strong, if sporadic.” [\[1\]](#) From the Holy See’s 1998 document, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, we also read:

At the dawn of Christianity . . . there arose disputes between the early Church and the Jewish leaders and people who . . . on occasion violently opposed the preachers of the Gospel and the first Christians.

As the balance of power changed in favor of the Christians, they sometimes severely persecuted the rabbinic Jews. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn has described an “often violent anti-Judaism on the part of Christians, together with . . . centuries of persecution, exile and recurring pogroms.” [\[2\]](#) Jews were sometimes coerced to convert to the Catholic faith in past centuries, although the popes repeatedly rejected this practice.

Evidence of these intense conflicts can be found in some of the extremely combative and even offensive rhetoric occasionally employed in the writings of a few of the early Church Fathers, an early Jewish prayer of “malediction” against Jewish Christians, and certain segments in the Jewish Talmud.

**R. Sungenis:** These are serious charges against the Church Fathers. Unfortunately, the authors cite no examples of the alleged abuse in order to allow the reader to judge whether these patristic statements were “extremely combative” and used “offensive rhetoric.” They also cite no ecclesiastical judgment against these Fathers. Instead, it appears as if the authors hope to make their private opinion the standard by which the public must judge the matter.

As faithful Catholics who owe an allegiance to the patristics as the foundation for what the Church at large holds as doctrine, one cannot summarily dismiss the patristic era on this matter, especially when the Fathers are in consensus. But eliminating the Fathers from the discussion seems to be the method *de jour* for those who seek to silence anything negative they said about the Jews, but it is certainly not Catholic and no Catholic authority has condoned such a dismissal. The personal judgment of these authors is typical of those partial to Jewish interests who seek to establish a limited playing field upon which the rest of the discussion must be played out. Anything outside of those parameters is slandered, and often by the label of “anti-semitism.” From what these authors have written previously on this subject, virtually any critique of the Jews, their politics, religion, or social mores, past or present, is categorically impermissible.

One of the favorite targets of derision among the Fathers is St. John Chrysostom, especially from his book *Against the Jews*. He is often labeled an "anti-semite" by both Jews and Jewish sympathizers in Catholic circles. The truth is, Chrysostom was no anti-semite. He was merely defending the truth of the Christian faith against Jews who were trying to overturn it and/or infiltrate it with Judaism, much the same as I do today and earn the same epithets as Chrysostom. All of the Fathers who dealt at length with the Jews and Judaism had the same focus. It was not Jews whom they hated but what the Jews were trying to do to Christianity and society at large. As one commentator stated of Robert Louis Wilken's book, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), Wilken

"...very convincingly demonstrates not only that St. John Chrysostomos was not an anti-Semite, but that his supposed writings against the Jews are actually against the 'Judaizers,' a terrible mistranslation which convicts him unfairly of racism, when in fact his words are addressed to a theological element in the Christian Church. This work was published in 1983 and is a 'must' for anyone wishing to understand the issue at hand."

Likewise, Eugene J. Fisher's book, *Interwoven Destinies: Jews and Christians Through the Ages* (Paulist Press, 1993), is

"a series of articles by Jewish and Christian writers providing contrasting views of the slow separation of the two communities over time, including both a Jewish and a Christian look at Chrysostom's 'Against the Judaizers.' (Both agree that, while Chrysostom's bombastic rhetoric is pretty offensive to modern ears, he's not coming down on the Jews out of a clear blue sky - he's primarily rebuking Judaizing Christians who attend Synagogue on Saturday and Church on Sunday, still trying to live in both worlds, and who teach others to do the same.)"<sup>1</sup>

Another writer states:

I would also direct you to a study, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (I could be wrong about the title, but it is close to this), by Stanford Professor Gavin Langmuir, a prominent historian of anti-Semitism, which was published in Berkeley, in 1990, by the University of California Press. This work approaches the history of anti-Semitism with a sophistication, based on good historical research, that puts an end to that unenlightened and artless theory, first put forth in the last century by eccentric (though admittedly trained) scholars and passed about today by coffee shop "scholars" whose greatest skills lie in classifying toilet tissue by gradations of softness; namely, that there is a chain of thought connecting St. John Chrysostomos, Luther, and Hitler, and that its links are cemented together by anti-Semitism. In so doing, he offers peripheral support (amidst some ideas about Christian thought that I would question) for many of the points that I have made about our contemporary ignorance of the historical image of Jews in the ancient world, their anti-Christian sentiments and their violence against

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.chrysostom.org/jews.html>

Christians, and the many ways that the Fathers of the Church used the word "Jew" in their writings and the diverse images that this usage entailed. It is important not only that you understand the context in which charges of anti-Semitism are usually raised against the Fathers (the Chrysostomos-Luther-Hitler link), but that you reply to such ignorance by pointing out the complex nature of anti-Semitism, its enigmatic history, and its various forms in Christian writings (for example, early Christian anti-Jewish polemics are something quite different from Medieval Western anti-Semitism, the latter more often than not the product of actual racism).<sup>2</sup>

Forrest and Palm's attempt to marginalize the Church Fathers on this issue is made in face of the fact that they garner to themselves every reference from the Fathers they can muster if it supports their particular view of the Jews. At the same time, the authors ignore the fact that if there was any group known to be "extremely combative" during the patristic era it was the Jews who came against Christ and the Christian Church. The book of Acts is replete in almost every chapter of outright hostility of the Jews against the Church. And the hostility didn't stop after the first century. It transgressed into even more "offensive rhetoric" when it climaxed in the Babylonian Talmud in 600 AD which concluded that Christ was a devil who is now being punished in boiling feces in hell and that his mother was a prostitute who bore him illegitimately. The same things were held and taught by the Jews throughout their history. Today there are Jews who urinate on pictures of Christ and who still believe the Talmud – a thoroughly anti-Christ and anti-Christian treatise – is the official Jewish commentary on the world. But one never finds Forrest and Palm speaking of these Jewish assaults as "extremely combative" and engaging in "offensive rhetoric." In fact, there is not one negative piece of news about the Jews on their website or in any of their other writings. Being "combative" and "offensive" is only reserved for the Church Fathers, regardless of whether the Fathers made their comments in reaction to Jewish antagonism against Christianity.

### **"The Vatican II" and "Extreme Supersessionism" Argument:**

**Forrest and Palm:** At Vatican II, the Council fathers exhorted the faithful to pursue fraternal dialogue and collaboration in order to overcome centuries of such mutual ignorance and confrontation. [3] Thankfully, the resultant dialogue and collaboration has led to many positive developments, such as a significantly improved rapport among Catholics and Jews. At the same time, certain difficulties have developed. One such area of difficulty involves our understanding of the relationship among Christians, Jews, and God.

Two opposing views of this relationship have arisen in certain quarters within the Church. The first, commonly known as the *dual covenant theory*, holds not only that the Jewish people retain a special relationship with God (which is true), but also that they have their own path to salvation through Judaism and therefore do not need to be—and should not be—presented with the Gospel and invited to expressly enter the Church (which is false). [4] The second view, *extreme supersessionism*, posits not

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/phronema/antisemitism.aspx>

only that the New Covenant in Christ superseded the Mosaic covenant (which is true), but also that God is essentially finished with the Jews as a people (which is false).

**R. Sungenis:** First, since Forrest and Palm refer to Vatican II's efforts to "overcome centuries of such mutual ignorance and confrontation" immediately after they refer to the Church Fathers as engaging in "extremely combative" and "offensive rhetoric," it appears they want the reader to believe that Vatican II disagreed with or shunned the Fathers (and the medievals), holding them largely responsible for the supposed "ignorance and confrontation." But Vatican II made no such stipulation. Vatican II consistently quoted the Fathers to back up its teachings, and in no instance is even a single Father criticized for holding views about the Jews and Judaism contrary to what the Church has consistently taught, much less refer to their views as "extremely combative" with "offensive rhetoric."

Second, the erroneous belief that the Jews should not be approached with the Christian gospel is not merely from the idea that "they have their own path to salvation through Judaism." A corollary error teaches that since the Jews are going to be saved *en masse* at some point in the future (at or around the Second Coming of Christ), then we should assume that God has guaranteed the salvation of the Jews, which consequently leads to the idea that our efforts to convert them now are futile. This idea was expressed not too long ago by Eugene Fisher, former director of the USCCB. Fisher's views are as follows:

If you put off the moment that Jews will come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah until the end of time, then we don't need to work or pray for the conversion of Jews to Christianity. God already has the salvation of Jews figured out, and they accepted it on Sinai, so they are OK. Jews are already with the Father. We do not have a mission to the Jews, but only a mission with the Jews to the world. The Catholic Church will never again sanction an organization devoted to the conversion of the Jews. That is over, on doctrinal, biblical and pastoral grounds. Finito. (*The Jewish Week*, January 25, 2002)

Fisher's comments then beg the question of whether the popular idea that the Jews are going to be converted *en masse* right before Christ returns is, indeed, a doctrine of the faith upon which Fisher can make such sweeping conclusions. As we shall see later, it is a highly dubious belief, for it originated in the patristic era among the earliest Church Fathers (Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, et al.) and a number of apocryphal books that taught Chiliasm – the belief that at Christ's Second Coming he would set up a 1000-year kingdom on earth and reign from Jerusalem; and during this time he would be converting the Jews, *en masse*, so that they could rule the earth. But the Church eventually rejected and condemned the Chiliasm in the fourth century under the leadership of Augustine. How the "en masse" baggage managed to escape much censor leads to a curious trail down the church's hermeneutical history. Anyone wishing to learn about this obscure point in Catholic eschatology can read my essay on the subject at: (<http://www.catholicintl.com/catholicissues/enoeli.pdf>).

Regardless whether the "en masse" theory is correct, the greater concern is the conclusions that are drawn from it. As we can see above, Fisher concludes that because there will be an *en masse* conversion

of Jews in the future we need not preach the Gospel to them presently since “God already has the salvation of Jews figured out...so they are OK.” This means that God will not only save the Jews *en masse* in the future, but he apparently is saving them in a quasi *en masse* in the present, since according to Fisher the Jews have already “accepted it on Sinai.” Although Forrest and Palm do not adopt Fisher’s precise *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* logic, they have their own version of the fallacy. They believe that because God is planning an *en masse* conversion of the last generation of earth’s Jews, this requires us to view the unconverted Jews of today with a special respect and love that wouldn’t otherwise be elicited from us. Essentially, ‘the Jews are special today because they will be special tomorrow’ is the working logic the authors are employing in this controversial thesis.

Third, the authors’ coining of the phrase “extreme supersessionism” is misplaced. The authors may wish to distinguish between the replacement of the Mosaic law as opposed to an outright rejection of the Jews, but “extreme supersessionism” is not the proper terminology to do so, and if not corrected it will lend itself to confusing the issue about the Old Covenant more than it has already been confused. Supersessionism does not come in degrees anymore than marriage comes in degrees. One is married or not married. Covenants are superseded or not superseded. When applied to covenants or contracts, supersessionism is a legal term denoting that the former entity has been replaced by the subsequent entity, and it is in this specific manner that the Church has consistently used the term. Never has the Church sought to qualify supersessionism into categories of lesser or more degrees. If there is any carry over from one covenant to another, it is not described in terms of limitations on supersessionism but on the idea that the principles of the former are absorbed by the latter.

### **The “Jews, as Jews” Argument:**

Let’s take a little closer look at the reason the authors chose to coin the phrase “extreme supersessionism.” They believe that this phrase accurately characterizes those who say that “God is essentially finished with the Jews as a people.” But this is hardly fair or accurate. Correctly understood, everyone should agree that “God is not finished with the Jews.” After all, the Jews still exist and the New Testament anticipates Jews converting to Christianity until the end of time. The early Catholic Church was composed almost entirely of Jews. What the authors really mean is, even though the Old Covenant has been revoked and superseded by the New Covenant, certain privileges, status and distinctions from the Old Covenant were transferred to the “Jews, as Jews,” and which they still retain today, and which will be enhanced in the future.

But is this an accurate assessment of the Jews’ status with God? Let’s investigate. On the one hand, St. Paul clearly says that because he, a Jew, received salvation in Jesus Christ, then it can be concluded that “God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew” (Romans 11:1-2). But we must immediately add that Paul is not saying that God’s openness to the Jew is because of his Jewish heritage, that is, God does not save him because of his national, ethnic or religious standing as a Jew. The New Testament is clear that, in regards to national, ethnic or religious identity, the Jew is no more favored than anyone else in the world, since God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11, 28-29; Galatians 3:28-29; Acts 10:34-35; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; 1Peter 1:17). In fact, as a national, ethnic and religious entity,

it can safely be said that God, indeed, reject the Jews. Legally or covenantally, He replaced them with the Catholic Church, an entity which now includes both converted Jews and Gentiles. As such, all the national, ethnic, and religious privileges and distinctions the Jews had in the Old Testament were terminated when the Catholic Church superseded Israel as God's official ambassador on earth. We will flesh this out even more as we go on in the analysis of the authors' thesis.

**Forrest and Palm:** In recent years, two events in particular have intensified the debate between these camps. The first was the 2002 release of a document by a sub-committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which included a problematic statement that "the Church believes Judaism . . . is salvific for [the Jews]." [5] More recently (and from the opposite pole), Bishop Richard Williamson of the Society of St. Pius X made ignorant and offensive statements about the Jewish people and the Shoah (Holocaust). The Holy Father unequivocally repudiated these statements as "intolerable and altogether unacceptable." [6]

**R. Sungenis:** Actually, there were more than two events. The first was Pope Benedict XVI's inclusion of the Latin mass prayer for the conversion of the Jews, an event that even the Jews saw as a major threat to the continuance of the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Another event was the vote in June-August 2008 by 231 to 14 of the US bishops to eliminate the heretical sentence from the US catechism ("Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them").

**Forrest and Palm:** Of these two theological errors, the dual covenant theory is more serious doctrinally because it fundamentally compromises the Church's Great Commission, given by Christ (cf. Mt. 28:18–20). Additionally, the public advocacy of this theory has created an unwarranted expectation among our Jewish brethren that in turn leads to their understandable frustration each time the Church reaffirms that the Gospel and the Church are for all men. However, it is particularly troubling that extreme supersessionism is frequently accompanied by hostile and un-Christian rhetoric that fosters an attitude of contempt for the Jewish people—an attitude that the Church has entirely rejected (see *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4, and *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, §IV and V).

**R. Sungenis:** The authors are correct. Any doctrine that leads to contempt for the Jewish people at large is simply an incorrect interpretation of that doctrine. By the same token, much misinterpretation of Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* has led to extremism on the other side of the fence. Many push the idea that *Nostra Aetate* opened up a whole new teaching about the Jews (e.g., Roy Schoeman, David Moss), but in reality *Nostra Aetate* only repeated and emphasized what the Church had officially taught for the previous nineteen centuries. Anything else would be heresy.

## “The Roy Schoeman/Old Covenant” Argument

### Forrest and Palm: The Gospel: Just for the Gentiles?

The dual covenant theory seems to have primarily developed in reaction to the Shoah and from a misconstrual of the esteem the Church has expressed for Judaism since Vatican II. Advocates of this theory contend that “dialogue, not conversion, should be the Catholic goal in relations with Jews.” [7] As evidence for this view, passages from Vatican II documents that acknowledge the elements of truth and goodness found in other religions (such as *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2; *Ad Gentes*, no. 18; and *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16) as well as passages from various documents that recommend respectful interreligious dialogue (such as *Dialogue and Proclamation* [8] and *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions* [9]) are commonly cited. It is also typical to find prominent mention of a frequently misunderstood statement about the Old Covenant that John Paul II made to Jewish leaders privately in Mainz, Germany, in 1980. However, neither these nor any other authoritative Church document has ever taught that the Jewish people already possess their own salvific covenant with God and therefore should not be presented with the Gospel and invited to expressly enter the Church.

The Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Magisterium consistently testify that the Good News of Jesus Christ and His Church is for *all* men—Jew and Gentile alike.

For instance, speaking to Jews, Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:5) and “Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19).

St. Paul, himself a Jew, wrote, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). At the synagogue in Pisidia, St. Paul preached the Gospel boldly: “Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38–39).

St. Justin Martyr states in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, “We do not trust through Moses or through the law” because there is “a final law, and a covenant, the chiefest of all, which it is now incumbent on all men to observe,” and “law placed against law has abrogated that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one.” [10]

Since Vatican II, in continuity with magisterial teaching such as the Council of Florence (1439) and *Mystici Corporis* (1943), the Church has consistently reaffirmed the universality of the Gospel and the Church. [11] In *Lumen Gentium* (1964), the Church affirmed that God “chose the race of Israel as a people” and “set up a covenant” with them, instructing them and making them holy. However, “all these things . . . were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant” instituted by and ratified in Christ (no. 9). In *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism*

(1985), we read that the “Church and Judaism cannot then be seen as two parallel ways of salvation and the Church must witness to Christ as the Redeemer of all.” [\[12\]](#)

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), reminds us that “dialogue does not dispense from evangelization” and that the possibility of salvation for “followers of other religions . . . by Christ, apart from the ordinary means he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for *all people* . . . the Church is the ordinary means of salvation . . . she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation” (no. 55).

And in *Dominus Iesus* (2000), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith states, “There is only one salvific economy” (no. 12), and “God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of *all* humanity. . . . The certainty of the universal salvific will of God does not diminish, but rather increases the duty and urgency of the proclamation of salvation and of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ” (no. 22).

Additional powerful evidence that the Gospel is for Jews and Gentiles alike comes in a much more personal form—the witness of Jews who have wholeheartedly embraced their Messiah and His Church through the millennia. These include Our Lady, the Apostles, Alphonse Ratisbonne, St. Edith Stein, the Lehman brothers (who became priests), Rabbi Eugenio Zolli (former head rabbi of Rome), and most recently, all of our Jewish brethren who belong to the Association of Hebrew Catholics. [\[13\]](#)

These Jewish men and women would no doubt strongly object to the notion that *anyone* has no need of the Messiah or the gifts He so graciously bestowed upon the Church for our salvation—the sacraments. As Roy Schoeman, a well-known speaker, author, and convert from rabbinic Judaism, wrote:

[To refuse to share the Gospel with Jews] deprives them of the opportunity of knowing the fullness of the truth of revelation; it deprives them of the incomparable joy and consolation of the intimacy with God achieved only through the sacraments; it deprives them of the eternal salvific benefits which flow from the Church and the sacraments. And most ironically, it deprives them of the true honor and glory of their own religion, of their own identity—of being part of the people and the religion which brought about the salvation of all mankind, the people through whom God became man, the people related to God in the flesh. (“Letters to the Editor,” *Inside the Vatican*, June-July, 2003).

God has given man one sure path to salvation, and that path is through the definitive and universal covenant in Jesus Christ by means of His Church. It is a serious error to direct *anyone* away from that sure path, regardless of the intention.

**R. Sungenis:** I, too, applaud Mr. Schoeman for his defense of preaching the Gospel to the Jews. Unfortunately, Mr. Schoeman has, in many other instances, only added to the confusion on this very topic. If there is anyone today who is preaching the “Jews, as Jews” are a special and God-blessed people, it is Roy Schoeman, and I don’t think it is any secret that his Jewish heritage is one of the main motivations for this emphasis. For example, Schoeman believes the Jews are “blessed by nature,”

whether they convert to Christianity or not. Schoeman even holds that faith itself is not a criterion for divine blessing, for "...a blessing by nature [is] promised to...the Jewish race, despite their lack of faith in Christ."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Ray Kevane, a former consultant to the *Association for Hebrew Catholics* who turned away from that organization due to the "heresy" he says it was teaching, adds that in one of his conversations with David Moss, Moss quoted Roy Schoeman as saying: "'Jews are an elect people. It is diminished when they become Christian, and that is the reason why Jews don't convert.' Other examples of Schoeman's dubious ethnocentric claims for the Jews is that Ishmael was the "illegitimate son" of Abraham (which is false), and concludes from this that present-day Arabs, because they come from Ishmael's bastard seed, are "doing a good job" of fulfilling the description of people who "have their hand against every man," and this is "borne out of the fact that in most of the violent conflicts throughout the world...one side is fighting in the name of Islam...as the sons of Ishmael."<sup>4</sup> Schoeman also claims that the Fathers of the Church and Catholic tradition perpetuated an error "for two thousand years" by interpreting the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the "restoration of Israel" as referring to the Catholic Church and not a future nation-state of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Discarding twenty centuries of tradition, Schoeman claims that Old Testament prophecy predicts a "new Jewish state" that "shall be extremely prosperous" and that the modern-day Israeli army is a God-favored entity such that God will see to it that "Israel will be miraculously militarily strong and able to defend itself."<sup>6</sup> To facilitate this divine blessing, Schoeman claims that the "fullness of the Gentiles" (Rm 11:25) occurred in 1967, and the sign of its fulfillment was what he deems as the God-blessed six-day surge of the Israeli army against its Arab neighbors in which "Jerusalem...was recaptured by the modern state of Israel in the 1967 war."<sup>7</sup> Schoeman even believes that Jewish converts to Christianity have a special "Jewish charisma" given to them by God that he doesn't give to Gentile converts.<sup>8</sup> In his EWTN interview, Schoeman made strange claims about his Jewish heritage, as well as proposing an unprecedented connection between Judaism and Christianity. He states:

First, I'm a "Jewish" convert...and see the Catholic Church is nothing but post-messianic Judaism. Obviously, if Jesus was the Jewish messiah, then the Catholic Church is the continuation of Judaism after the Jewish messiah came....I see myself as nothing but a Jew who has come into the fullness and correctness of Judaism, which is the Catholic Church....Every Jew who has entered the Catholic Church doesn't see it as a conversion. They just see it as a Jew who has been wrong about who the Jewish messiah was, to a Jew who is right...and all the them, including me...thinks this makes you more Jewish, not less Jewish.

Schoeman teaches that "Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* and Pope John Paul II" taught against the doctrine of "supersessionism – that the Old Covenant had been entirely replaced (or superseded, hence 'supersessionism'), made null and void, by the New." He adds that supersessionism "dominated Christian theology for much of the past two thousand years" and that during this whole span of time the

<sup>3</sup> *Salvation is from the Jews*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 301-302.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 303-312, 352-353.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 309-310.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

traditional teaching was “erroneous.”<sup>9</sup> If we accept Mr. Schoeman’s thesis, we would have to conclude that *Nostra Aetate* and John Paul II “changed” the “two thousand” year-old Catholic doctrine on the Old Covenant. If that is the case, then the Catholic Church just destroyed itself, for it has proven, once and for all, that its traditional teaching and its official doctrinal statements are worthless. They can be overturned at any time by any future pope or council. So either Mr. Schoeman is wrong about *Nostra Aetate* or the Catholic Church has been wrong for 2000 years about its own identity. Dr. Kevane saw the same error in Moss and Schoeman’s teachings. He writes:

“Not too long ago (March 2005), in a public statement on EWTN, Dave Moss rejected the idea that the Church replaced the people of Israel. He clearly identified the latter idea as an ‘erroneous theology’ that was taught for 2000 years by the Catholic Church. He further stated that the Church no longer teaches that the people of Israel are superseded. They are an eternal people with an irrevocable calling. How can any individual declare that the Catholic Church (“...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven...”) has taught erroneous theology for 2000 years. Surely, intended that way or not, this has to be the height of arrogance. Both statements are heretical. The ‘irrevocable calling’ the Jews have is the same as it is for the rest of us – to save their eternal souls.”

Now, all this information about Roy Schoeman’s teachings would have little relevance for this particular critique except for the fact that Forrest and Palm have basically imbibed almost every bit of it. If they haven’t, then they have failed to show it since no attempt at correcting Mr. Schoeman’s presumptuous ethnocentric views have been forthcoming from them. Instead, whatever Mr. Schoeman says is defended and made to look as if it is orthodox. This is all the more puzzling because earlier the same authors assured us that: “Of these two theological errors, the dual covenant theory is more serious doctrinally because it fundamentally compromises the Church’s Great Commission, given by Christ (cf. Mt. 28:18–20).”

These extreme and biased views of Roy Schoeman and the subsequent failure of the authors to demand that Mr. Schoeman eliminate them from his popular book begs the question as to whether they can be trusted with giving us the whole truth and nothing but the truth on this “serious doctrinal” issue. If on the one hand, Forrest and Palm are withholding correction to a fellow Catholic simply because he is a friend or happens to be Jewish, then there is a conflict of interest afoot. On the other hand, it appears that from the propositions espoused in “All in the Family: Christians, Jews and God” Forrest and Palm largely agree with Mr. Schoeman’s views regarding divine favoritism toward the Jews. I have already pointed out the authors’ sweeping dismissal of the Church Fathers as the first indication of their bias on the issue, in addition to their attempt to redefine supersessionism into a concept that comes in degrees. Schoeman also believes that supersessionism comes in degrees, and just enough so that the Jews and the nation of Israel can replace the Catholic Church in those areas where the Old Covenant has supposedly not been superseded. (For more on Schoeman’s views, see my essay at <http://www.culturewars.com/2009/SSPX.htm>).

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

## “The Special Relationship with God” Argument

### Forrest and Palm: Israel—Irrelevant?

Jesus Christ defeated death and opened the gates of heaven for man, and He created the Church as His universal sacrament of salvation (see *Catechism*, nos. 637, 776, and 1019). The New Covenant in Christ has superseded the Mosaic (or “Old”) covenant. The term “supersession,” which was first used by an Anglican minister, has subsequently been used by some Catholics to describe this truth. [14] It appears in no magisterial texts; yet, as originally used, it does accurately describe Catholic teaching. However, over time, variations of this doctrine have appeared, including an extreme version that has made its way into certain Catholic circles.

**R. Sungenis:** Supersessionism, and/or its verbal form, supersedes, has indeed been used in Catholic magisterial texts, as recent as John Paul II’s *Redemptoris Mater*, which states in note 2:

The expression “fullness of time” is parallel with similar expressions of Judaism both Biblical (cf. Gen 29:21, 1 Sam 7:12; Tob 14:5) and extra-Biblical, and especially in the New Testament (cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 21:24; Jn 7:8, Eph 1:10). From the point of view of form, it means not only the conclusion of a chronological process but also and especially the coming to maturity or completion of a particularly important period, one directed towards the fulfillment of an expectation, a coming to completion which thus takes on an eschatological dimension. According to Gal 4:4 and its context, it is the coming of the Son of God that reveals that time has, so to speak, reached its limit. That is to say, the period marked by the promise made to Abraham and by the Law mediated by Moses has now reached its climax, in the sense that Christ fulfills the divine promise and supersedes the old law.

**Forrest and Palm:** *Extreme* supersessionism goes well beyond the teaching of the Church by positing that the Jews, as Jews, no longer possess any special relationship with God; they play no further special role in God’s design for man’s salvation; and the Church has entirely replaced the role of the Jewish people in every way in regard to the Scriptural promises and eschatology related to Israel. Generally, the same citations from Scripture, the Fathers, and the Magisterium noted above are used to support extreme supersessionism. However, as with the dual covenant theory, the import of select quotes and terms is exaggerated, while the import of quotes and terms that contradict the theory is ignored or minimized.

For example, extreme supersessionism emphasizes scriptural and magisterial terms that convey discontinuity between the Mosaic covenant and the New Covenant (like “revoked” and “abolished”) to the virtual exclusion of scriptural and magisterial terms that convey continuity between the covenants (like “fulfilled”). In so doing, extreme supersessionism effectively adopts a false “either/or” approach, rather than a “both/and” approach that preserves the theological tension regarding Christ’s relationship to and impact on the Mosaic covenant. [15] Avery Cardinal Dulles has commented on this tension:

All these texts [that refer to the abolishment of the Old Covenant], which the Church accepts as teachings of canonical scripture, have to be reconciled with others, which seem to point in a different direction. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, teaches that he has come not to abolish the Law and the prophets but to fulfill them, even though he is here embarking on a series of antitheses, in which he both supplements and corrects certain provisions in the law of Moses. In a passage of great importance, Paul asserts in Romans that the Jews have only stumbled. They are branches broken off from the good olive tree, but are capable of being grafted on again, since they are still beloved by God for the sake of their forefathers, whose gifts and call are irrevocable. [16]

While the manner in which to resolve this theological tension is currently an area of legitimate investigation and inquiry, the Holy Father seems to have personally resolved it by distinguishing between the enduring, underlying substance of the Mosaic covenant and its external, provisional form. The specific, external form of the Mosaic covenant—such as the legal prescriptions and the temple sacrifice of animals—was indeed abolished with the commencement of the New Covenant. But the underlying substance—from the moral precepts to the foundational principles of sacrifice and worship—is fulfilled and transformed by Christ. In and through Christ, the Mosaic covenant is thus actualized and subsumed into the New Covenant.

**R. Sungenis:** I have been teaching, writing, and lecturing for the past seven years that the Old Covenant has been legally revoked yet its divine principles of morality, worship and civility continue in the New Covenant. I have stated this fact in a dozen different ways, and it was all there for everyone to read in my many essays on the subject. The article I wrote for *Culture Wars* in January 2008: “The Old Covenant: Revoked or Not Revoked,” displayed the balance between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in great detail

<http://www.catholicintl.com/articles/The%20Old%20Covenant%20Revoked%20or%20Not%20Revoked%20for%20Culture%20Wars.pdf>).

Additionally, in a recent dialogue I had with Dr. Art Sippo (who had been one of my most vociferous antagonists on Jewish issues), we came to a wonderful and satisfying agreement on this very issue when I showed him that the Old Covenant was legally revoked but that its principles still live on in the New Covenant. ([http://www.catholicintl.com/dialogs/A\\_Successful\\_Dialogue\\_on\\_the\\_Old\\_Covenant.pdf](http://www.catholicintl.com/dialogs/A_Successful_Dialogue_on_the_Old_Covenant.pdf)). Dr. Sippo had more or less been saying the same thing but with different terminology. I don’t know anyone either in Catholic tradition or current official teaching of the Church (e.g., the 1992 Catholic Catechism) who has any problem with what I proposed in making the balance.

The truth is, if there is any fault in regard to the required balance between the revocation of the Mosaic covenant and the continuance of its moral and worship principles, it is by those today who emphasize the continuance aspect at the expense of the revocation aspect. This is precisely where the “Old Covenant is not revoked” bantering for the past three decades has tried to steer the discussion – by allowing the Jews to retain legal possession of the Old Covenant, as the *United States Catholic Catechism*

*for Adults* attempted to do in 2006 before its authors were caught teaching heresy on page 131. I cite many examples of this erroneous position among contemporary Jewish and Catholic authors in my essay noted above, “The Old Covenant: Revoked or Not Revoked.”

**Forrest and Palm:** While Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

In this Torah, which is Jesus himself, the abiding essence of what was inscribed on the stone tablets at Sinai is now written in living flesh, namely, the twofold commandment of love. . . . To imitate him, to follow him in discipleship, is therefore to keep Torah, which has been fulfilled in him once and for all. 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. [17]

In regard to the relational bond between the Jewish people and God, the magisterium has made clear that the Church became spiritual “Israel” with the commencement of the New Covenant in Christ. [18] But, contrary to extreme supersessionist theology, this does not therefore mean that God is finished with “Israel according to the flesh”—the Jewish people. [19] Indeed, while it is undeniable that a Jew who embraces the New Covenant is most fully united with God, it is also undeniable that His love and concern for the Jews, *as Jews*, perdures in the New Covenant—it was not extinguished. As St. Paul and the Church have unequivocally affirmed, the Jewish people remain dearly loved by God, “for the sake of the fathers [of Israel]. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (cf. Rom. 11:28; *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4).

**R. Sungenis:** Again, we must ask the question (in light of Forrest and Palm’s “strawman” noted above): who are these “extreme supersessionists” and where have they taught that God is finished with the Jewish people? If the authors believe this is such a popular argument among supersessionists, doesn’t it deserve at least one citation from a supersessionist’s writings to back up the allegation, especially in a paper which footnotes its sources? This demands further investigation. We need to know just what the authors are proposing and how they are proposing it, since they apparently hold that their idea (God not being finished with the Jewish people) has some special dimension to it that has been missed by others.

In the above paragraph the authors state: “Indeed, while it is undeniable that a Jew who embraces the New Covenant is most fully united with God, it is also undeniable that His love and concern for the Jews, *as Jews*, perdures in the New Covenant—it was not extinguished.” Let’s examine this statement a word at a time. What precisely does “Jews, as Jews” mean? The authors don’t really tell us. Logically, however, it can only have two possible meanings:

- (a) Jews are Jews, and as such God has “love and concern” for the Jews, for God is love. How could he not have love for the Jews? We could also say that God loves the Jews as he loves non-Jews, and from this love He hopes that the Jews will convert to Christianity, as even He hopes that non-Jews will convert. So, in this sense it is superfluous to say that “God has love and concern for the Jews.” Since a leopard cannot change his spots, a Jew cannot stop being a Jew, and a

Gentile cannot stop being a Gentile. So obviously, if God has love and concern for the Jews it would have to be with them "as Jews." But if the authors are using this particular meaning of "Jews, as Jews," they are not making any distinctions and thus few with disagree with their view.

- (b) Jews, simply because and only because they are Jews, receive a special love from God that he does not give to other nations or races. This must be the understanding that Forrest and Palm are trying to convey, otherwise there would be no reason for them to emphasize God's love for the Jews, since they already know that God loves everyone in the world and thus such love would not provide any distinction for the Jews. In other words, the authors' uses of "Jew, as Jews" means they wish to distinguish the Jews as having received a special love from God simply because these people have a national, ethnic or religious connection to the Jewish race. Reread Schoeman's views of the Jews on pages 11-13 to understand what it really means that God loves the "Jews, as Jews." Forrest and Palm believe the same thing.

If (b) is their intended meaning, this is where the authors go headlong off the track. To claim that God loves Jews simply and only because they are Jews, is racism. It purports that God's love is specifically directed to a certain nation or race in distinction from other nations or races who He does not give such love. The truth is, in no place does either Scripture, Tradition or the Catholic Magisterium teach this kind of nationalistic or ethnic love from God, at least not in the New Testament period when the theocracy of Israel no longer exists as a God-sanctioned legal and religious entity. (Romans 2:9-10; Galatians 3:28-29; Acts 10:34-35; 13:45-48).

As a national entity, an entity that was once God's official spokesman; an entity that once maintained and enforced all the divine covenantal, legal, ceremonial and civil laws, the Jews were, indeed, rejected by God as the custodian of those privileges. These privileges were then transferred to the New Testament Church, the Catholic Church. But in regards to acquiring salvation, God never rejected the Jewish people. They are still human beings made in the image of God who have, individually, the potential to forsake the faithlessness and disobedience of their ancestors and join the Church for their salvation. If God had totally forsaken the Jews then he would have also barred them from receiving salvation in the New Covenant. This is the precise argument that St. Paul gives in Romans 11:1-5. It is not a national or ethnic favoring of "Jews, as Jews" that God gives to them in his "love and concern," but a favoring that seeks to give each and every Jew the opportunity to receive salvation in the Church of Jesus Christ.

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? Of course not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup>God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? <sup>3</sup>"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." <sup>4</sup>But what is God's response to him? "I have left for myself seven

thousand men who have not knelt to Baal." <sup>5</sup>So also at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. (Romans 11:1-5).

We see another instance of the erroneous nature of Forrest and Palm's proposal when they attempt to commandeer Romans 11:28. Above they write: "As St. Paul and the Church have unequivocally affirmed, the Jewish people remain dearly loved by God, "for the sake of the fathers [of Israel]. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (cf. Rom. 11:28; *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4)." Let's look closely at what Paul says in Romans 11:26-32 to get the context of his remarks:

<sup>26</sup>and thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come out of Zion, he will turn away godlessness from Jacob; <sup>27</sup>and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." <sup>28</sup>In respect to the gospel, they are enemies on your account; but in respect to election, they are beloved because of the patriarchs. <sup>29</sup>For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so they have now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may (now) receive mercy. <sup>32</sup>For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. (NAB)

As in Romans 11:1-5, the context of Paul's remarks concern only the hope of salvation in the New Covenant for the Jew. More specifically, it is only in respect to the "election" that the Jews are loved by God, not because God has an unqualified and unconditional love for the Jews because they are Jewish. This is a fine distinction but it absolutely necessary because without it the uninformed reader will go off in the wrong direction as we saw above with Roy Schoeman's novel teachings about Israel being a God-favored nation that fulfills Old Testament prophecy in place of the Catholic Church.

What is "the election"? It is from the Greek word ἐκλογὴν, the same word Paul employed in verse 5 when he said: "So also at the present time there is a remnant, chosen [ἐκλογὴν] by grace." Hence, verse 5 establishes what the "election" is, and verse 28 follows in kind. As such, since verses 4-5 explain the "election" as the remnant of Jews who believed out of a nation that was largely in unbelief, so it is with the "election" in verse 28. There are Jews that are "enemies of the gospel" but there is a smaller group of "elect" Jews who are "beloved of God." If this is not the case, then Paul is using two entirely different definitions of the word "election" in the same context, one individual and one national.<sup>10</sup> But a national or ethnic "election" of Israel is never the meaning Paul uses in his epistles. Each time the word "elect" is utilized it is in reference to individuals who are chosen, without reference to race or national origin, out of a much larger group who are not chosen. We should not be surprised at this distinction, for Paul says the same in Romans 9:6-7: "For not all who are of Israel are Israel."

Let's flesh this out a bit more so that there is no misunderstanding, for if Forrest and Palm are correct and it is true that God loves the Jews simply because they have Jewish blood running through their veins, then we should, by all means, be modeling God's love, treating the Jews as special people, people

<sup>10</sup> The pronoun "they" in verse 28 is not in the Greek. The Greek literally reads: "According to the gospel, enemies on your account; according to the election, beloved on account of the fathers"

to be loved and cared for more than non-Jews. Of course, this also means that if the authors are wrong, then their thesis is heretical and they are leading the Catholic masses astray.

Let's set up a hypothetical scenario to illustrate the problem. For the sake of argument, let's say Forrest and Palm are correct. As such, an interlocutor would ask a certain person, "Are you a Jew"? If the person answers, "Yes," the interlocutor would correctly respond, "Then you are beloved of God." The same interlocutor would then ask another person: "Are you a Jew"? If the person answers, "No," then the interlocutor would be required to say, "Then either you are not beloved of God or God doesn't love you as much as he loves the Jews." One can begin to see the racial quagmire this scene creates. One is beloved of God because he is Jewish; the other is not beloved because he is not Jewish. The authors are more or less trapped into accepting this hypothetical scenario, for, as we noted earlier in defining what "Jews, as Jews" means, if they have no intention of saying that God loves the Jews more than non-Jews then there would be no reason for them to emphasize the assertion that God loves "Jews, as Jews" in distinction to non-Jews.

Moreover, if the authors' are correct, we would expect to find a continuous thread of their thesis in the New Testament. It should be unmistakable. But do we? Is there any New Testament verse to which the authors can point us (besides their question begging assertions regarding Romans 11:28) that says God loves the Jews simply because they are Jewish? No, there is not a single verse. As noted earlier, what we see in the New Testament is a consistent denial of such a thesis (*cf.* Romans 2:9-10; Galatians 3:28; Acts 10:34-35; Ephesians 6:9; 1Peter 1:17).

In fact, if we are going to be honest with what the New Testament actually says, we would have to admit that it makes a concerted effort to go in the very opposite direction than what Forrest and Palm are asserting, that is, it specifies God's displeasure with "the Jews, as Jews." We can start with St. Stephen's speech to the Jews in Acts 7 as he runs through the sordid history of Israel and then ends by telling the Jews they are continuing in the footsteps of their apostate fathers. We can then turn to St. Paul's speech in Acts 13 in which he runs through the same Old Testament history. Though there were "many of the Jews" who agreed with Paul's speech (Acts 13:43), by and large the Jews rejected him, which then led Paul to proclaim:

It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.<sup>47</sup> For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.'

And notice this also. Luke, the commentator of this scene who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, says in verse 48: "The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe." In other words, we see here the same distinction we noted in Romans 11:28 between the Jews who are "enemies of the gospel" and the Jews and Gentiles who are the "elect" of God.

A commentary on Paul's experience in Acts 13 is recorded for us in 1 Thess 2:14-16 as he says:

For you suffer the same things from your compatriots as they did from the Jews, <sup>15</sup>who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted us; they do not please God, and are opposed to everyone, <sup>16</sup>trying to prevent us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved, thus constantly filling up the measure of their sins. But the wrath of God has finally begun to come upon them.

Now, it would be safe to say that, if God loves “the Jews, as Jews” without any distinction between the typical unbelieving Jew and the elect Jew, He certainly has a strange way of fulfilling it if the information in 1 Thess 2:14-16 is true. We must agree that, barring God’s love for mankind in general, in the realm where God makes choices as to whom he is going to love for special reasons, there is a vast difference between receiving God’s love and receiving God’s wrath. According to Paul, the majority of Jews are presently receiving the “wrath of God,” not his love.

The story is not over. Paul also adds yet another qualifier to explain what “beloved” refers to in Romans 11:28. He not only says that God’s love is directed to the “election,” he adds that God does so “because of the fathers.” What did God promise the “fathers”? Beginning with God’s promises to Abraham, Scripture is clear that God does not hold the Jews as “beloved” merely because they are Jews, but because God predestines the salvation of the elect Jews (and elect Gentiles) that he promised to Abraham when he said “I will make your seed as the stars of heaven in multitude” (cf. Genesis 12:1-3; 22:16-18; Hosea 1:10-11; Hebrews 6:13-18; 10:1-13; 11:1-40; Galatians 3:6-29; Romans 4:1-26). This is why there is such a pronounced argument in the New Testament against circumcision, since doing away with it eliminated the Jew from having God’s favor simply because he was Jewish. This is also why the Church is the “new Israel,” for it houses Jews and Gentiles that make up the “elect.” Unfortunately, Forrest and Palm, so determined to give divine favor to “Jews, as Jews,” have totally neglected this dimension of the issue.

Now, let’s look at the footnotes that Forrest and Palm marshal to support their view. Footnote 19 includes the following citations of which I will comment on briefly.

### **“The Romans 9:3-5” Argument:**

**Forrest and Palm:** [19] Rom. 9:3–5; 1 Cor. 10:18.

**R. Sungenis:** The authors provide no explanation or exegesis to these crucial passages. Obviously, they are hoping that just a cursory reading will give the impression that the two passages support the “the Jews, as Jews, are beloved of God” thesis. If I may add, the authors of the 2006 *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* apparently had the same intention. When the heretical teaching on page 131 was exposed [“Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them”], they decided to eliminate the guilty sentence but replace it with a quote from Romans 9:3-5, without any commentary as to why this verse was chosen. But I immediately noticed that they chose Romans 9:3-5 because at first blush the verse seems to give the impression that the Jews of today retain the divine blessings from the Mosaic covenant such that they were never taken away. Essentially,

the catechism authors tried to put back with one hand what they were forced to take away with the other, and no one was the wiser. Usually this is called sleight-of-hand.

Let's look closely at the passage. The RSV version has the following:

<sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race. <sup>4</sup>They are Israelites, **and to them belong the sonship**, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; <sup>5</sup>to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.

Notice the phrase I bolded. The way this phrase is translated it looks as if the RSV is saying that the Israelites still retain the sonship, the glory, the covenant, and even the law and the worship, that they had in the Old Testament. I have to hand it to the authors of the US catechism. If there was ever a verse they could choose to attempt to save face for themselves for having sullied the catechism with a heretical sentence, this is it! This is especially the case when the authors give no rhyme or reason why they chose Romans 9:4-5.

Moreover, it is no coincidence that the US adult catechism uses the RSV as its base translation, as does the 1992 Catholic Catechism. This is rather interesting since the RSV is originally a Protestant translation, and one that was only changed in four insignificant places in Romans by the Catholic editions of the RSV. Hence, the new edition of the US adult catechism chose the RSV version of Romans 9:3-5.

But things can be seen a little differently when the standard Catholic bible, the New American Bible, is used when quoting Romans 9:3-5. Notice the clear difference in the translation:

<sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kin according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup>They are Israelites; **theirs the adoption**, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; <sup>5</sup>theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.

So we went from the RSV's "and to them belong the sonship" to the NAB's "theirs the adoption." Why is there such a dramatic difference? Because the NAB is translating literally from the Greek while the RSV is interpolating. The word "belong" is not in the original Greek. If the verb is missing in the Greek, there is a good reason. The verb determines the time (i.e., past, present or future). If a translation uses a present tense verb (such as the RSV's "belong"), it connotes that the sonship is a present possession of the Israelites. If there is no verb, then there is no attempt by Paul to transfer what was a possession in the past into a possession of the present or future. In the NAB version Paul is simply making an indicative statement that the "Israelites" had possession of the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises, but he is not saying they possess it presently or will possess it in the future. Hence, there is little reason that this verse could support the "Jews, as Jews, are beloved of God" thesis that the authors are trying to establish. In fact, it is right at this point that Paul adds, in the very next verse, that although the Jews of the past were given these blessings yet did not

believe, “it is not that the word of God has failed. For not all who are of Israel are Israel” (Rom 9:6 NAB). In other words, in having the blessings of the sonship, the covenant, the law, the worship, *etc.*, the Jews should have flocked to God. Instead, they spurned him all the more. Obviously, it is Paul’s intent to separate believing Jews from unbelieving Jews who think they are beloved of God because they are Jews.

Let’s look at the second verse the authors bring to their support:

Look at Israel according to the flesh; are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? (1Co 10:18, NAB)

One wonders what the authors see in this verse to support their thesis. My inkling is that this is another case in which they wish to create an impression instead of giving the reader an honest exegesis. A cursory view of the verse might convey to someone that “Israel according to the flesh” is being used in the present tense, which might allow one to conclude that there are Jews who still practice the ritual sacrifices with legitimacy and meaning. Of course, the authors would have a tough time proving this notion, especially since Paul’s epistles are replete with teachings that the sacrifices have passed away and no longer have any legitimacy or meaning (Hebrews 7-10). In 1 Co 10:18 Paul is merely making the comparison with what the Levitical law had stated for sacrifice. An Israelite under the Mosaic economy who refused to eat of the sacrifices would consequently disassociate himself from the altar, and from everything connected to that altar. The same would apply to the Corinthians. It is an argument by analogy, not an attempt to say that Jewish sacrifices are somehow legitimized in the New Testament period.

### **“The Cardinal Ratzinger” Argument:**

The authors then cite various statements from Catholic authors, notably, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, to support their thesis:

**Forrest and Palm:** Additionally:

“But this does not mean that there is nothing more to be said about . . . ‘Israel according to the flesh’” (*Many Religions, One Covenant*, p. 69).

“Hand in hand with this belief goes the other, that Israel still has a mission to accomplish today” (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2002), p. 149).

“We also know that while history still runs its course even this standing at the door fulfills a mission, one that is important for the world. In that way [the Jewish] people still has a special place in God’s plans” (*Ibid.*, p. 150).

**R. Sungenis:** What are these quotes supposed to prove for the authors? If this is the best they can find to prove their thesis, they have actually gone backwards, not forwards. In the second quote, the cardinal says that “Israel has a mission to accomplish today,” but doesn’t explain what the mission is. Surely if the context of the passage had specified the nature of this particular “mission” the authors would have added it. But apparently there was nothing in the context that would support their thesis. So, as they did with Romans 9:3-5, they resort to leaving impressions, the impression that Israel has some important but unspecified mission. In fact, the only “mission” that the cardinal can cite for Israel is the mission of “standing at the door,” a metaphor that, though ambiguous, certainly doesn’t lend itself to any grandiose employment of Israel, except waiting for God to move “the election” towards salvation, as we already saw in Romans 11:28.

**Forrest and Palm:** “If such a dialogue is to be fruitful, it must begin with a prayer to our God, first of all that he might grant to us Christians a greater esteem and love for that people, the people of Israel, to whom belong ‘the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs are the patriarchs, and from them comes Christ according to the flesh, he who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen’ (Romans 9:4–5), *and this not only in the past, but still today*, ‘for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable’ (Romans 11:29)” (Cardinal Ratzinger, “The Heritage of Abraham,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 29, 2000).

**R. Sungenis:** So here again we see the use of Romans 9:3-5 that we covered above, along with the inaccurate translation from the RSV. Regardless of the translation, however, since the cardinal gives no exegesis of the passage, I hope Forrest and Palm are not trying to make anything more of the cardinal’s words than what Paul allowed in Romans 9. For example, if the authors are implying by italicizing the clause “*and this not only in the past, but still today*” that the cardinal is teaching the “the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises” is still a legal possession of Jews today, or that these past possessions somehow make “the Jews, as Jews” special and privileged people above the rest of the human race, then they have just made the cardinal a heretic. With St. Paul, the cardinal can only mean that because the Jews once had possession of these gifts, they have all the more reason to see them in light of the Christian gospel and convert to Christianity, for these very gifts point to Jesus Christ (as Paul says in verse 5: “from whom is Christ”), the very same argument that Jesus gave to the Pharisees in John 5:46 [“For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me, because he wrote about me”] and John 8:56 [Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad”]. In other words, the point of Romans 9:3-5 is not to say that the Jews retain the same privileges they had in the Old Covenant, but that because of these past privileges the Jews should be all the more willing to convert to Jesus Christ. Again, this is precisely why Paul follows in Romans 9:6 with the consequent point saying: “But it is not that the word of God has failed. For not all who are of Israel are Israel.” Obviously, since the Jews had possessed all the signs and gifts that pointed to Christ, we would expect them to come to Christ in droves. But the fact that they didn’t come in droves does not mean that the promises of God have failed, for from the beginning God knew that only a remnant, “the election,” would turn to Him.

**Forrest and Palm:** Question: “God has not, then, retracted his word that Israel is the Chosen People?” Cardinal Ratzinger: “No, because he is faithful” (*God and the World*, p. 150).

**R. Sungenis:** At first sight, this excerpt from the cardinal’s interview may seem like the cardinal is saying the Jews are still the Chosen People as they were in the Old Testament. But when we look at the immediate context of the interview, this is not necessarily how “Chosen People” is being used by either Peter Seewald or Cardinal Ratzinger. This is suggested in the next question Seewald asks the cardinal:

Question: “‘I, too, am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, member of the tribe of Benjamin’ says Paul in his letter to the Romans, although one part of Israel has been afflicted with ‘hardness of heart.’ And further: ‘From the point of view of the gospel they are enemies of God...from the point of view of their being **the Chosen People**, they are beloved of God.’ Strong words.”

Ratzinger: This is another of the paradoxes that the New Testament sets before us. On the one hand, their No to Christ brings the Israelites into conflict with the subsequent acts of God, but at the same time we know that they are assured of the faithfulness of God. They are not excluded from salvation, but they serve salvation in a particular way, and thereby they stand within the presence of God, in which we, too, place our trust.

We see that Seewald has interpreted the word “election” that is found in most translations of the Greek word ἐκλογὴν in Romans 11:28 as “Chosen People.” Seewald was apparently working on the notion (albeit a false one) that “election” could be transposed with “Chosen People” so that it could then be applied to all the Jews without exception. But we have already noted that St. Paul’s use of ἐκλογὴν in Romans 11:5 forbids making the word all-inclusive. It refers only to the remnant of Jews who receive the grace of God for salvation as opposed to the larger nation of Jews who did not receive it.

**Forrest and Palm:** “They are still Israel, the way the Jews are still Jews and are still a people, even during the two thousand years when they had no country” (*Ibid.*, p. 148).

**R. Sungenis:** This proves nothing for the authors. There is no argument that Israel is Israel and the Jews are the Jews.

**Forrest and Palm:** “It is in God’s hands, of course, just in what way, when and how the reuniting of Jews and Gentiles, the reunification of God’s people, will be achieved” (*Ibid.*, p. 150, emphasis added).

**R. Sungenis:** As such, the cardinal is telling us that there is no definitive or official Catholic teaching on how or when the Jews will be reunited with the Church, so it would behoove the authors not to be so dogmatic with their particular view.

**Forrest and Palm:** “This means that all nations, *without the abolishment of the special mission of Israel*, become brothers and receivers of the promises of the Chosen People; *they become People of God with*

*Israel* through adherence to the will of God and through acceptance of the Davidic kingdom” (*Many Religions, One Covenant*, p. 28, emphasis added).

**R. Sungenis:** Prior to this, the cardinal did not define what the “special mission of Israel” was, except to say that it involved “standing at the door.” That the “nations” are “receivers of the promises of the Chosen People” is certainly true, since the Church superseded the Jews as the “new people of God” according to *Nostra Aetate* 4. The joining of the “People of God with Israel” is nothing more than what Paul describes in Ephesians 2:14-16; 4:13 as already occurring in the Church. The Davidic kingdom is just another term for Christ’s kingdom. So there is nothing in what the cardinal says that teaches the thesis of the authors, that is, that “Jews, as Jews,” are beloved of God simply because they are Jews.

**Forrest and Palm:** In this powerful affirmation of God’s irrevocable love and concern for the Jewish people, St. Paul is specifically referring to Jews who have *not* accepted Christ or His Church. [\[20\]](#)

### “The Romans 11” Argument:

This abiding love for and special relationship with God’s earthly first-born, the Jewish people (cf. Ex. 4:22), is evidenced in several ways.

**First,** God continues to call forth the “first-fruits” or a “remnant” of the Jewish people to explicit faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 11:5). St. Paul cites his own conversion and the conversion of some of his contemporaries as proof that “God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew” (Rom. 11:2). And, indeed, there have been Jewish entrants into the Church through Baptism ever since.

**R. Sungenis:** Paul does not use “first-fruits” as a synonym for “remnant” in Romans 11. They are two separate concepts.

**Forrest and Palm: Second,** according to Scripture and Tradition, in the “last days” the “first-fruits” or “remnant” mentioned above is expected to blossom forth into what is commonly referred to in the Church as “the conversion of the Jews.” This expectation is supported by multiple passages of Scripture, [\[21\]](#)

**R. Sungenis:** Let’s look at the passages that the authors believe refer to a “blossoming” or *en masse* conversion of the Jews just prior to Christ’s Second Coming. From footnote 21 the authors claim the following passages teach such a massive conversion of Jews:

#### 1) Rom. 11:12, 15, and 25:

Here are the passages of Romans 11:

Verse 12: “Now if their transgression is enrichment for the world, and if their diminished number is enrichment for the Gentiles, how much more their full number. (NAB)”

Once again, what the authors hope will happen is that the reader will make a cursory reading of the verse and conclude that because there is a “diminished number” now there must be a “full number” in the future, and from this the authors want the reader to conclude that the “full number” can only come when Christ returns and saves the very last generation of Jews, *en masse*. But does Paul say that? No, he makes absolutely no indication here or in the context that such is the case. For example, the “full number” that Paul is anticipating could be accomplished by an incremental conversion of Jews from the first century all the way to the last century, and the sum total of all those converted Jews, in addition to all the Jewish remnant that was saved in the Old Testament, could be the “full number” that Paul anticipates.

The same is true for verse 15 that the authors quote:

Verse 15: For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (NAB)

Once again, Paul does not specify, and neither did Cardinal Ratzinger, the ‘how and when’ of this “acceptance.” The authors merely assume that the only way it can happen is if God suddenly and dramatically saves all the last generation of Jews just prior to Christ’s Second Coming. Practically speaking, how fair is that to all the other Jews who lived for the previous four or more millennia prior to the last generation of Jews? What makes the last generation so special that only they receive the grace of God while most of their Jewish brethren perish in hell because God apparently wasn’t ready to save them? As I see it, the authors’ view is not only exegetically unsound, it is a monstrous distortion of God’s character.

Let’s look closely at Romans 11:25:

I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers, so that you will not become wise (in) your own estimation: a hardening has come upon Israel in part, until the full number of the Gentiles comes in, (Rom 11:25 NAB)

So the obvious question is, what is “the full number of the Gentiles,” for when that fullness comes then the hardening has reached a terminus. Since the context of Romans 11 is dealing with salvation, the “full number of Gentiles” must be when the complete number of Gentiles is saved (*cf.* Mt 24:14; 2Pt 3:9; Lk 21:24-25). But that cannot occur until the last day when Christ returns for his Second Coming, since there is no passage of Scripture that says the Gentiles will only be saved until a certain point prior to the Second Coming and that the rest will perish with no chance of salvation. That being the case, the “hardness” of the Jews at large must continue right up until<sup>11</sup> the last day when Christ returns, which

<sup>11</sup> The word “until” is the Greek ἄχρι οὐ. The phrase can either continue the action of the main verb (that is, the hardness of Israel will continue indefinitely or forever) or cease the action of the main verb (that is, the hardness of Israel will cease when the fullness of Gentiles arrives). In either case, however, the hardness of Israel cannot terminate prior to the Second Coming. The only exception to this would be if “the fullness of the Gentiles” referred to something other than the salvation of the Gentiles, or Scripture taught that the Gentiles would cease being saved for an interlude prior to the Second Coming. But neither of these two possibilities are taught in Scripture.

means that we cannot expect an *en masse* conversion of Jews during that time. We can only expect, as Paul already stated in Romans 11:5, 14, 23 that the “remnant” of Jews will be saved, the remnant from the Old Testament and the remnant from the New Testament.

Let me add this important fact to the mix. Notice that the authors do not cite Romans 11:26-27 in their list of verses that support an *en masse* conversion of Jews. I find this exclusion curious to say the least. Allow me to quote those verses:

Verses 26-27: and thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come out of Zion, he will turn away godlessness from Jacob; <sup>27</sup>and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

First, notice that Paul does not say “and THEN all Israel will be saved.” He says “thus all Israel will be saved.” This is a Greek adverb that means “in this way,” or “in this manner.” It connects the previous verse (25) with verses 26-27. But if verse 25 already establishes that the hardness of the Jews at large would continue right up until the last day when Christ returns, who, then, comprises the “all Israel shall be saved”? It can only refer to the Jews who have been saved throughout history, the remnant of Jews from the Old and New Testaments, some of which were being saved in Paul’s day and of whom the remainder will be saved in our day and beyond (*e.g.*, St. Edith Stein, Rabbi Zolli, etc.). This is precisely why verse 28 distinguishes between Jews who are “enemies of the gospel” from the Jews who are “the election.” Sandwiched between verse 5’s and verse 28’s references to the “election” we have verse 26’s reference to “all Israel.” As such there is nothing else in the context to retard the exegesis away from connecting “all Israel” with the remnant who have been elected. In other words, all of the Jews from Abraham until the end of time who have received salvation, it is those only who comprise the “all Israel” of Romans 11:26. In this way, God fulfills every word of his promise to Abraham, for only those God had intended to save will indeed be saved. As says in Romans 9:6: “But it is not as though the word of God has failed, for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.”

Second, and most important, is the latter part of verse 26 and the whole of verse 27. It is important because the detailed description St. Paul gives in these two verses cannot refer to the Second Coming of Christ, but only to the First Coming. Let’s go through them one by one:

- 1) “The Deliverer comes from Zion”: The “Deliverer” is Christ. Notice that he comes from Zion (Israel), not heaven. If this were referring to Christ’s Second Coming it should say the Deliverer comes “from heaven,” as is clear in such passages at 1 Thess 4:13-17 or 2 Thess 1:7-10.
- 2) “And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” When did Christ, the Deliverer, establish a “covenant” with Israel? This is very easy to answer. It happened at Christ’s First Coming, and it will not happen at his Second Coming. For example, Luke 1:68-77 says some amazing things about the purpose of Christ’s First Coming in regards to the Jews:

<sup>68</sup> "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, **for he has visited and brought redemption to his people.**

- <sup>69</sup> He has raised up a horn for our **salvation within the house of David** his servant,
- <sup>70</sup> even **as he promised** through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old:
- <sup>71</sup> **salvation from our enemies** and from the hand of all who hate us,
- <sup>72</sup> to show mercy to our fathers and **to be mindful of his holy covenant**
- <sup>73</sup> and of **the oath he swore to Abraham our father**, and to grant us that,
- <sup>74</sup> rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him
- <sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
- <sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
- <sup>77</sup> **to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,**

Notice that Luke 1:72 and 77 look amazingly similar to Romans 11:26-27. Both passages speak of Christ fulfilling the “covenant” that was promised to the Jewish fathers, and both passages speak of “the forgiveness of sins.” But Luke 1:72-77 is referring only to the First Coming of Christ. So why do many make Romans 11:26-27 refer to the Second Coming? As I noted earlier, they do so because they are perpetuating an error that started when the Catholic Church switched from Premillennial eschatology to Amillennial eschatology in the fourth century, but forgot to drop some of the baggage from the Premillennial view.

Now, I could go through many other passages in the New Testament that speak of the covenant being established with Israel at the First Coming of Christ, such as Hebrews 8:1-13 or Hebrews 10:16-18, but that will not be necessary. The reader can look them up for himself. One thing that is important to see, however, is that just as the Hebrews passages are quoting from the Old Testament prophecies about the First Coming of Christ, so Romans 11:26-27 is doing the same. The passages Paul quotes in Romans 11:26-27 are Isaiah 59:20-21 and Isaiah 27:9, which refer only to the First Coming of Christ. Suffice it to say, every passage in Scripture that speaks of bringing a covenant to forgive the sins of the Jews refers to the First Coming of Christ. There isn’t one passage that says a covenant is established or implemented at the Second Coming of Christ, and no passage that says sins will be forgiven during that time. Those who do not wish to take this view have the unenviable task of:

- (a) Explaining how no passage of Scripture ever refers to the Second Coming or events surrounding it as that which establishes a covenant to forgive sins.
- (b) Prove from the context of Romans 11 how “all Israel” can refer to a conversion *en masse*.
- (c) Explain why a conversion *en masse* is so anticipated when it inevitably consigns millions of other Jews to the horrors of disbelief who lived prior to the *en masse* conversion.

- (d) Show how the “fullness of the Gentiles” comes prior to the Second Coming and not at the Second Coming.
- (e) Show how Isaiah 59:20-21 and Isaiah 27:9 can point to the Second Coming and not the First Coming.
- (f) Answer why Paul consistently separates Jews into those who are the “enemies of the gospel” from those who are the “remnant” or the “election,” if, indeed, he meant that “all Israel” refers only to an *en masse* group of Jews near the end of time.
- (g) Show how “the Deliverer” can be anyone but Christ. If it is Christ, then one must explain how it is possible for the Deliverer to come prior to the Second Coming to save the last generation of Jews and then come again for the official Second Coming.

### “The Luke 13:35 and 21:24” Argument:

**Forrest and Palm:** Lk. 13:35/Mt. 23:39.

**R. Sungenis:** Once again, the attempt of the authors to proof-text their way through this project without offering any exegesis to prove their particular point is certainly not indicative of good scholarship. Their challenge is to show how the passages they choose teach that there will be an *en masse* conversion of the last generation of Jews just prior to the Second Coming of Christ. It will not suffice merely to cite previous exegetes who have cited the same passages as proof-texts. If they cannot demonstrate their thesis from a detailed and comprehensive exegesis of Scripture then their case is dubious at best. Nevertheless, let’s look at Luke 13:35 and Matthew 23:39. Both passages say the same thing:

Behold, your house will be abandoned, desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Apparently, the authors wish us to conclude that this passage is referring to a time after the Jews convert *en masse*. At this time they then see the Lord at his Second Coming and say “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” But the burden is on the authors to show how and why this passage does not refer to the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem during the week of his passion, since the same exclamation (“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”) is stated verbatim by the Jews during that time (*cf.* John 12:13 in fulfillment of Psalm 118:25f). There is no passage of Scripture that refers “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” to the Second Coming.

**Forrest and Palm:** Lk. 21:24.

**R. Sungenis:** This passage actually works directly against the authors:

<sup>24</sup> They will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken as captives to all the Gentiles; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The authors have the same problem here that they did in Romans 11:25, that is, they must explain how the “fullness of the Gentiles” terminates prior to the Second Coming of Christ. The context of Luke 21 (which the authors fail to include) does not indicate any such interlude. The immediately following verses of Luke 21 show us that as soon as the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, Christ returns on the clouds of glory and the world comes to an end, and thus, there is no space of time in which an *en masse* conversion of Jews can take place. Luke continues with verses 25-27:

<sup>25</sup>“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. <sup>26</sup>People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup>And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Indeed, if an *en masse* conversion of Jews was such an important, integral, and necessary fulfillment of prophecy that it would be safe to say that Scripture would be amiss if it did not specify such a high profile event, we are at a loss to explain why Luke does not even hint at such a stupendous occurrence, much less leave no room for it in his chronological time-scale.

### “The Hosea 3:5” Argument:

**Forrest and Palm:** Hos. 3:5.

**R. Sungenis:** At this point we would have to assume that since the authors now transition to the Old Testament, the above verses of Scripture (Romans 11:12,15,25; Matthew 23:39; Luke 21:24) are the strongest passages that they can find to support their view in the New Testament. If this is the best they have to offer, they certainly have an uphill climb. Let’s see how they fare with the Old. I will also cite verse 4 since the authors left it out:

Hosea 3:4-5: For the people of Israel shall remain many days without king or prince, Without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or household idols. <sup>5</sup>Then the people of Israel shall turn back and seek the Lord, their God, and David, their king; They shall come trembling to the Lord and to his bounty, in the last days.

Once again, if the authors want to apply this passage to the Second Coming of Christ and a mass conversion of Jews during that time, but not to the First Coming of Christ, the burden is on them to prove their case, for the simple fact that thus far they have shown no passage of Scripture which explicitly says that these things will occur at or near the Second Coming. There are a whole host of supporting passages, however, that apply Hosea 3:4-5 to the First Coming, not the Second.

The previous chapters of Hosea (chapters 1-2) use with the same analogy of the whorish wife as Hosea chapter 3. In Hosea 1:2, God tells Hosea to take a whore for a wife (“Go, take a harlot wife and harlot’s children”), and does the same in Hosea 3:1 (“Again the LORD said to me: Give your love to a woman beloved of a paramour, an adultress”). Hosea 1:4-11 then shows the apostate history of Israel in capsulated form. They are judged by God and God then turns to Judah. As God rejects Israel, he

prophesies in verses 10-11 that despite the nation of Israel's demise, still, "the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand on the sea" and those who "are not my people" will be "the sons of the living God." The importance of this passage for our purposes is that it is fulfilled in Romans 9:24-28 when the Gentiles are brought into the Church along with Jews, and Paul assures us that this event occurs during the First Coming of Christ, not during the Second Coming. Hoses 1:11 continues the prophecy and says that "the sons of the living God" are the new "sons of Judah" and "sons of Israel" who will "appoint one leader" (Christ).

Hosea 3:1-5 gives essentially the same prophecy as Hosea 1:1-11 but with different detail. Here Hosea marries a whore to show the apostasy of Israel, but allows the whore to remain with him to illustrate the fact that from that point in history until the "one leader" comes, Israel will not exist as a nation (*i.e.*, as verse 4 says, "without a king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or idols"). This happened when Israel was taken off into captivity in 722 BC and never returned.

Hosea 3:5 then says "the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord...in the last days." We already saw that the "sons of Judah" and "sons of Israel" being "gathered together" under "one leader" in Hosea 1:10-11 was fulfilled by Christ's First Coming in Romans 9:24-28. Likewise, the "sons of Israel" in Hosea 3:5 refers to the same event. Note especially that Hosea 3:5 says that this gathering of the sons of Israel occurs "in the last days." This is the plural Hebrew word **דְּיָמַיִם** ("days"). Prophetically speaking, Scripture knows of only one period of "last days." It begins at Christ's First Coming, not his Second (*cf.* Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21; Hebrews 1:2; Luke 1:68-77). When Scripture wants to refer only to the Second Coming, it uses the singular "last day" (*cf.* John 6:39-40; 12:48).

Suffice it to say, there is nothing in Hosea 3:4-5 that refers to the Second Coming, and thus Forrest and Palm have yet to provide us with a Scriptural proof of their thesis.

### **"The Deuteronomy 4:30 and Isaiah 59:20" Argument:**

**Forrest and Palm:** Deut. 4:30.

In your distress, when all these things shall have come upon you, you shall finally return to the LORD, your God, and heed his voice. (NAB)

**R. Sungenis:** Once again, if the authors want to convince the reader that this passage is speaking of the Second Coming and not the First Coming, then the burden of proof is on them, since there is no passage in the Bible that specifies a significant conversion of Jews during events of the Second Coming, but a plethora of passages that point to the events of the First Coming (Acts 2:16-21; 15:16-18; Luke 1:68-77; Romans 9:24-28).

As is usually the case, in their quest for proof-texts, the authors invariably ignore the context of the passage. Deut 4:30 is not talking about either the First or Second Coming of Christ but about the times God would punish disobedient Israel by having their foreign enemies oppress them (as is the case with

the book of Judges when 25% of Israel's time is spent under oppression from foreign rulers) or off to captivity (e.g., Assyria or Babylon).

**Forrest and Palm:** Is. 59:20.

**R. Sungenis:** Now, this is certainly a curious attempt at providing a proof-text, for this passage is the one that Paul cites as supporting his argument in Romans 11:26-27 that the Deliverer will come from Zion and establish a covenant that forgives sins. So we might say that the authors have committed the logical fallacy of using as proof the very thing they are trying to prove. Nevertheless, let's look at the passage closely:

<sup>18</sup> He repays his enemies their deserts, and requites his foes with wrath. <sup>19</sup> Those in the west shall fear the name of the LORD, and those in the east, his glory; For it shall come like a pent-up river which the breath of the LORD drives on. <sup>20</sup> He shall come to Zion a redeemer to those of Jacob who turn from sin, says the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> This is the covenant with them which I myself have made, says the LORD: My spirit which is upon you and my words that I have put into your mouth shall never leave your mouth, nor the mouths of your children nor the mouths of your children's children from now on and forever, says the LORD.

So we would ask, what in this passage points its events to the Second Coming of Christ and not the First Coming? As for pointing to the First Coming, the reference to those in the "west" and "east" is very similar to Jesus' statement in Matthew 8:11-12:

<sup>11</sup> I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven, <sup>12</sup> but the children of the kingdom will be driven out into the outer darkness, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."

In other words, it's not the "Jews, as Jews" that receive the favor of God, but the remnant of Jews and remnant of Gentiles who will sit at Abraham's table. Paul said this was already fulfilled in Romans 9:24-28; and Peter says the same in 1 Peter 2:9-10 as he quotes from the same Old Testament passages.

Isaiah 59:20's reference to the redeemer coming to Zion (which Paul changes to coming "from" Zion in Romans 11:26) refers to Christ coming to earth at his birth, and it matches the language of Luke 1:68-77 which also refers to the First Coming. Isaiah's "covenant of forgiveness" matches the language of Hebrews 8:1-13 and 10:16-18, which refer to the First Coming, not the Second.

The major problem with Forrest and Palm's whole paradigm of prophetic interpretation is that they are following the thesis of Jewish convert Roy Schoeman who seeks to take the Old Testament passages that the Catholic Church has traditionally applied to the First Coming of Christ (and to the Catholic Church in particular), and now want apply them to the Second Coming (and to the Jews in particular). We might say that these authors are guilty of imposing a Judaized eschatology on Sacred Scripture.

## “The Micah 2:12 and Malachi 4:5-6” Argument:

**Forrest and Palm:** Mic. 2:12.

**R. Sungenis:** Micah 2:12 says:

“I will gather you, O Jacob, each and every one, I will assemble all the remnant of Israel; I will group them like a flock in the fold, like a herd in the midst of its corral; they shall not be thrown into panic by men” (NAB).

So the logical challenge to the authors is to convince us that this passage refers exclusively to the Second Coming of Christ and not the First. But Micah’s reference to “the remnant of Israel” is very similar to Paul’s reference in Romans 11:5 to the remnant of Israel elected by grace in the face of the rest of the nation that perished.

**Forrest and Palm:** Mal. 4:5–6.

**R. Sungenis:** Malachi 4:5-6 says:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup>And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse” (RSV; the NAB combines this with chapter 3).

So apparently the authors are teaching that Elijah the prophet will return before the Second Coming of Christ and convert the Jews, *en masse*. Interestingly enough, this was what the Jews in the Old Testament believed about Elijah, and this belief is repeated during every Seder meal. But it is fallacious. As the Jews of the Old Testament skipped over the First Coming of Christ as the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6, so do Forrest, Palm and Schoeman. But they don’t share all the blame. This focus on Elijah returning to convert the Jews is a leftover piece of baggage from the Premillennialism of the early patristic period. Augustine, who rejected Premillennialism, still tried to salvage the return of Elijah and thought he could do so by using the LXX version of Malachi 4:5-6 instead of the original Hebrew. Unfortunately, both parties ignored the fact that Jesus said only John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6; and, you guessed it, Jesus was referring to his First Coming, not his Second Coming. Again, please see my essay at <http://www.catholicintl.com/catholicissues/enoeli.pdf>

**Forrest and Palm:** ...no less than twenty-one of the most prominent patristic witnesses...

**R. Sungenis:** The authors are quoting from Jacob Michael’s book to back up this seemingly impressive list of Catholic witnesses. They also cite his paper that calls my view a “Theology of Prejudice.” As you can see, simply because I don’t agree with their thesis, what I say in criticism of it is simply labeled as “prejudice” against the Jews.

So, what do we do with these “twenty-one prominent patristic witnesses”? Interestingly enough, I find it odd that the same patristic witnesses that the authors previously said were “extremely combative” and had used “offensive rhetoric” when dealing with the Jews are now sought as support when it comes to defending an *en masse* conversion of Jews at the Second Coming.

Let me compare this to the issue of geocentrism. I can amass “twenty-one patristic witnesses” to support the view that the earth is motionless in space and that the sun, moon and stars revolve around the earth. In fact, I can amass the whole patristic era in absolute consensus, with no deviation, not even in the slightest detail, to support geocentric doctrine. I can also amass the whole medieval period without exception. I can also amass every pope prior to the twentieth century. I can point to at least four popes (Pius V, Paul V, Urban VIII, Alexander VII) who made dogmatic statements supporting geocentrism, two of them even calling heliocentrism a “formal heresy.” I can amass an abundance of Scriptures saying that the sun moves around the earth and the earth stands still, and none that say the earth moves or that the earth revolves around the sun. But yet Mr. Palm, the co-author of the *Lay Witness* article, who claims that he has “no less than twenty-one of the most prominent patristic witnesses...” to support his idea of a mass conversion of Jews at the end of time, is the very person who called me up on the phone five years ago and told me that he was going to start a public and vociferous campaign against me because of my position “on the Jews and geocentrism.” Mr. Forrest is also partial to geocentrism, so we wonder why Mr. Palm doesn’t start a “public campaign” against Mr. Forrest. My guess is that it’s the same reason he doesn’t start one against Roy Schoeman – friendship is more important than doctrine. So I find it quite hypocritical for Mr. Palm to now start touting the same patristic, medieval and papal witnesses for his pet doctrine concerning the Jews but totally reject the same witnesses when it comes to his preferred cosmology. As I said above, these authors have a conflict of interest when dealing with this topic. I can at least show why I reject the portion of Fathers that believed in an *en masse* conversion of Jews just prior to the Second Coming (*i.e.*, it was a remnant of false doctrine left over from the early patristic period among the Fathers who were advocating Premillennialism), but Forrest and Palm give us no rationale why they reject the Fathers who spoke out against the Jews who antagonized the Christian Church or who supported the doctrine of geocentrism.

### “The Medievals, Doctors and Popes” Argument:

**Forrest and Palm:** an extensive line-up of medieval witnesses, four Popes, and at least fourteen Doctors of the Church. [\[22\]](#)

**R. Sungenis:** And for all this testimony the Church has never made even one official doctrinal statement endorsing any of it. Why is that the case if the authors feel so compelled to impose their belief on everyone else, and even calling opposing views a “theology of prejudice”? What we will see when we analyze this list of “witnesses” is that they are not dogmatic in the least, and they all have tangential views, some of which conflict with others. The truth is, except for the “Last Four Things,” Catholic eschatology is an open enterprise of ideas and speculation, little of which has been officially recognized, much less made into doctrine. As is usually the case with Catholic interpretation of Scripture (except in very few instances), the Catholic does not exegete the passage in question. Few Catholics knew of

biblical exegesis until late in the second millennium. Many of them just glom onto the most popular idea of the time and record that as the interpretation of the passage. Sadly, most of them did not know the biblical languages (Greek and Hebrew). They only knew Latin. But any scholar today will agree that no qualified interpreter of Scripture can be definitive, and certainly not dogmatic, on the meaning of any verse unless he knows and has thoroughly examined the biblical languages and their contextual usage. The only solid exception to this is if the interpretation of the passage was given directly by the Apostles, or what the Church calls "Apostolic Tradition."

For further clarification of this matter, let's look at what Pope Leo XIII says in *Providentissimus Deus* on the Interpretation of Scripture:

**Pope Leo XIII:** For although the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek is substantially rendered by the Vulgate, nevertheless wherever there may be ambiguity or want of clearness, the "examination of older tongues," to quote St. Augustine, will be useful and advantageous. But in this matter we need hardly say that the greatest prudence is required, for the "office of a commentator," as St. Jerome says, "is to set forth not what he himself would prefer, but what his author says."

**R. Sungenis:** This is precisely what I strive to do for this topic. When one examines the original Greek, especially of passages such as Romans 9:3-5 or Romans 11:1-32, there is a whole array of issues that the Fathers and medievals didn't even address, much less give a definitive interpretation to. In fact, I dare say that much of the meticulous Greek analysis I have given to Romans 9 and 11 in my commentary (*CASB III: The Epistles of Romans and James*, published in 2008 by CAI Publishing, Inc.) has never been done in any Catholic exegesis of the issue. If it has, I am unaware of it. I implore anyone who is reading these words to show how the Greek words, the grammar, and context of Romans 11 give us definitive evidence for a mass conversion of the Jews prior to the Second Coming of Christ. If someone feels he can defend the belief and would like to have an open and public debate, I will gladly oblige. I wish they would do so before they use such slanderous characterizations as "a theology of prejudice."

**Pope Leo XIII:** and therefore that it is permitted to no one to interpret Holy Scripture against such sense or also against the unanimous agreement of the Fathers." By this most wise decree the Church by no means prevents or restrains the pursuit of Biblical science, but rather protects it from error, and largely assists its real progress. A wide field is still left open to the private student, in which his hermeneutical skill may display itself with signal effect and to the advantage of the Church. On the one hand, in those passages of Holy Scripture which have not as yet received a certain and definitive interpretation, such labors may, in the benignant providence of God, prepare for and bring to maturity the judgment of the Church; on the other, in passages already defined, the private student may do work equally valuable, either by setting them forth more clearly to the flock and more skillfully to scholars, or by defending them more powerfully from hostile attack. Wherefore the first and dearest object of the Catholic commentator should be to interpret those passages which have received an authentic interpretation either from the sacred writers themselves, under the inspiration of the Holy

Ghost (as in many places of the New Testament), or from the Church, under the assistance of the same Holy Spirit, whether by her solemn judgment or her ordinary and universal magisterium -- to interpret these passages in that identical sense, and to prove, by all the resources of science, that sound hermeneutical laws admit of no other interpretation.

**R. Sungenis:** This is what I have done in all my works for the Church. When there is a doctrine that has been solemnly defined, I have valiantly defended the Church's teaching. For example, one can find detailed and thorough expositions of such defined doctrines of Justification, Scripture and the Mass in my books *Not By Faith Alone*, *Not By Scripture Alone* and *Not By Bread Alone*. But on ideas that "have not as yet received a certain and definitive interpretation" I, under "the benignant providence of God" seek to "prepare for and bring to maturity the judgment of the Church." I recently had a good example of this procedure in my frequent protests to the Vatican and the US bishops that the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* had an erroneous and even heretical sentence on page 131. Two years after my campaign, the US bishops voted to take out the offending sentence. I also recently submitted an analysis of Head Coverings for women to the Congregation for Divine Worship and am waiting to hear the judgment of the Church on the matter. I am doing the same thing with matters regarding Catholic eschatology, and in particular eschatology in regard to the Jews. If someone would like to challenge my conclusions with an even better exegesis of Scripture, so be it. But please let it not be a display of proof-texts without exegesis or an assemblage of patristic and medieval "witnesses" that only give the appearance of siding with the popular view yet upon further examination are severely wanting, as what I find in this paper by Forrest and Palm.

**Pope Leo XIII:** the Holy Fathers, We say, are of supreme authority, whenever they all interpret in one and the same manner any text of the Bible, as pertaining to the doctrine of faith or morals; for their unanimity clearly evinces that such interpretation has come down from the Apostles as a matter of Catholic faith.

**R. Sungenis:** As I noted above, this is precisely what I am asserting. In regards to eschatology, there is no consensus among the Fathers, except in the most basic concepts (*e.g.*, the Last Four Things). How could we possibly say there was a consensus among the Fathers on the End Times when the earliest Fathers (Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Lactantius, *et al.*) believed in an eschatological scenario (Premillennialism) that is completely at odds with what Augustine believed (Amillennialism)? This is a gaping hole in Catholic hermeneutics that hardly anyone wants to address, but there the pink elephant stares at us in the room. If we were really being faithful to the axiom that "the Fathers got their teaching from the Apostles" we would assume that these earliest Fathers received their Premillennialism from the Apostles and that the latter Fathers had no right to change it. As I also said above, when it comes to a crystal clear example of a unanimous belief among the Fathers, one in which there is absolutely no divergence of opinion (such as it is for geocentrism), all of a sudden the same Catholics that cry for adherence to unanimity on their pet projects are the very ones who deny it when it comes to issues they prefer not to advertise. Or, as we've seen with Forrest and Palm, they accept what they believe is the Fathers' majority opinion on a mass conversion of Jews at the Second Coming but look upon these very same Fathers as "extremely combative" and using "offensive rhetoric" when they speak about the

obstinacy and faithlessness of Jews in their own day. This kind of ‘pick-and-choose’ patristic hodge-podge is common in many Catholic groups I have seen today.

**Pope Leo XIII:** But he must not on that account consider that it is forbidden, when just cause exists, to push inquiry and exposition beyond what the Fathers have done; provided he carefully observes the rule so wisely laid down by St. Augustine -- not to depart from the literal and obvious sense, except only where reason makes it untenable or necessity requires; a rule to which it is the more necessary to adhere strictly in these times

**R. Sungenis:** Again, this is precisely what I have done in my work. Pope Leo XIII is telling us that if we push inquiry beyond the Fathers (as I do when I point out that the Fathers contradicted one another on eschatology, some being Premillennial and others being Amillennial; or that the Fathers did not exegete Romans 11:25-27 and therefore do not represent official Catholic teaching on this subject), then we are permitted and encouraged to go to Scripture, provided that we not depart from the literal and obvious sense. Suffice it to say, I don’t think you are going to find any more literal exegesis of Scripture than you do from the pen of Robert Sungenis. According to some of my critics, I am literal with Scripture to a fault (*e.g.*, geocentrism, six-day creationism, head coverings, God’s anger). For example, if someone can find a more thorough, detailed, and literal exegesis of each of the Greek words in Romans 11:25-27 than what I have presented in my Romans commentary, I will indeed listen and be corrected if necessary. But I am not going to sit here and watch amateurs proof-text their way through Scripture, most of whom never had theological and hermeneutical training or experience, and tell me that I don’t even have the right to question popular beliefs (*e.g.*, a mass conversion of Jews in the future) much less show by exegesis that the theory is wrong and has a dubious pedigree. When my detailed and comprehensive scholarship is consigned to being merely a “theology of prejudice,” then it is time to ask what the motivation is behind those who use such categorical and slanderous words. As Pope Leo XIII said: “For ‘in those things which do not come under the obligation of faith, the Saints were at liberty to hold divergent opinions, just as we ourselves are,’ according to the saying of St. Thomas.”

### “The Catholic Catechism’s Paragraph 674” Argument:

**Forrest and Palm:** Additional attestation may be found in the *Catechism* (no. 674).

**R. Sungenis:** Here the authors, again, without an examination of the text they claim for support, are passing it off as an “attestation” to their belief of a mass conversion of the Jews near the Second Coming. But does the 1992 Catechism teach this view. Let’s take a very close look at paragraph 674.

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. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of

old.” St. Paul echoes him: “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” 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”.

Now, is there anything in this paragraph that says there will be a mass conversion of the last generation of Jews right before the end of time? The answer is no. At best, paragraph 674 merely strings together a series of Scripture passages without making any definitive commentary on them. These are the same passages we have already examined in great detail above, namely, Acts 2-3; Romans 11:12, 15, 25; Luke 21:24; Eph 4:13. We saw that none of these passages are necessarily speaking of the Second Coming of Christ, but all of them are speaking of the First Coming and the events immediately after it. Further, if the Church really believed that there must be a mass conversion of the last generation of Jews prior to the Second Coming, then here in paragraph 674, or any surrounding paragraph on eschatology, was the perfect opportunity to make it known, clearly and concisely, to the Catholic world. But we can search the catechism's 904 pages and not find one definitive reference to such an event. Forrest and Palm, and many others, merely ‘read into’ paragraph 674 what they would like to see, and perhaps it was written as it was precisely for that purpose.

**Forrest and Palm:** the 1909 and 1913 *Catholic Encyclopedia*,

**R. Sungenis:** The only thing we will find in both editions of the Catholic Encyclopedia are citations from various Fathers and medievals concerning the same variety of eschatological views I have already outlined above.

**Forrest and Palm:** Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, and a multitude of renowned modern Catholic scholars ranging from Lapidé to Lagrange. [\[23\]](#)

**R. Sungenis:** I find it interesting that the authors would garner Ludwig Ott to their support, since he is very candid about the variety of eschatological views among the Fathers, especially concerning the Premillennial baggage about Elijah returning to earth to preach to the Jews. As for Lapidé to Lagrange, if the authors can cite even one of these theologians who has done a detailed and exhaustive exegesis on the key passages that we have covered above, all of us should consider what they have to say. Unfortunately, we don't find any such significant studies. We mostly find a rehashing of what someone before them said, and often that rehashing has a variety of tracks that it follows.

**Forrest and Palm:** While there are relatively minor variations amongst these witnesses, there is no disagreement that in the last days there will be an unusual and significant conversion of the Jewish people to Christ and that this conversion will be a sign of His Second Coming. [\[24\]](#)

**R. Sungenis:** Is the switch from Premillennialism to Amillennialism a “minor variation,” especially when the Premillennial view is the point of origin for the idea that Elijah would preach to the Jews just prior to

the Second Coming of Christ and save them *en masse*? I dare say not. Be that as it may, if you've been following along with my study, I don't have a problem saying that in the "last days" there would be an "unusual and significant conversion of the Jewish people to Christ," but this was a sign of his First Coming, not the Second, for the conversion began to take place at Pentecost when 3000 Jews were saved in one day (Acts 2:41; 4:4), and from thence forward the Church grew by leaps and bounds with Jewish converts, until it covered the whole earth (Acts 1:8; Colossians 1:6, 23; Romans 9:24-28). The problem with most Catholic exegesis of this issue is that they have confused the First Coming with the Second Coming due to the baggage they kept when the Catholic Fathers switched from Premillennialism to Amillennialism in the fourth century. It is about time that that horrendous error be seized and excised out of Catholic theology for good.

Again, for those who want a detailed and extensive study into the Fathers' view on eschatology, with specific investigation into the original Premillennial idea that there would be a mass conversion of the last generation of Jews just prior to the Second Coming, as well as the concept which led them to believe that Elijah would return to preach to the Jews, please consult the commentary I provide on pages 441-473 the *CASB III: The Epistles of Romans and James*. For those who do not have a copy of the commentary, you can find these pages at this website: <http://www.catholicintl.com/catholicissues/enoli.pdf>

### **"The Jews Still Exist" Argument:**

**Forrest and Palm: Third**, implied in the above-named prophecy is an assurance that God will not allow the Jewish people to perish from the face of the earth—He will preserve their existence. If they do not exist, they cannot convert. No other ethnic group has such an assurance.

**Fourth**, and perhaps as a practical evidence of the previous point, is the current existence of the Jewish people in the face of such prolonged and extreme adversity, an adversity that culminated with the horror of the Shoah. As then-Cardinal Ratzinger noted:

The way that this tiny people, who no longer have any country, no longer any independent existence, but lead their life scattered throughout the world, yet despite this keep their own religion, keep their own identity; they are still Israel. . . even during the two thousand years when they had no country. . . There is something more than historical chance at work. . . . Israel remains—and shows us something of the steadfastness of God. [25]

**R. Sungenis:** Right or wrong about this assertion, the mere fact that the authors have framed the debate into one which is determined by divine favoritism toward an "ethnic group" shows conclusively that they know what they are saying. This debate is about their belief that God favors a certain race of people on earth more than any other race.

Now, let's look at this assertion from another angle to show how presumptuous and superfluous it is. First, the authors haven't proved their contention that an *en masse* conversion of Jews is a "prophecy"

of Scripture. They are certainly permitted to believe it in their private thoughts as a possible end time scenario, but they have no right to use the prophecy as the foundation for other facts, especially since the Church has not dogmatized the particular prophecy they have in view. This is simply another case of the authors begging the question. What they really need to do is make a thorough study on the dubious origins of the *en masse* theory before they start touting it as a fixed doctrine of Catholic eschatology.

Second, God doesn't need to mention the Gentiles, or any ethnic group within them, as continuing until the end of time, because obviously there are so many Gentile ethnic groups. If a few do not survive, it is inconsequential. The Jews, however, need to be reassured that they will continue to exist since the threat of judgment for their continual rejection of Christ looms over them every century. It is only God's mercy that has allowed them to survive until now, not because God is showing favoritism to "Jews, as Jews" who are protected simply because they are Jewish. This goes back to the point we made earlier, that is, that the Jews at large are "enemies of the gospel" (Rom 11:28) and it is only to the "election" that God shows favor, and then only because of his promise to the "fathers," not because some person's name is Cohen or Goldstein.

### **"The Jesus Was a Jew" Argument:**

**Forrest and Palm: Fifth**, the second Person of the Holy Trinity—our Savior—will forever be a Jew. He was born of a Jewish woman whom we exalt as the Queen of Heaven. And the Church herself is built on twelve Jewish men—the Apostles—who will sit in judgment with Christ. The Gentiles, cut from the "wild olive tree," have been grafted on to "the holy stock of the Hebrews"—the cultivated olive tree, Israel. [26] "Spiritually, [Christians] are all Semites." [27] As Catholics, we receive the glorified Body and Blood of the Jewish God-man at every Mass. These profound realities create a bond between the Jewish people, God, and the Church that, while not salvific by itself, is nonetheless special and enduring. They are not merely "in the past," as extreme supersessionism would have it.

**R. Sungenis:** Did Jesus ever assert his Jewish heritage to gain favor with God? Did he ever teach any Jew to do so? No, Jesus never made Jewishness a measure of God's favor. He did precisely the opposite. He condemned those who depended on their Jewish heritage to gain favor with God. They were called Pharisees and we can read all about their attempt to make themselves look more worthy than others by means of their Jewish heritage in the numerous Gospel accounts of their hypocrisy. This alone should be enough to tell Forrest and Palm they are entirely on the wrong track.

Second, the authors treat St. Paul's metaphor of the "olive tree" in Romans 11 as if it is settled doctrine in the Catholic Church, but it is not. There have been a number of views regarding the identities of Paul's metaphors in Romans 11. Although there are some Catholics in history who viewed Israel as the "olive tree" or "root," there were many who didn't.<sup>12</sup> The reason is very simple. If it was Israel, then why are the Jews also viewed as the "branches," for Paul says in Romans 11:17 and 19 that some of the branches

<sup>12</sup> **Cyril of Jerusalem:** Then, when ye were stripped, ye were anointed with exorcised oil, from the very hairs of your head to your feet, and were made partakers of the good olive-tree, Jesus Christ (Catechetical Lectures, XX, 3); **Ignatius:** These things I write to you, thou new olive-tree of Christ" (To the Antiochians, ch. VI);

were broken off. These couldn't refer to Gentiles because the Gentiles had not yet been grafted in. So the next question is: if Jews are the branches, how can they also be the root? Well, one solution is that the root does not refer to Israel, *per se*, but to a select group from Israel, that is, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the very “fathers” Paul alludes to in Romans 11:28 as the reason why God is presently having mercy on the Jews. Another possibility is that the root is Christ himself, the very core of Israel's existence (cf. 1 Cor 10:4-5; Heb 10:26; 1Pet 1:11). But we don't even get a mention of these possibilities from the authors. They seem too busy limiting our vision to seeing only the Jews at large as the fulcrum upon which the rest of eschatology rests.

As for the sources that the authors use to support their view, they are dubious at best. In another case of an attempt to proof-text their way through the issue, the authors extract a non-contextualized quote from Cardinal Ratzinger's book, *Many Religions, One Covenant*, p. 32. The sentence they extract is:

“Before we pursue further the interpretation of the figure of Jesus as it emerges here, we must, however, first ask what this view of the historical figure of Jesus means for the existence of those who know themselves to be grafted through him onto the ‘olive tree Israel,’ the children of Abraham.”

First, the cardinal offers no exegesis of Romans 11 to confirm any particular view, much less one that says Israel is the olive tree. Second, there is no statement that can be extracted from Romans 11 that says “the olive tree Israel.” The olive tree is unidentified in Paul's metaphor. So, from whence might the cardinal be getting this quote, “the olive tree Israel”? Well, the sentence says it comes from “those who know themselves to be grafted through him,” that is, the Jews, not necessarily Cardinal Ratzinger. Be that as it may, how can one be “grafted” into a tree and yet be the tree at the same time? Hence, the “olive tree Israel,” can only mean Abraham and those who followed his faith, not the Jews at large who rejected both God and Abraham. If, rather, one insists that “olive tree Israel” means that the olive tree refers to all of Israel, St. Paul says no. He, inspired by the Holy Spirit who cannot lie, said that the Jews in his day, and ours, are the “branches” that were broken off, not the tree. In the next paragraph of page 32 the Cardinal talks about “the conflict between Jesus and the Judaism of his time,” which would make the reference to “the olive tree Israel” anachronistic, since Paul had not written Romans 11 until about 25 years after Jesus died. Or it may refer to instances in the Old Testament in which the Jews or Israel are spoken of under the figure of an olive tree (cf. Is 17:6; 24:13; Jr 11:16; Hos 14:7; Zec 4:3-12). In any case, the cardinal is preaching no doctrine that the olive tree of Romans 11 must be and can only be Israel.

The authors then cite “St. Augustine to Faustus the Manichean, Bk 9 2, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (NPNF) Vol. IV, p. 176. St. Augustine, Sermons, XXVII, 12 in NPNF, Volume VI, p. 345,” as their next proof. What Augustine actually said to Faustus was this: “the Gentiles, a wild olive tree, were grafted into the good olive, that is, the holy stock of the Hebrews, that they might partake of the fatness of the olive.” But notice that Augustine says “the holy stock of the Hebrews,” not the Hebrews in general. The “holy stock” of the Hebrews is composed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those who followed in their faith,

not the Jews at large. Most of the Jews were not holy. They were sinners and apostates who rejected the God of Abraham and the God whom Abraham looked forward to, Jesus Christ (John 8:56). Moreover, Augustine never says that the olive tree is the nation of Israel or the people of Israel, but the progenitor of Israel, Abraham, the man of faith in Christ. Augustine wrote in another place: "Because it is by faith that God justifies the Gentiles; 'and the Scripture foreseeing this, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed," in order that by this grace of promise the wild olive might be grafted into the good olive, and believing Gentiles might be made children of Abraham, 'in Abraham's seed, which is Christ,'" (*On the Spirit and the Letter*, ch 46).

### **"The Pontifical Biblical Commission" Argument:**

**Forrest and Palm:** Also, in *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, the Pontifical Biblical Commission stated, "The New Testament never says that Israel has been rejected. From the earliest times, the church considered the Jews to be important witnesses to the divine economy of salvation. *She understands her own existence as a participation in the election of Israel and in a vocation that belongs, in the first place, to Israel, despite the fact that only a small number of Israelites accepted it*" and "In the Letter to the Romans, Paul makes clear that for Christians who have come from paganism, what is involved is a participation in Israel's election, God's special people. The Gentiles are 'the wild olive shoot,' 'grafted to the real olive' to 'share the riches of the root' (Rm 11:17, 24). They have no need to boast to the prejudice of the branches. 'It is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you'" (emphasis added).

**R. Sungenis:** And where does the PBC say that Israel is the olive tree? The PBC says that Gentiles participate in "Israel's election, God's special people." But who are "God's special people"? This is the most important question of this debate. Forrest and Palm are trying to convince us that all the "Jews, as Jews" or all "Israel according to the flesh—the Jewish people" are themselves "the special people of God" just because they are Jews. The PBC doesn't affirm such a thesis. It merely refers to "Israel's election," which according to St. Paul in Romans 9:6 and 11:5-11 is not the nation of Israel or the ethnic or biological people called the Jews, but the Jews who have accepted Jesus Christ and consequently are called "the remnant" or "the election." Israel, as a nation, no longer is the "election," for the Old Covenant has been revoked and superseded by the New Covenant, and thus the legal or covenantal status the Jews had with God is completely gone. The only "election" the New Covenant knows is one that incorporates both Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Jesus Christ. Anything else is heresy. If the authors disagree then they need to prove their case from an exegesis of Scripture; citations from Traditional teaching; and the confirmation of Magisterial pronouncements.

### **"The Catholic Catechism's Paragraph 839" Argument:**

**Forrest and Palm: Sixth,** unlike other non-Christian religions, rabbinic Judaism "is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant" (*Catechism*, no. 839). To the extent that rabbinic Judaism adheres to the enduring principles and teachings that have been subsumed into the new and eternal covenant in Christ (for example, principles of morality), that "response" is faithful and true. Conversely, to the extent

that rabbinic Judaism is at odds with those enduring principles and teachings (for example, the identity of the promised Messiah), that “response” is not faithful and true. [28]

**R. Sungenis:** Here is another instance in which the authors simply ‘read into’ the passage what they want to see. Let’s look at the actual wording of paragraph 839 of the 1992 Catholic Catechism. Notice that you find no reference to “rabbinic Judaism,” but only “the Jewish faith” with reference to the faith of Jews in the Old Testament, not today’s religion of Judaism which denies that Jesus Christ is God.

Paragraph 839:

Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways. The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People. When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People, “the first to hear the Word of God.” The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God’s revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews “belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ”, “for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.”

Notice that para. 839 compares “the people of God in the New Covenant” with “the Jewish people, the first to hear the Word of God.” The first to hear the word of God were the Jews in the Old Testament. This is why para. 839 then goes on to say that “the Jewish faith...is already a response to God’s revelation in the Old Covenant” for the faith of holy Jews in the Old Testament was a result of God’s revelation to them. Para. 839 then finishes with the same verse we covered earlier, Romans 9:4-5, a passage that speaks of the past possessions of the Jews, not present possessions. There is simply nothing in para. 839 that refers to present-day “rabbinic Judaism,” but there is something here that tells us about the motivation and desire of Michael Forrest and David Palm, which is to make rabbinic Judaism a God-sanctioned religion that allows the “Jews, as Jews” to merit some special blessing from God. Roy Schoeman pushes the same view of rabbinic Judaism in his book *Salvation is from the Jews*.

### “The Protestant Compared to Jew” Argument:

**Forrest and Palm:** Two other issues common to extreme supersessionism deserve mention. First, proponents of extreme supersessionism often evidence a significant double standard by judging Jews much more harshly for not expressly entering the Church than they do our Protestant brethren. Historically speaking, the Protestants of today are far closer in time to the fathers of their schism than are the Jews to theirs. [29] Therefore, there is certainly at least equal excuse for today’s Jews for not expressly entering the Catholic Church as there is for Protestants. And while the rigorist who is focused on followers of Judaism may argue that at least Protestants “accept Christ,” one may counter that rejection of the Church is also rejection of Christ (Lk. 10:16). As such, perhaps both of these religious communities ought to be given the benefit of the doubt as a whole, charitably assuming basic good will on their part rather than a fully-informed, bad will.

**R. Sungenis:** The main argument against the Jew is not that he refuses to “enter the Catholic Church.” This is merely another strawman that the authors resurrect to minimize the problem. The main problem is that the Jew denies God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, whereas Protestants accept Jesus Christ as God. As the epistles of John state, he who denies that God has come in the flesh is of the antichrist, the same denial of Jesus Christ that “rabbinic Judaism” holds today (cf. 1John 2:22-23; 4:3; 2John 1:7).

**Forrest and Palm:** Additionally, proponents of extreme supersessionism often demand that Jews enter the Church, only to then treat them with suspicion and hostility once they do so. As one traditionalist Catholic commentator expressed it, unfortunately, some of our Catholic brethren “seem less interested in attracting Jews to the Church than in shaking their fists at them.” [30] Perhaps this unwelcoming posture suggests that the story of the Prodigal Son is being replayed with the sons in reversed roles (cf. Lk. 15:11–32).

**R. Sungenis:** If Chris Ferrara would “shake his fist” at Jews who attempt to undermine Catholic doctrine as much as he does to Catholic popes, bishops and priests, we might make even more headway in the Catholic/Jewish dialogue. But as long as Ferrara seeks to distance himself from critiquing the Jewish problem in the Church, we will have people such as Forrest and Palm quoting him for support when, in fact, both parties disagree with each other on a whole host of issues coming out of Vatican II and the post-conciliar popes. Moreover, the Jewish convert who is most guilty for undermining Catholic doctrine with his Judaized slant to the Catholic faith, Roy Schoeman, was criticized severely just a couple of years ago by Ferrara. I know, because I worked on the article in *The Remnant* with Ferrara. But ever since the SPLC included *The Remnant* as one of the “dirty dozen” Catholic institutions who are “anti-semitic,” *The Remnant* has been desperately trying to shake off the label, and Ferrara has more or less done an about-face in the process with regard to the Jewish problem in the Church.

## Concluding Arguments:

### Forrest and Palm: For Our Salvation

While the Church continues to grapple with certain nuances in the relationship among Jews, Christians, and God, she has never taught the dual covenant theory or extreme supersessionism.

Catholics may confidently embrace several complementary truths about the Jewish people. Jews share a common spiritual patrimony and relationship with us that is entirely unique (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4). Unlike other non-Christians, their faith “is already a response to God’s revelation in the Old Covenant” (*Catechism*, no. 839). [31]

**R. Sungenis:** Here we see how an eisegesis of paragraph 839 now becomes the foundation for further resolutions by the authors.

**Forrest and Palm:** They also retain an irrevocable and special relationship with God because of their forefathers, a relationship which continues to be evidenced in several important ways. Yet, this

relationship is not salvific by itself; it finds its ultimate fulfillment in and through Jesus Christ and His Church. Thus, the Gospel and the Church are for all men—Jew and Gentile alike.

**R. Sungenis:** Again, it is not the “Jews as Jews” who retain a “special relationship with God” but the elect Jews, those that will follow the faith of their forefathers.

**Forrest and Palm:** In order to avoid becoming a stumbling block, we must share the Gospel with humility, respect, patience, wisdom, and understanding. [\[32\]](#) As our first Pope wrote, “In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet. 3:15). The exercise of these virtues is particularly vital when sharing the Gospel with our Jewish brethren. May the Lord grant us each the grace to effectively use our particular gifts for the benefit of every soul He desires—whether Jewish or Gentile. And may that joyous day soon arrive when the Jewish people are most fully grafted back into their own olive tree alongside their Gentile brethren.

**R. Sungenis:** As we’ve noted from Scripture, the Jewish people have been and are being “grafted back” into the olive tree. It started at Pentecost when 3000 Jews were added in one afternoon, and it continues, as St. Paul says in Romans 11:23, for any Jew who decides to “discontinue their unbelief.” Luke 1:68-79 is clear that it was at Christ’s First Coming, not his Second, that the “God of Israel visited” the Jews, “the house of David,” a visitation that was “spoken by the prophets” after “his oath to Abraham,” so that the Jews could have “salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.” But Forrest and Palm imply that the word of God has failed, since they are only looking for some future conversion of Jews to fulfill the promises to Abraham. The key they miss is Scripture’s divine analysis to the Jewish problem, for it says in Romans 9:6, “It is not as though the word of God has failed, for not all those from Israel are Israel.” That is, there is only a “remnant chosen by grace” (Rom 11:5) who we expect to accept the Christian gospel at any given time, just as it was in the Old Testament when Elijah said that only 7000 did not bow the knee to Baal out of a nation of millions of people. St. Paul, who received many divine revelations, never once spoke of Jews converting to Christianity *en masse*. If an *en masse* conversion were such an integral and important doctrine we would expect Scripture to give us some clear and consistent indication to its reality. Alas, what we have seen from Forrest and Palm is little more than superficial proof-texts which they string together with no contextual or grammatical exegesis to prove their contentions. What we find in Paul is the exact opposite, for in Romans 11:14 he said: “in order to make my race jealous and thus save some of them,” not all of them. The “all Israel” of Romans 11:26 is not some privileged group of ethnic Jews in the distant future who are saved just before the end so that God can say he kept his promise to the Jews. That is the Premillennial error upon which most evangelical Protestants base their eschatology and Catholics need to distance themselves from it. Rather, “all Israel” comprises all the Jews from Abraham to the end of time who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and they do so because the word of God has not failed. Likewise, the “fullness of the Gentiles” comprises all the Gentiles from Adam until the end of time who have done the same. Together we will reign with Jesus Christ in the New Heaven and New Earth for all eternity, while “the Jews, as Jews,” the former “sons of the kingdom, shall be cast into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:11-12).

The proposal that God has some “special relationship” with “Jews, as Jews” or “Israel according to the flesh” that he does not have with non-Jews is contrary to Scripture, for God shows no favoritism based on race (Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 6:9). There is not one passage in the New Testament that says anything differently, including the question-begging passage Forrest and Palm sought to make their own – Romans 11:28. To teach that God loves Jews more than non-Jews is theological racism, and it has no place in the Catholic religion. Those prelates and Catholic apologists who are now teaching that God shows favoritism to the Jews are flirting with heresy. Unfortunately, if this false doctrine is not stopped, it may turn into the foundational heresy of the predicted apostasy (2Thess 2:3-11).

Robert Sungenis

November 19, 2009

NB: If either Mr. Forrest or Mr. Palm would like to have a public, oral, and recorded debate with me on these issues, I give them an open invitation to do so. All they need to do is inform BTF and we will make the arrangements.

**Endnotes to Forrest and Palm's essay:**

[1] Fr. Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 31–32, 49–52, 104–106.

[2] Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, "Judaism's Way to Salvation," *The Tablet*, March 29, 2008.

[3] Cf. *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4, and [\*Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration "Nostra Aetate" \(n. 4\)\*](#).

[4] Advocates of the dual covenant theory do not necessarily deny that all salvation comes through Jesus Christ. For instance, some contend, "If Jews are in covenant with the God whom Christians understand to be Triune, then they are in relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit, and are related to the saving power of Jesus Christ, even if that is not how Jews experience the relationship" (John T. Pawlikowski, Philip Cunningham, and Mary C. Boys, "Theology's 'Sacred Obligation': A Reply to Cardinal Dulles," *America*, October 14, 2002. Available online at <http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/BoysCunnPaw.htm>). However, such individuals still contend that Jews do not need to be (and should not be) presented with the Gospel and invited to enter Christ's Church because they are already saved within Judaism.

[5] *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* (Consultation of the National Council of Synagogues and The Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, August 12, 2002. Available online at [http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/ncs\\_usccb120802.htm](http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/ncs_usccb120802.htm)). This document was never approved by the bishops of the United States and has been removed from the USCCB website.

Subsequent to the submission of the present article for publication in *Lay Witness*, the USCCB's Committee on Doctrine and Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs issued *A Note on Ambiguities Contained in Reflections on Covenant and Mission* (June 18, 2009. Available online at <http://www.usccb.org/bishops/covenant09.pdf>). In this note, the bishops stated unequivocally that *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* "is not an official statement of the [USCCB]," that some theologians have mistakenly "treated the document as authoritative," and that this has "proven problematic because the section representing Catholic thought contains some statements that are insufficiently precise and potentially misleading." The note also affirms that "[RCM] should not be taken as an authoritative presentation of the teaching of the Catholic Church" and that it could "lead some to conclude mistakenly that Jews have an obligation not to become Christian and that the Church has a corresponding obligation not to baptize Jews." The document concludes, "The fulfillment of the covenants, indeed, of all God's promises to Israel, is found only in Jesus Christ. By God's grace, the right to hear this Good News belongs to every generation. Fulfilling the mandate given her by the Lord, the Church, respecting human freedom, proclaims the truths of the Gospel in love."

[6] Cindy Wooden, "Pope Says Holocaust Denial is 'Intolerable . . . Unacceptable,'" *Catholic News Service*, February 12, 2009, <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0900668.htm>.

[7] John T. Pawlikowski, Philip Cunningham, and Mary C. Boys, "Theology's 'Sacred Obligation': A Reply to Cardinal Dulles."

[8] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," May 19, 1991. Available online at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia//pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_19051991\\_dialogue-and-proclamatio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia//pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html).

[9] Secretariat for Non-Christians, "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission," May 10, 1984. Available online at [www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/eic/pdf/art-Interfaith-attitudenonchristian.pdf](http://www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/eic/pdf/art-Interfaith-attitudenonchristian.pdf).

[10] St. Justin Martyr, chapter 11, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Marcus Dods and George Reith, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01282.htm>.

[11] See [Appendix](#) for selected quotations.

[12] Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*. Available online at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19820306\\_jews-judaism\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820306_jews-judaism_en.html).

[13] Rabbi Zolli took the name "Eugenio" in honor of Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII, because of the Holy Father's efforts on behalf of the Jewish people during World War II. See also *Honey from the Rock* by Roy Schoeman, which relates the stories of 16 Jews who "find the sweetness of Christ."

[14] In 1870, A. S. Thelwall of the Church of England used the term "supersession" to describe Tertullian's views on the Old Covenant as expressed in his treatise *An Answer to the Jews* (available online at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0308.htm>.)

[15] This over-emphasis on discontinuity stands in contrast to the guidelines promulgated by the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: "When commenting on biblical texts, emphasis will be laid on the continuity of our faith with that of the earlier Covenant . . . without minimizing those elements of Christianity which are original. We believe that those promises were fulfilled with the first coming of Christ. But it is nonetheless true that we still await their perfect fulfillment in his glorious return at the end of time" (*Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration "Nostra Aetate" (n. 4)*).

[16] Avery Cardinal Dulles, "The Covenant with Israel," *First Things*, November 2005, [http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=256](http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=256).

[17] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Many Religions, One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999), pp. 70–71.

Avery Cardinal Dulles also echoed this view in "The Covenant with Israel": "We may say that the Old Covenant is in a sense abolished while being at the same time fulfilled. The law of Christ gives a definitive interpretation to the Torah of Moses. Yet the ancient rites retain their value as signs of what was to come. The priesthood, the temple, and the sacrifices are not extinct; they survive in a super-eminent way in Christ and the Church."

This view may also be found in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, the preface of which was written by then-Cardinal Ratzinger: "Paul mentions more than once the covenant-law of Sinai, he contrasts it with the covenant-promise of Abraham. *The covenant-law is later and provisional* (Ga 3:19–25). The covenant-promise is prior and definitive (Ga 3:16–18). From the beginning it has a universal openness. It finds its fulfillment in Christ." (no. 41, emphasis added. Available online at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20020212\\_popolo-ebraico\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_popolo-ebraico_en.html)).

[18] *Lumen Gentium*, no. 9; *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4; *Ad Gentes*, no. 5; *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 25; *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 20.

[19] Rom. 9:3–5; 1 Cor. 10:18. Additionally:

"But this does not mean that there is nothing more to be said about . . . 'Israel according to the flesh'" (*Many Religions, One Covenant*, p. 69).

"Hand in hand with this belief goes the other, that Israel still has a mission to accomplish today" (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2002), p. 149).

"We also know that while history still runs its course even this standing at the door fulfills a mission, one that is important for the world. In that way [the Jewish] people still has a special place in God's plans" (*Ibid.*, p. 150).

"If such a dialogue is to be fruitful, it must begin with a prayer to our God, first of all that he might grant to us Christians a greater esteem and love for that people, the people of Israel, to whom belong 'the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs are the patriarchs, and from them comes Christ according to the flesh, he who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen' (Romans 9:4–5), and this not only in the past, but still today, 'for the gifts and the call of

God are irrevocable' (Romans 11:29)" (Cardinal Ratzinger, "The Heritage of Abraham," *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 29, 2000).

Question: "God has not, then, retracted his word that Israel is the Chosen People?" Cardinal Ratzinger: "No, because he is faithful" (*God and the World*, p. 150).

"They are still Israel, the way the Jews are still Jews and are still a people, even during the two thousand years when they had no country" (Ibid., p. 148).

"It is in God's hands, of course, just in what way, when and how the reuniting of Jews and Gentiles, the reunification of God's people, will be achieved" (Ibid, p. 150, emphasis added).

"This means that all nations, *without the abolishment of the special mission of Israel*, become brothers and receivers of the promises of the Chosen People; *they become People of God with Israel* through adherence to the will of God and through acceptance of the Davidic kingdom" (*Many Religions, One Covenant*, p. 28, emphasis added).

[20] God has an irrevocable love and concern for Israel according to the flesh because of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not because of Israel's righteousness. Therefore, that bond is not broken even by their failure to expressly accept the Messiah and His Church. Evidence of this dynamic may also be found in Deuteronomy 9:4–6: "Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land; but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people."

[21] Rom. 11:12, 15, and 25; Lk. 13:35/Mt. 23:39; Lk. 21:24; Hos. 3:5; Deut. 4:30; Is. 59:20; Mic. 2:12; Mal. 4:5–6.

[22] Jacob Michael, *Never Revoked by God: The Place of Israel in the Future of the Church* (Lulu, 2006, <http://books.lulu.com/content/448192>); [http://www.sungenisandthejews.com/Addenda\\_and\\_Bio.html](http://www.sungenisandthejews.com/Addenda_and_Bio.html); and <http://sungenisandthejews.blogspot.com/2008/02/theology-of-prejudice.html>.

[23] See also *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*:

"[St. Paul] emphasises that 'God has not cast off his people' (Rm 11:2). Since 'the root is holy' (11:16), Paul is convinced that at the end, God, in his inscrutable wisdom, will graft all Israel back onto their own olive tree (11:24); 'all Israel will be saved' (11:26)" (no. 36)

“God does not abandon [Israel]. His plan is to show them mercy. ‘The hardening’ which affects ‘a part of’ Israel is *only provisional and has its usefulness for the time being* (11:25); *it will be followed by salvation* (11:26). Paul sums up the situation in an antithetical phrase, followed by a positive affirmation:

‘As regards the Gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable’ (11:28–29).

Paul views the situation realistically. Between Christ’s disciples and the Jews who do not believe in him, the relation is one of opposition. These Jews call the Christian faith into question; they do not accept that Jesus is their Messiah (*Christ*) and the Son of God. Christians cannot but contest the position of these Jews. But at a level deeper than opposition there exists from now on a loving relationship that is definitive; *the other is only temporary.*” (no. 81)

[24] Dual covenant proponents generally seem to acknowledge this eschatological expectation; however, they erroneously interpret it as a reason to deny that the Church’s Great Commission currently extends to Jews. To them, Jewish entrance into the Church is *solely* a matter of the “last days.” The USCCB’s recent document [A Note on Ambiguities Contained in Reflections on Covenant and Mission](#) specifically addresses this error, stating that “Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God fulfills both in history and at the end of time the special relationship that God established with Israel” (no. 5). Bishop Lori, chairman of one of the committees that promulgated the *Note*, further amplified this point by stating that the Church does not “fail to witness to [the Jewish people] her faith in Christ, nor to welcome them to share in that same faith whenever appropriate,” and “we see [the New Covenant in Christ] as fulfilling God’s plan for the salvation of all peoples, both *now and at the end of time*” (emphasis added, <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2009/09-141.shtml> ). Thus, the entrance of Jews into the New Covenant in Christ is both a current matter of interest to the Church *and* an eschatological one.

[25] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World*, p. 148.

[26] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Many Religions, One Covenant*, p. 32. St. Augustine to Faustus the Manichean, Bk 9 2, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (NPNF) Vol. IV, p. 176. St. Augustine, *Sermons*, XXVII, 12 in NPNF, Volume VI, p. 345. Romans 11:17–24. See also [The Root of Romans 11](#).

Also, in *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, the Pontifical Biblical Commission stated, “The New Testament never says that Israel has been rejected. From the earliest times, the church considered the Jews to be important witnesses to the divine economy of salvation. *She understands her own existence as a participation in the election of Israel and in a vocation that belongs, in the first place, to Israel, despite the fact that only a small number of Israelites accepted it*” and “In the Letter to the Romans, Paul makes clear that for Christians who have come from paganism, what is involved is a participation in Israel’s election, God’s special people. The Gentiles are ‘the wild olive shoot,’ ‘grafted to the real olive’ to ‘share the riches of the root’ (Rm 11:17, 24). They have no need

to boast to the prejudice of the branches. ‘It is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you’” (emphasis added).

[27] Pope Pius XI speaking to a group of German pilgrims on September 20, 1938, quoted in Robert Martin, *Spiritual Semites: Catholics and Jews during World War II* (New York, NY: Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, 1983), p. 18.

[28] *Dei Verbum*, nos. 15–16: “[The books of the Old Testament], though they also *contain some things which are incomplete and temporary*, nevertheless show us true divine pedagogy. . . . God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New. For, though Christ established the new covenant in His blood (see Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), still the books of the Old Testament with all their parts, caught up into the proclamation of the Gospel, *acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament*” (emphasis added).

And *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration “Nostra Aetate”* (n. 4): “An effort will be made to acquire a better understanding of *whatever in the Old Testament retains its own perpetual value* (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 14–15)” (emphasis added).

[29] “Schism” is used here in the broad sense.

[30] Christopher Ferrara, “Cardinal Kasper and the Good Friday Prayer,” *Remnantnewspaper.com*, March 5, 2008.

[31] It should perhaps also be noted that modern, rabbinic Judaism differs from the Judaism of Christ’s day in some significant ways. For instance, the Jewish Temple was destroyed in AD 70, and the Old Testament sacrifices commanded by God subsequently ceased. Judaism has also added writings to the Old Testament scriptures that they consider to be holy—the Talmud. However, unlike the Old Testament, the Church does not recognize the Talmud as being either inspired or inerrant. Additionally, today there are several different sects of Judaism, for instance: Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Humanist, and Reform. Between and even within these sects, beliefs and practice vary significantly. (See <http://www.jewfaq.org/movement.htm> and <http://judaism.about.com/od/denominationsofjudaism/p/branches.htm>.)

[32] Cf. *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 2: “This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.”

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