

The Erroneous Teachings of “Catholics for Israel”

At http://www.israelcatholic.com/component/option.com_frontpage/Itemid,123/lang,en/, various and sundry claims about the Jews and Israel are being disseminated as Catholic teaching. Suffice it to say, they are not Catholic teachings. We expose them in this critique. The site does not reveal the author of the material, nor does it mention the name of any person associated with the website. We obtained the address of the website through a patron that obtained it from the website of Jewish convert, Roy Schoeman.

In the following critique of Catholics for Israel’s teaching, CFI represents Catholics for Israel.

CFI: What do we mean by Catholics “for Israel”?

Catholics for Israel is an apostolate faithful to the Magisterium, the living teaching office of the Church to whom Jesus has entrusted the task of authentically interpreting the word of God (DV 10). This means that official magisterial teachings of the Catholic Church, most especially chapter 4 of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, form the core of our beliefs concerning Israel and the Jewish people.

The Church and the Jewish People as Formulated in *Nostra Aetate*

For the first time in the history of the Church, the declaration *Nostra Aetate* (promulgated at the Second Vatican Council in 1965) laid a positive foundation for a theology of Israel and of the Jewish people.

This document affirmed:

the spiritual bond between Christians and the Jewish people.

R. Sungenis: What is a “spiritual bond”? Would it not have to be a bond in which we share the same spiritual beliefs and practices? If so, then how can Catholics have such a bond with people who deny that Jesus Christ is God, the very essence of the Christian faith? The denial of Christ’s deity is the very essence of the Jewish people and the religion of Judaism. In other words, the Jews believe Jesus Christ was a fraud. Hence, *Nostra Aetate* does not teach that Christians and Jews have a “spiritual bond,” rather, it says they “have a common spiritual heritage.” A “heritage” refers to the original source of both groups, not that both groups still remain

bonded. The original source is Abraham, but unfortunately, the Jews at large rejected the faith of Abraham, the very person who looked forward to Jesus Christ (John 8:56-58).

CFI: that the Church received the Old Testament from the people of Israel.

R. Sungenis: Actually, the Church received the Old Testament from the faithful people of Israel, from Moses and David and those like them. We did not receive it from the “people of Israel” at large. Most of the people of Israel were faithless sinners who were rejected by God for their apostasy, and it is this same disbelief that reigns among the Jewish people today, the very people with whom “Catholics for Israel” claims we have a “spiritual bond.”

CFI: that the Church “draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree (Israel) onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles” (Rom 11:17-24).

R. Sungenis: Unlike the CFI version, *Nostra Aetate* does not contain the word “Israel” in its quote of Romans 11:17-24. St. Paul does not say that “Israel” is the olive tree. In fact, St. Paul does not identify the olive tree at all. However, since St. Paul refers the “branches that were broken off” the olive tree to the unbelievers from Israel (Romans 11:7-11), then the only people from Israel that remained on the tree are the faithful Jews, not the nation at large. Unfortunately, the faithful of Israel only made up a small percentage of Jews in Israel. As Romans 11:5 states, the percentage in Elijah’s time was miniscule -- 7000 out of a nation of millions.

CFI: that Jesus the Messiah has by his cross “reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in himself” (Eph 2:14-16).

R. Sungenis: Not quite. The Greek of Eph 2:16 is in the subjunctive case and is referring to the work that Jesus did to make it POSSIBLE for Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled, not that Jews and Gentiles are automatically reconciled merely because Christ went to the cross. The only way Jews and Gentiles can be reconciled with each other is if they are first reconciled with Christ. Once they both accept Christ, only then can there be reconciliation, and only then is there a “spiritual bond.”

CFI: that to the Jewish people belong “the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Messiah according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:4-5).

R Sungenis: Not quite. The Greek does not have the verb “belong.” The New American Bible is more correct in its translation, which has “They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises” (Rom 9:4 NAB). In other words, the Israelites had AT ONE TIME possessed the adoption, covenants, giving of the law,

worship and promises, but no longer. If the Israelites still had these blessings, then nothing was changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament. But the New Testament says with certainty that all the items in Romans 9:4 were abolished because they were finally fulfilled in the New Covenant (cf., 2 Cor 3:6-14; Eph 2:14-16; Col. 2:14-15; Hebrews 7:18; 8:1-13; 10:9).

CFI: that the apostles and most of the early disciples were Jews.

R. Sungenis: Yes, in fulfillment of the prophecies that stated that God would save the Jews (cf. Luke 1:67-79). Unfortunately, after that short interval, most of the Jews rejected Christ, so much so, that St. Paul decided to forsake his ministry to the Jews and go to the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-48).

CFI: that despite the fact that many Jews rejected Jesus and the Gospel, “God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers” and “does not repent of his gifts and his calling to them” (Rom 11:28-29).

R. Sungenis: Of course, we would expect nothing less from God, for God made a promise to Abraham that if any Jew would believe and obey like Abraham, that Jew could also be saved with Abraham (Romans 4:1-24). Salvation is the “gift and calling” of God, and it is the very reason why it is still possible that Jews can be saved today, even though God rejected them as a national entity in 33 AD. The whole context of Romans 11 is speaking about the possibility of salvation, not some special favor God gives the Jews just because they are Jews (cf. Romans 11:14, 23)

CFI: that Jews and Christians will one day worship and serve the Lord together with one voice.

R. Sungenis: They all ready do. Jews have been converting to the Christian faith for 20 centuries. Unfortunately, the number who convert has not increased from the number that came out of Israel three millennia ago. As God told Elijah, only 7000 out of a nation of millions of Jews in the 9th century BC converted their hearts to God. The rest worshiped the devil (Romans 11:3-5). Additionally, there is no promise in the Old or New Testament that says we can expect any great mass of Jews and Gentiles worshipping together than we have already witnessed.

CFI: the importance of mutual respect and understanding as the fruit of common study and dialogue.

R. Sungenis: This goes without saying. There is no group of people to whom we witness of Jesus Christ that we are to show disrespect or misunderstand.

CFI: that although “the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today.”

R. Sungenis: Yes, it is obvious that those who were not there at the time of Jesus’ death cannot be charged with Jesus’ death. By the same token, this also means that the Jews present at Jesus’ death are liable for his death, and thus it is incorrect to say, as some Jewish scholars have said, that the Jews had nothing to do with the death of Christ and all the blame should be put on the Romans.

CFI: that consequently, “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures;” and so the Church “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.”

R. Sungenis: Correct. St. Paul says in Romans 11:1 that God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. But the immediately following context that defines what God means by his decision not to reject them concerns only the offer of salvation to the Jews, not that God is still regarding the Jews and the nation of Israel as a separate and privileged people as He did in the Old Testament. God’s interest in the New Covenant is in saving the Jew from his Jewish religion which denies that Jesus Christ is God and denies that he offered the atonement for the sins of the world. Hence, when St. Paul says that “God has not rejected his people,” he means that God, even though he judged the nation of Israel at large as apostate, has not rejected ALL of the Jewish people, for He will save any Jew then or today who wants to be saved.

CFI: that it remains nonetheless “the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.”

R. Sungenis: Precisely my point above.

CFI: Open Questions

While *Nostra Aetate* has provided an essential foundation for a positive Catholic theology of Israel, it has but laid the most basic building blocks of this foundation, while leaving many questions open and unanswered. Examples of such questions are:

Given that God’s gifts and calling to Israel are irrevocable, even while a majority of the Jewish people has to this day not accepted the Gospel, what exactly is Israel’s role in God’s plan of salvation since the coming of Jesus the Messiah?

R. Sungenis: This is not an “open question,” since neither the Bible nor the Church has ever taught that Israel (the nation and its people in the Middle East) has a unique or special role in

God's plan of salvation other than what has already been stated, that is, that the Jews, since they have not been forsaken in *toto*, still have the invitation to join the Catholic Church and become parishioners or priests. Those who try to establish a unique role for the Jews just because they are Jews are rejecting the teachings of both the Bible and the Church.

CFI: Jesus' great commission to the Church to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) remains intact, particularly to the Jewish people since the gospel is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the non-Jew" (Rom 1:16). How should the Church faithfully express her missionary calling to the Jewish people in respect, sensitivity, and love, mindful of not repeating regrettable abuses that were committed in the past?

R. Sungenis: First, neither *Nostra Aetate* nor any other official teaching of the Catholic Church has said that the Catholic Church committed "regrettable abuses...in the past" against the Jews. Second, the phrase of St. Paul's in Romans 1:16 is not to be interpreted as if the Jews, above any other ethnic group, have a priority in receiving the Great Commission. Hence, CFI's statement that the "great commission...remains intact, particularly to the Jewish people" is fallacious. In the Greek language, the clause "to the Jew first and also for the Greek" means that Paul will preach the Gospel to the Jews and Greeks first. This was fitting since Rome was filled with both groups, but not with "barbarians and the ignorant."

CFI: How should Jews who encounter Jesus the Messiah and find the fullness of truth in the Catholic Church continue to live and express their Jewish identity as Catholics Jews?

R. Sungenis: They aren't. This is precisely the destructive ethnic distinction that St. Paul tried to dispel from the Jews, and a teaching that the Catholic Church upheld throughout her history, especially at the Council of Florence. If the Jew wants to become Christian, then he must forsake all the Jewish identity markers of the Old Testament, for they were merely types and shadows that mean nothing today because they have all been fulfilled in Christ (Col. 2:15-16; Gal 3:1-5; 5:1-4). Instead, the converted Jew should be asking himself how he can better promote the beliefs and practices of the Christian faith at the same time he seeks to divest himself of his strictly Jewish identity. A true Jew, as St. Paul teaches in Romans 2:28-29, is not someone who is circumcised in the flesh, but who is circumcised in the heart. Hence, all Christians are spiritual Jews, for physical Jews do not count for anything as far as God is concerned, except as a group of people who need to be saved and to whom the invitation of salvation remains open.

CFI: How should Catholics of Jewish origin relate to the Torah and to the observance of its commandments?

R. Sungenis: The simple answer is, by accepting what the Catholic Church has accepted from the Torah, and rejecting what the Catholic Church has rejected from the Torah. This is not an “open question” for Jews to decide. Jewish Christians are under the authority of the Catholic Church, and only what the Catholic Church deems fitting from the Torah can be assimilated. As such, the Catholic Church has stated quite clearly throughout her history, and made even more definitive in the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church, that all rituals, types, symbols and any other Jewish identity markers used in the Torah, have no meaning today and are not to be adopted by anyone. The only part of the Torah that the Church has taken as its own is the moral commands, for they were created by God long before the Jews existed.

CFI: Given that God’s gifts and calling to Israel are irrevocable, one of the most central of these gifts is the land of Israel – a gift that was never revoked by the New Testament. What is the significance of the land of Israel today and of the recent return of the Jewish people to the land of their forefathers?

R. Sungenis: Here we notice another insertion of words into the biblical text. The author says “Given that God’s gifts and calling to Israel are irrevocable,” but the actual text says, “for the gifts and call of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29). St. Paul is merely giving us a general truth of God, that is, if God promises something, he does not go back on his word, whether it applies to Jews or Gentiles or anything else.

The New Testament did, indeed, revoke the land of Israel from the Jews, since the Jews who were once given the land of Israel had those property rights revoked when the Old Covenant was revoked (2Cor 3:6-14; Hebrew 8:1-13). The Torah is clear that the land of Israel was part and parcel with the covenant between God and Israel. Hence, if there is no separate covenant for the Jews then there is no separate land for the Jews. Accordingly, the New Testament mentions nothing about the Jews being able to keep the land of Israel, especially in Romans 11 right after the verse in question (i.e., verse 29: “for the gifts and call of God are irrevocable”). The remaining verses, Romans 11:30-33, only speak of God offering salvation to the Jews, not a parcel of land in the Middle East. It is only Jewish political aspirations that seek to support the occupation of Israel as a divine right, otherwise known as Zionism, the very political movement that the author of Catholics for Israel advances.

CFI: Statement of Faith

In light of *Nostra Aetate* and of the above questions, Catholics for Israel proposes the following statement of faith:

Concerning the Jewish people:

We DO:

affirm an unconditional love for the Jewish people, our “elder brothers in the faith.”

R. Sungenis: That depends on what “unconditional love” means. If it means that Catholics are to preach the Gospel to the Jews despite how the Jews continually reject the Gospel, then the phrase is being used correctly. But if the implication of “unconditional love for the Jewish people” is that the Jewish people are to be favored over any other ethnic group or race of people, it is not only wrong, it is sinful, for God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:9-10). Moreover, the only Jews who are our “elder brothers in the faith” are those like Abraham who waited and believed in the future Messiah, Jesus Christ (John 8:56: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad”). All other Jews are neither “brothers” nor “in the faith.”

CFI: oppose anti-Semitism in all its forms, including under its currently common disguise of anti-Zionism.

R. Sungenis: We notice here that the author does not give a definition of “anti-semitism,” but the implication of his words is that if one does not agree with his Zionistic stance that the Jews are to have the land of Palestine by divine right (which is the essence of Zionism), then one is to be regarded as an “anti-semite.” This is about as close to a mortal sin and apostasy as one could be, for it not only rejects the Catholic Church’s teaching that the OT prophecies of a restoration of Israel refer to the Catholic Church herself (cf. Lumen Gentium 2, 9; Ad Gentes 1, 5; Acts 15:16-18), it reintroduces the very ethnic and nationalistic distinctions that St. Paul and the other New Testament writer says are “anathema” (Gal. 1:8-9; 5:1-4; Col 2:15-16). The proper understanding of “anti-semitism” is an irrational hatred of the Jews simply because they are Jews. It is a mortal sin. “Anti-Zionism” is a rejection of the political belief that the land of Palestine belongs to the Jews alone.

CFI: call Christians to repent from past and present anti-Semitic acts, words, and attitudes.

R. Sungenis: Granted. If any Christian espouses anti-semitism, he is to repent. At the same time, any Christian who espouses philosemitism is to repent as well. Philosemitism is the favoring of Jews simply because they are Jews. Once again, God is no respecter of persons. Jews and Gentiles are alike in His eyes. Only those who accept God and his son Jesus Christ are favored by God.

CFI: affirm the irrevocable and permanent nature of God’s covenant with the Jewish people and oppose the false teaching of replacement theology (supercessionism), which claims that the Church has replaced Israel as God’s chosen people.

R. Sungenis: The author has now made his most blatant rejection of the clear and consistent teaching of the Catholic Church, which has taught for nearly 2000 years that the Jewish

covenant has been revoked and superseded by the New Covenant and the Catholic Church. Here are those teachings in brief:

- **Hebrews 7:18:** “On the one hand, a former commandment is annulled because of its weakness and uselessness...”
- **Hebrews 10:9:** “Then he says, ‘Behold, I come to do your will.’ He takes away the first [covenant] to establish the second [covenant]...”
- **2 Corinthians 3:14:** “For to this day when they [the Jews] read the Old Covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away”
- **Hebrews 8:7:** “For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another”
- **Colossians 2:14:** “Having canceled the written code, with its decrees, that was against us and stood opposed to us; He took it away nailing it to the cross”
- **Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*,** para. 29: “...the New Testament took the place of the Old Law which had been abolished...but on the gibbet of His death Jesus made void the Law with its decrees fastened the handwriting of the Old Testament to the Cross”
- **The Catechism of the Council of Trent:** “...the people, aware of the abrogation of the Mosaic Law...”
- **Council of Florence:** “that the matter pertaining to the law of the Old Testament, of the Mosaic law...although they were suited to the divine worship at that time, after our Lord’s coming had been signified by them, ceased, and the sacraments of the New Testament began”
- **Council of Trent:** “but not even the Jews by the very letter of the law of Moses were able to be liberated or to rise therefrom”
- **Cardinal Ratzinger:** “Thus the Sinai [Mosaic] Covenant is indeed superseded” (*Many Religions – One Covenant*, p. 70).
- **St. John Chrysostom:** “Yet surely Paul’s object everywhere is to annul this Law....And with much reason; for it was through a fear and a horror of this that the Jews obstinately opposed grace” (*Homily on Romans*, 6:12); “And so while no one annuls a man’s covenant, the covenant of God after four hundred and thirty years is annulled; for if not that covenant but another instead of it bestows what is promised, then is it set aside, which is most unreasonable” (*Homily on Galatians*, Ch 3)

- **St. Augustine:** “Instead of the grace of the law which has passed away, we have received the grace of the gospel which is abiding; and instead of the shadows and types of the old dispensation, the truth has come by Jesus Christ. Jeremiah also prophesied thus in God’s name: ‘Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...’ Observe what the prophet says, not to Gentiles, who had not been partakers in any former covenant, but to the Jewish nation. He who has given them the law by Moses, promises in place of it the New Covenant of the gospel, that they might no longer live in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit” (*Letters*, 74, 4)
- **Justin Martyr:** Now, 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; and an eternal and final law – namely, Christ – has been given to us, and the covenant is trustworthy...Have you not read...by Jeremiah, concerning this same new covenant, He thus speaks: ‘Behold, the days come,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...’” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch 11).

The Catholic Church and the New Testament also teach (contrary to “Catholics for Israel”) that the Catholic Church has replaced Israel as the chosen people of God. For example, Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* 2, 9 states: “Christ instituted this new covenant, namely, the new covenant in his blood; he called a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one...and this race would be the new people of God. For those who believe in Christ...are finally established as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...who in times past were not a people, but now are the People of God’ (1 Peter 2:9-10). Hence, only converted Jews and Gentiles now make up the Chosen People of God. The New Testament does not contain any reference to the Jews alone, especially unconverted Jews, as being the Chosen People of God.

CFI: affirm the Church’s faith that Israel’s calling, destiny and salvation can only be accomplished in union with Jesus, Messiah of Israel and King of the Jews, who was sent first and foremost to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 15:24) and wept over Jerusalem’s rejection of Him (Luke 19:41), and that union with Jesus is most fully attained in the Catholic Church.

R. Sungenis: If the author is implying by his grammar that Israel has a special calling and destiny over and above the Gentiles or any other race or ethnic group on earth, and that this special calling and destiny is to be accomplished as a solitary blessing for Israel, he is not teaching Catholic truth. In the New Testament, Israel’s calling and destiny does not begin anew, making Israel the pinnacle of God’s work, when the Jews accept Christ as Messiah. Rather, the Jews are assimilated into the Catholic Church and become its ordinary members just as everyone else in the world who joins the Catholic Church. There is no special place or extra divine blessing in

being Jewish or being a convert who is Jewish. If anything, the Jews should more fittingly assume a posture of humility when they join the Catholic Church considering that their ancestors killed the Messiah and disbelieved and ridiculed his Church for the past 20 centuries.

CFI: affirm, therefore, the permanence of Church's missionary mandate, divinely ordained by the Word of God, to propose the Gospel of salvation "to the Jew first."

R. Sungenis: Again, this is a misconstruing of St. Paul's wording in Romans 1:16. It does not mean that the Jew has priority over the Gentile in receiving the Gospel. In context it means that the Jews and the Greeks will receive the Gospel first since that was St. Paul's major audience as he traveled throughout Asia minor and Europe.

CFI: reject, therefore, the false teaching of dual-covenant theology, which would have the Jews attain salvation through the Old Covenant and observance of the Torah, while Gentiles attain salvation through Jesus the Messiah. Although "the Torah is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12), it remains nonetheless that "a man is not justified by the works of the Torah [law] but by faith in Jesus Christ... for by the works of the Torah no flesh shall be justified... for if righteousness comes through the Torah, then Christ died in vain" (Gal 2:16, 21).

R. Sungenis: Here the author shows his utter confusion in theology. Earlier he taught that we are to "affirm the irrevocable and permanent nature of God's covenant with the Jewish people and oppose the false teaching of replacement theology (supersessionism) [sic]." If so, then this would allow for the existence of two covenants, one for the Jewish people that was established in the Old Testament, and one for the Church which was established in the New Testament. But if there are two covenants existing at the same time, then it is a "dual-covenant theology," the very teaching that the author says he repudiates. The author tries to escape the contradictory nature of his formulation by claiming that "dual-covenant theology" refers to saying that the Jews can attain salvation through the Old Covenant; while he earlier defined "supersessionism" as "the false teaching of replacement theology (supersessionism) [sic] which claims that the Church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people." The truth is, there is no difference between "dual-covenant theology" and the denial of supersessionism. Any establishment of a continuing covenant exclusively for the Jews is both a denial of supersessionism and an advocacy of dual-covenant theology. The reason is simple. All covenants from the Old Testament have found their fulfillment in Christ, and Christ established only one covenant, the New Covenant. All other covenants have either been revoked or have been coalesced into the New Covenant.

CFI: affirm that, since the Church is "the all-embracing means of salvation" in which alone "the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained" (UR 3), "Church and Judaism cannot then be

seen as two parallel ways of salvation and the Church must witness to Christ as the Redeemer for all" (NJJ I.7).

R. Sungenis: Correct, but this does not mean that once the Jews are converted to the Church they now assume a special or unique program from God or are to be favored above any other converts, for God is no respecter of persons.

CFI: affirm the need for establishing a Jewish-Catholic community where Catholic Jews will be able to live a genuinely Catholic life, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus the Messiah and of His Catholic Church, while at the same time remaining entirely faithful to the Torah and to Israel's cultural and religious heritage. This is in accordance with the first community of Jewish Christians who were "all zealous for the Torah" (Acts 21:20) - for Jesus did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them (Mat 5:17-20).

R. Sungenis: As noted earlier, the wish to be "entirely faithful to the Torah and to Israel's cultural and religious heritage" was condemned at the Council of Florence and has not been modified in any Catholic doctrinal teaching either before or after the Council of Florence. The passage in Acts 21:20 is taken out of context by the author. The context shows that St. Paul was teaching precisely the opposite of what the author is contending, that is, that the Jews should NOT be observing the laws of the Torah. Paul reiterated this prohibition throughout the book of Acts, and also in Colossian 2:15-16; Galatians 5:1-4 and many other places. The author also takes Matthew 5:17-18 out of context. Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets in the New Covenant, not by a continuation of the Old Covenant. If not, then Jesus would be contradicting the Holy Spirit who wrote in Hebrews 7:18 and 8:1-13 and 10:9 that the Old Covenant has been revoked and replaced by the New Covenant. Analogously, if I hire a worker under a contract to do a job for me, when he completes that job the contract is over, for it has been fulfilled. If I want him to do another job, I must make another contract with him.

CFI: We do NOT:

Pretend to love the Jewish people and support Israel as a cover-up for missionary activity.

R. Sungenis: My suggestion is that the author cultivate a love for all unsaved people, not just unsaved Jews. Preaching the Gospel primarily to Jews is showing favoritism based on race.

CFI: Favor disrespectful or aggressive proselytizing of the Jewish people on the part of Christians.

R. Sungenis: The author's remarks go without saying.

CFI: Concerning the land and people of Israel:

We DO:

believe that God's promise of the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was never revoked by Jesus and the New Covenant, and that this promise remains valid to this day.

R. Sungenis: As we noted earlier, a revocation of the Old Covenant means a revocation of the land that was under the Old Covenant. The two cannot be separated, since the latter is legally bound up with the former. Moreover, God already fulfilled his promise of land to the Jews in the Old Testament. In three separate places, Scripture says that God fulfilled all the promises of land for the Jews that he originally promised to Abraham, and that there is no more land promised by God for the Jews, since He has fulfilled his promise once and did not promise it a second time. (See Joshua 21:43-45; 1 King 8:56; Nehemiah 9:7-8).

43 And so the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to their fathers he would give them. Once they had conquered and occupied it, 44 the LORD gave them peace on every side, just as he had promised their fathers. Not one of their enemies could withstand them; the LORD brought all their enemies under their power. 45 Not a single promise that the LORD made to the house of Israel was broken; every one was fulfilled. (Jos 21:43-45 NAB)

56 "Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he promised. Not a single word has gone unfulfilled of the entire generous promise he made through his servant Moses. (1Ki 8:56 NAB)

7 "You, O LORD, are the God who chose Abram, who brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and named him Abraham. 8 When you had found his heart faithful in your sight, you made the covenant with him to give to him and his posterity the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites. These promises of yours you fulfilled, for you are just. (Neh 9:7-8 NAB)

CFI: believe that the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel in the last century bears prophetic significance, and we therefore affirm the theological plausibility of a moderate biblical Zionism.

R. Sungenis: As noted earlier, this view is based on the author's repudiation of the Catholic Church's two-thousand year old teaching that the prophecies concerning a restoration of Israel, (outside of the second temple of Ezra-Nehemiah), refer prophetically to the Catholic Church alone (cf., *Lumen Gentium* 2, 9 and Acts 15:16-18). Moreover, the Catholic Church does not teach or sanction a "biblical Zionism," moderate or otherwise.

CFI: believe that though the modern state of Israel is in itself a secular entity, it may well be a “first step” towards the final redemption of the Jewish people.

R. Sungenis: We wish it were, but the evidence shows that Israel is just as closed to the Gospel as they were when it was established in 1948. Conversely, some Jewish converts teach, quite erroneously, that the “fullness of the Gentiles” came in 1967 with the Six-day war, and that a flood of converts started coming out of Israel after that time. The sad fact is, the amount of converts in Israel today is as dismal as it was prior to 1967. The proper way to convert the Jewish people to Christianity is not to tie the Jewish people’s hopes to the physical land of Israel but to the land of the kingdom of heaven, the New Jerusalem from heaven. In fact, the more that the hopes of the salvation of the Jews is tied to either Zionism or the land of modern Israel, the less the Jews will convert to Christianity, for God will not bless a Gospel that has been tainted by racism or national pride.

CFI: believe that the state of Israel has the right to defend itself against acts of terrorism carried out against it and its people; that it should, however, always exercise great caution and restraint in order to not harm innocent civilians.

R. Sungenis: These are admirable ideals, but unfortunately, there must be a lot of work done in order to convince the Israelis that the days of Joshua’s cherems are over, for the recent genocide in Gaza is a strong indication that Israel believes it has the right to take the lives of innocent civilians with impunity.

CFI: encourage and promote reconciliation, peace and justice for all of the inhabitants of the Holy Land today.

R. Sungenis: Granted, but this cannot be done by elevating the Jew above the Arab. Both must be on the same level.

CFI: call all inhabitants of Israel, Israelis and Palestinians, to repent and turn away from the grave evils that currently afflict Israeli and Palestinian society such as violence and hatred, corruption and dishonesty, discrimination and injustice, promiscuity, prostitution, pornography, abortion, and the increasing normalization of homosexuality.

R. Sungenis: Granted, but “Catholics for Israel” should not call for such cessation of sinful activity while at the same time promoting “Zionism” and claiming that Israel has sole right to the land of Palestine, for such hubris will only incite the Arabs and Palestinians to reject the Jews.

CFI: Call all inhabitants of Israel, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews, Christians and Muslims, to conversion to the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah, the prince of peace, through whom is found forgiveness, reconciliation with God and with one another, and eternal life.

R. Sungenis: And do so with the stipulation that all these groups are equal in the eyes of God and that the Jew does not hold some place of divine favor above anyone else.

CFI: Call all Christians in the Holy Land to greater faithfulness and unity in living and sharing the gospel of Jesus the Messiah.

R. Sungenis: We should call all Christians EVERYWHERE, not just the “Holy Land,” to a “greater faithfulness and unity in living and sharing the gospel of Jesus the Messiah.”

CFI: We do NOT:

attribute a Messianic significance to the modern state of Israel in its present form.

R. Sungenis: The author uses many ambiguous terms and here is no exception. Earlier he said that the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel in the last century “bears prophetic significance,” and therefore affirms the theological plausibility of a “moderate biblical Zionism.” What does “prophetic significance” and “moderate biblical Zionism” mean? Now the author uses another ambiguous term, “Messianic significance,” which, ironically, seems to contradict the idea that the Jews’ return to Israel “bears prophetic significance.”

CFI: advocate the rebuilding of the Temple and re-establishment of animal sacrifices.

R. Sungenis: But the author wrote earlier that the Jews are to “remain[] entirely faithful to the Torah and to Israel's cultural and religious heritage.” It is the Torah that commands the practice of animal sacrifice and the building of a tabernacle to conduct the sacrifices. How is it that the author can “remain entirely faithful to the Torah” yet eliminate the very essence of the Torah from his obedience? This shows another contradiction in his thought, but this is only to be expected when one begins from a fallacious premise of denying supersessionism.

CFI: support the ingathering of the Jewish people to the Holy Land in the eschatological hope of ushering in the battle of Armageddon.

R. Sungenis: This is an odd mixture of two highly confused concepts. Once again, the author shows his repudiation for Catholic teaching regarding how to interpret the Old Testament’s prophecies concerning the “gathering” of the people of God. The author insists that it applies to literal Jews, while the Catholic Church has taught that it applies to Christians, Jews and Gentiles, gathered into the Catholic Church. The author also misconstrues the “battle of Armageddon” as a final battle in the Middle East between warring nations. This is a remnant of Protestant

Zionistic eschatology, but it is quite wrong. The context of Apocalypse 16:16 concerns Judgment Day. The Battle of Armageddon is the battle of Christ against the forces of evil on the Last Day. This is precisely why the previous verse, 15, tells Christians not to be caught walking naked when God returns for “the great day of God Almighty” (verse 14). That is, the Christian is to be ready for Christ to return at any moment.

CFI: necessarily agree with every political or military action carried out by the government of Israel.

R. Sungenis: Then it is required of the author and his apostolate to publically voice their objections to the policies of Israel that are sinful.

CFI: support any form of injustice or discrimination towards anyone.

hold any anti-Arab or anti-Palestinian attitudes.

R. Sungenis: Then it would behoove the author not to promote Zionism and divine favor of the Jewish people, since both are unjust and discriminate against non-Jews.

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