

Dialogue on the Catholic Church's View of Romans 11:25-27

Mark Cameron versus Robert Sungenis

Mark: That being said, I still think you are a talented apologist who makes many excellent points - your recent critique of Scott Hahn's dissertation and the incipient Protestantism of his methods of exegesis, for instance, was brilliant.

R. Sungenis: Thank you, Mark. I'm glad you see the truth of that issue. I wish more people would.

Mark: I read your dialogue with John Pacheco on Romans 11 and the conversion of the Jews on the CAI website. While I am not qualified to comment on your detailed exegesis of Romans 11:25-27 and the other relevant verses, I think you are wrong in your assertion that the Church does not teach that this passage refers to a future conversion of the Jews.

Traditionally, that is precisely what the Church has taught. The 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia article on the "General Judgment" states:

"Conversion of the Jews: According to the interpretation of the Fathers, the conversion of the Jews towards the end of the world is foretold by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (11:25-26): 'For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, . . . that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in. And so all Israel should be saved as it is written: There shall come out of Sion, he that shall deliver, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'"

R. Sungenis: Mark, I understand why you might hold this in high esteem, but let me warn you that the Catholic Encyclopedia is not our official authority on these matters. As for the CE's comment on Romans 11:25-26, that is merely the statement of a single person who has no ecclesiastical authority, except to write his opinion. If, as he says, his view of Romans 11 is the "interpretation of the Fathers," what Fathers does he list in the article? I'm sure if he had listed them, you would have spared no expense in making me privy to them. Statements such as "According to the interpretation of the Fathers" mean absolutely nothing unless the person writing such a statement tells us which Fathers believed said doctrine, with references. His statement "according to the interpretation of the Fathers" makes it sound as if dozens of Fathers held to the idea, but you and I know that is simply not the case. Below, you only find two Fathers who you think support the idea. In fact, such statements are very misleading, since they give the impression to the unformed reader that there is no question that a consensus among the Fathers existed. END

Mark: You write that only two Fathers, Sts. Jerome and Cyril of Alexandria, predict the final conversion of the Jews. But in fact this belief is held by close to a consensus of the Fathers. Sts. Augustine and Chrysostom, who you quote as opposing this belief, say elsewhere that there will be a final conversion:

After admonishing them to give heed to the law of Moses, as he foresaw that for a long time to come they would not understand it spiritually and rightly, he went on to say, "And, behold, I will send to you Elias the Tishbite before the great and signal day of the Lord come: and he shall turn the heart of the father to the son, and the heart of a man to his next of kin, lest I come and utterly smite the earth." **It is a familiar theme in the conversation and heart of the faithful, that in the last days before the judgment the Jews shall believe in the true Christ, that is, our Christ, by means of this great and admirable prophet Elias who shall expound the law to them.** For not without reason do we hope that before the coming of our Judge and Saviour Elias shall come, because we have good reason to believe that he is now alive; for, as Scripture most distinctly informs us, he was taken up from this life in a chariot of fire. When, therefore, he is come, he shall give a spiritual explanation of the law which the Jews at present understand carnally, and shall thus "turn the heart of the father to the son," that is, the heart of fathers to their children; for the Septuagint translators have frequently put the singular for the plural number. And the meaning is, that the sons, that is, the Jews, shall understand the law as the fathers, that is, the prophets, and among them Moses himself, understood it.

R. Sungenis: Again, I appreciate the effort here Mark, but I must say that quoting Augustine and Chrysostom as referring to some future conversion of Jews, especially when in other places Augustine says something quite the opposite of what appears to be said above, hardly forms a "consensus" of Patristic witness to support your contention. There were over a hundred fathers worthy of note, and hardly any of them predict a future conversion of the Jews, let alone a massive conversion. Instead, many of these same Fathers wrote many essays remarking about the unbelief of the Jews, and how it will continue to the end of time. Surely, in recognizing the Jews' unbelief these same Fathers would also be anxious to write about a future conversion of Jews if this had been the consensus among them. As it stands, it must not have been a consensus, since hardly any of them write about a future conversion.

As for Augustine, there is nothing in the above quote that refers to a national restoration nor a massive conversion of Jews. Augustine simply says that Elijah will return to speak to the Jews. He doesn't say how many, nor does the passage from which he quotes (Malachi 4:5-6). In keeping with his remark in Letters 149, Augustine still has in view a remnant of Jews, and thus he is not departing from his view.

Second, it is by no means a consensus among the Fathers, or the Medievals, nor has the Church made any statement to this effect -- that Elijah will return in person before the end of time. Although that idea is floated around by some people, there is little support for that idea. At best, it is an open issue.

Third, the New Testament makes clear that Malachi's prophecies of the coming of Elijah are not necessarily referring to a future return of Elijah, in body, to the earth before the end of time. The only interpretation the New Testament gives us about Malachi's prophecy is that it is to be interpreted as referring to John the Baptist who came in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Matthew 11:14; 17:3; Mark 9:11-12). That much we know for sure.

One of the most important verses in regard to this is Luke 1:16-17, which refers to John the Baptist.

"And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

As you can see, Luke 1:16-17 is quoting from Malachi 4:5-6, and it is applied to the first coming of Christ, as are all the other prophecies about the conversion of Israel. I don't know one prophecy that confines Israel's conversion to the end of time.

In fact, Luke 1:16-17 matches the prophecy of Zachariah in Luke 1:67-79, which refers to the salvation of Israel as occurring with the first coming of Christ (the same passage I sent to John):

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people,

69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,

70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us;

72 to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

74 to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,

78 through the mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high

79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Added to this is the fact that "the day of the Lord" is not confined to the end of time. Acts 2:19-21 refers to Christ's death as the time when Joel's prophecy of the "day of the Lord" was fulfilled.

"And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; 20 the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day. 21 And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The gospels record that the sun was darkened at the death of Jesus, in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Matt 23:45).

Finally, there is no reference in the Old or New Testament that specifically and categorically teaches that Elijah will come just prior to the return of Christ, nor any verse that specifically teaches a future mass conversion of the Jewish people or national restoration, other than what has been happening for the past two-thousand year in the remnant. Elijah's "future coming," if there is such an incident, may refer to nothing more than the Lord coming with all his saints at the very end of time to usher in the New Heaven and New Earth (1 Thess 3:13; 4:14-17).

Mark: St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew, HOMILY LVII.

For the Scriptures speak of two advents of Christ, both this that is past, and that which is to come; and declaring these Paul said, "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly." Behold the one, hear how he declares the other also; for having said these things, he added, "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." And the prophets too mention both; of the one, however, that is, of the second, they say Elias will be the forerunner. For of the first, John was forerunner; whom Christ called also Elias, not because he was Elias, but because he was fulfilling the ministry of that prophet. For as the one shall be forerunner of the second advent, so was the other too of the first. But the Scribes, confusing these things and perverting the people, made mention of that other only to the people, the second advent, and said, "If this man is the Christ, Elias ought to have come beforehand." Therefore the disciples too speak as follows, "How then say the Scribes, Elias must first come?"

Therefore also the Pharisees sent unto John, and asked him, "Art thou Elias?" making no mention anywhere of the former advent. What then is the solution, which Christ alleged? "Elias indeed cometh then, before my second advent; and now too is Elias come;" so calling John. In this sense Elias is come: but if thou wouldst seek the Tishbite, he is coming. Wherefore also He said, "Elias truly cometh, and shall restore all things." All what things? Such as the Prophet Malachi spake of; for "I will send you," saith He, "Elias the Tishbite, who shall restore the heart of father to son, lest I come and utterly smite the earth."

Seest thou the accuracy of prophetic language? how, because Christ called John, Elias, by reasoning of their community of office, lest thou shouldst suppose this to be the meaning of the prophet too in this place, He added His country also, saying, "the Tishbite;" whereas John was not a Tishbite. And herewith He sets down another sign also, saying, "Lest I come and utterly smite the earth," signifying His second and

dreadful advent. For in the first He came not to smite the earth. For, "I came not," saith He, "to judge the world, but to save the world."

To show therefore that the Tishbite comes before that other advent, which hath the judgment, He said this. And the reason too of his coming He teaches withal. And what is this reason? **That when He is come, he may persuade the Jews to believe in Christ, and that they may not all utterly perish at His coming. Wherefore He too, guiding them on to that remembrance, saith, "And he shall restore all things;" that is, shall correct the unbelief of the Jews that are then in being.**

Hence the extreme accuracy of his expression; in that he said not, "He will restore the heart of the son to the father," but "of the father to the son." For the Jews being fathers of the apostles, his meaning is, that he will restore to the doctrines of their sons, that is, of the apostles, the hearts of the fathers, that is, the Jewish people's mind.

"But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then they understood that He spake to them of John."

And yet neither the Scribes said this, nor the Scriptures; but because now they were sharper and more attentive to His sayings, they quickly caught His meaning.

And whence did the disciples know this? He had already told them, "He is Elias, which was for to come;" but here, that he hath come; and again, that "Elias cometh and will restore all things." But be not thou troubled, nor imagine that His statement wavers, though at one time He said, "he will come," at another, "he hath come." For all these things are true. Since when He saith, "Elias indeed cometh, and will restore all things," He means Elias himself, and **the conversion of the Jews which is then to take place**; but when He saith, "Which was for to come," He calls John, Elias, with regard to the manner of his administration. Yea, and so the prophets used to call very one of their approved kings, David; and the Jews, "rulers of Sodom," and "sons of Ethiopians;" because of their ways. For as the other shall be forerunner of the second advent, so was this of the first.

R. Sungenis: There is something interesting you need to know about Chrysostom's interpretation of Malachi 4:5. He makes a blatant error in basing his conclusion of the supposition that it reads "Elijah the Tishbite." This is not correct.

Not knowing Hebrew, Chrysostom and Augustine often end up in unsupported exegesis by relying only on the LXX. Jerome, who knew Hebrew, did not translate Malachi 4:5 as "the Tishbite."

Neither the original Hebrew, nor the Latin Vulgate, had "the Tishbite" added to Elijah. The Hebrew reads ELIYAH HANABIYA (that is, "Elijah the prophet"). The Latin Vulgate reads "Heliam prophetam," while the Douay-Rheims reads "Elias the prophet." There are no Hebrew textual variants with any other reading. Chrysostom is getting his reading from the LXX which

has "Elion ton Thesbiten," but this is obviously a mere Jewish interpretation of the passage, not the inspired text. In fact, this may have been the reason the Jews were confused regarding the real nature of Elijah's appearance, and missed his identity being fulfilled in John the Baptist (cf., Matt 16:14; 17:10). Obviously, if they were looking for the "Tishbite" instead of John the Baptist, they would have been misled by their own translation of the Hebrew text, and apparently so was Chrysostom. If he can make such an error with the text, then we certainly can't put much stock in his conclusions about anything else regarding Elijah's appearance.

In any case, even if Chrysostom were right about the "correcting the unbelief of the Jews that are then in being," this does not necessarily refer to some massive conversion or national restoration. If, as Chrysostom admits himself, that there are two advents of Elijah, and yet the first advent of Elijah (viz., John the Baptist) yielded only a remnant of Jewish believers (Romans 11:5), then by prophetic equilibrium, there would only be a remnant who turn from their unbelief at the end of time. This is why, for example, Apocalypse 1:7 speaks of Jews at Christ's return "seeing the one whom they pierced" and "wailing" at his return. The Greek word for "wailing" refers to utter sorrow and dismay, and there is no hint in that verse, or any other verse, that there is going to be a massive conversion of Jews at the end.

Mark: Now, I would agree with Robert that this conversion of Israel means simply a religious conversion in the last times. It does not necessarily imply a political restoration of Israel, still less does it imply fundamentalist dispensationalist theology. (I am a supporter of Israel, but on secular political grounds, not religious ones. To me, it is promises made to Jewish settlers by the British Colonial administration, just reparations for the Holocaust, failure of the Arab states to accept a reasonable compromise in 1948, and legitimate right of conquest in defensive wars in 1948 and 1967, and not the Old Testament or Revelations which underlies the Jewish claim to a state.) However, Catholic eschatology has traditionally held that there will be a mass conversion of the Jewish people to the true faith just before the Second Coming. I am at a loss to understand why Mr. Sungenis is so keen to deny this traditional exegesis.

R. Sungenis: Mark, I challenge you to show any consensus of Patristic or Medieval thought, or any pope or council, which has ever taught that "Catholic eschatology has traditionally held that there will be a mass conversion of the Jewish people to the true faith just before the Second Coming." At best, you have a couple of Fathers referring to a conversion of Jews, but none of them refer to a "mass conversion." In addition, we see above that Chrysostom has based his interpretation on an incorrect reading of Malachi 4:5. If your conception were such a "traditional" idea, we would be finding it all over the Patristics and Medievals. But not only do we not find any such consensus, we actually have Fathers that are opposed to such an idea, as I detailed previously.

Mark: Apparently, you do not find my quotes from the Catholic Encyclopedia, Augustine, or Chrysostom to be persuasive, saying "quoting Augustine and Chrysostom as referring to some future conversion of Jews, especially when in other places Augustine says something quite the opposite of what appears to be said above, hardly forms a 'consensus' of Patristic witness to support your contention. There were over a hundred fathers worthy of note, and hardly any of them predict a future conversion of the Jews, let alone a massive conversion."

Actually, the quotes I found were the best I could do in an hour or two of fiddling around on the Internet. But your challenge drove me to do a bit more research in my own books and the local Catholic seminary library. I come away more persuaded than ever that there was a broad Patristic, Medieval, and Counter-Reformation consensus about a final conversion of the Jews.

Let's start with recent (but orthodox, pre-Vatican II) authorities. You note that the Catholic Encyclopedia article has no authority beyond that of its author. But my point was that he makes this assertion as common knowledge of what the Fathers taught, just as Augustine calls the idea of a final conversion "a familiar theme in the conversation and heart of the faithful."

Other recent authorities have also repeated the same belief as representing a common consensus. Ludwig Ott lists "the conversion of the Jews" as one of the "Signs of the Second Coming" (Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 1952, p. 486-487), citing Romans 11:25-32 as his authority.

R. Sungenis: Mark, I understand why you might find Ott supporting your view, but let's read what he says.

On page 486 he writes:

"The conversion of the Jews: In Rom. 11:25-32, St. Paul reveals 'the mystery' : When the fullness, that is the number ordained by God, of the Gentiles has entered the kingdom of God 'all Israel' will be converted and saved. There is question of a morally universal conversion of the Jews."

First, Ott is saying nothing different than what I have said. If you read my essay carefully, I maintain that "all Israel" will be saved when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

Second, Ott offers no exegesis of the text, so we don't know in which direction he is going. As I explained by using the context of Romans 11, God has been saving Jews, and will continue to save Jews, until the end of time. The sum total of all those Jews is "all Israel," and thus it can be safely said, as God promised to Abraham, that all Israel will be saved, but whether this will be a massive conversion in the future is nowhere taught in Scripture, nor does Ott himself say so.

In fact, Ott says just the opposite. He says, "There is question of a morally universal conversion of the Jews." In other words, he knows that there are people, such as yourself, who teach there will be a universal conversion, but to Ott that view is at best a "question."

Third, let's look at what Ott says about your Elijah theory. He writes:

"The conversion of the Jewish people is frequently brought into a causal connection with the coming-again of Elias, BUT WITHOUT SUFFICIENT FOUNDATION. The Prophet Malachy announces: 'Behold, I will send you Elias the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers: lest I come, and strike the earth with anathema.' Jewry understood the passage as referring to a physical coming-again of Elias (Ecclus 48:10) but erroneously placed it in the beginning of the

Messianic era, and saw in Elias a precursor of the Messiah (John 1:21; Mt 16:14). Jesus confirms the coming of Elias, but refers it to the appearance of John the Baptist; of whom the Angel had foretold that he would go before the Lord, that is, God in the spirit and in the power of Elias (Luke 1:17): 'He (John) is Elias, who (according to the prophecy of the Prophet) is to come' (Mt 11:14). 'But I say to you that Elias is already come: and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they had a mind (Mt 17:12; Mk 9:13). JESUS DOES NOT SPEAK EXPLICITLY OF A FUTURE COMING OF ELIAS BEFORE THE GENERAL JUDGMENT, PROBABLY NOT EVEN IN MT 17:11 ('Elias indeed shall come and restore all things'), in which the prophecy of Malachias is simply reproduced. JESUS SEE IT ALREADY FULFILLED IN THE APPEARANCE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (Mt. 17:12)."

As you can see, Mark, Ott agrees with my position. Obviously, Ott is aware of the few Fathers that said Elijah would come in the future, but he dismisses them as "without sufficient foundation," as I do. Ott agrees that Jesus did not teach it either, but insists that Jesus taught that Elijah came figuratively in the person of John the Baptist.

Mark: The Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, edited by Dom Bernard Orchard, 1953, says of Romans 11:25-32: "From the present, (verses) 1-24, St. Paul turns his attention to the future. The time will come when the present problem of Israel's exclusion from the salvation of the Messiah will cease to exist because of her conversion, which will follow the conversion of the Gentiles. The final conversion of Israel could not be known to St. Paul from any natural source." It then goes on to argue that St. Paul deduces the "final conversion of Israel" from the permanence of God's promises and prophecies, which promise the eventual salvation of Israel.

R. Sungenis: Again, we have the same problem. Orchard offers no exegesis of the very passage he is citing. He, as other commentators on this passage do without sufficient study, merely proof-text the passage, thinking that a mere citation of it proves their point. As I told John Pacheco, Orchard did not address the Greek text of Romans 11, and thus he was oblivious to the fact that the passage could be saying the very opposite of what he claims it says. Until you offer a commentary that delves into the exegetical issues regarding Romans 11, then citing them really doesn't offer any persuasive evidence.

Mark: Now, granted that the Catholic Encyclopedia, Ott, and Orchard's Commentary have no magisterial authority, it must be admitted that all of these orthodox, pre-Vatican II standard sources seem to treat the "final conversion of Israel" as a given. Why would this be unless there was a considerable consensus of Fathers and Catholic exegetes behind it?

R. Sungenis: Mark, you'll find in many of these proof-texting commentaries the author cites very few if any patristic witnesses to support the contention. In fact, Ott admits to no such consensus, rather, he says that there is a "question" as to whether "all Israel" refers to a universal conversion.

Mark: The more I search the Fathers, the broader the consensus seems to be. To add to the Augustine and Chrysostom quotes I found earlier, here are a few more:
Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* (Preface, X, 20):

"After the loss of Job's possessions, after all his bereavements, after all the suffering of his wounds, after all his angry debates, it is good that he is consoled by twofold repayment. In just this way does the holy church, while it is still in this world, receive twofold reward for the trials it sustains, when all the gentile nations have been brought into its midst, at the end of time, and the church converts even the hearts of the Jews to its cause. Thus it is written, 'Until the fulness of nations enters and so all Israel is saved.'"

R. Sungenis: Again, Mark, this is vague at best. First, you'll notice that Gregory does not cite any earlier patristic witness. In order for a massive conversion of Jews at the end of time to be the abiding view of the Church, there would have had to be an apostolic teaching that such was the case. As it stands, none of the early Fathers speak of such a massive conversion in the distant future, let alone say they received such teaching from the apostles.

Second, Gregory offers no exegesis of the crucial phrases in the Romans 11 text (e.g., "fulness of the Gentiles," "so all Israel is saved").

Third, Gregory does not specify a massive conversion of Jews, and thus there is nothing that departs from the stipulation in Romans 11 that a "remnant" of Jews will be saved, either now or in the future.

My contention is that your view actually LIMITS the salvation of the Jews, since your view is so fixated on a mass future conversion that you minimize the salvation of the Jews in the present time and since Pentecost. Your view is that God is not already doing a work among the Jews, but is reserving that for some obscure moment at the end of time. But, as the passages from Luke and other citations show, that is not what the New Testament predicts. All those passages speak of God coming to the Jews at the First Coming of Christ, and that is why 3,000 Jews and Gentiles converted on Pentecost Day, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that God would send the Redeemer to them from Zion, as I pointed out in Luke 1:68-79. On the other hand, you have no passage, other than your personal interpretation of Romans 11:25-26, to support your claim of a massive conversion in the future, a passage that not even the person you cited (Ott) sees as proof.

Mark: St. John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa* (IV, 26, "Concerning the Antichrist"):

"First, therefore, it is necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations: And then shall that wicked one be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, whom the Lord shall consume with the word of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. But Enoch and Elias the Thesbite shall be sent and shall 'turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' that is, the synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the apostles."

R. Sungenis: Again, Mark, there are problems. First, John Damascene is rather late in the patristic record, and thus he offers little evidence of an apostolic precedent for his view. He certainly doesn't cite any patristic witness to back up his claims. Second, you see that he makes

the same mistake that Chrysostom made in depending on the LXX translation of Malachi 4:5, referring to Elijah as the "Thesbite," the very same critique that Ott offered to you.

Mark: Now, before going on the Medievals, I have to note that the statements you made regarding the view of the fathers were quite unequivocal. "The consensus among the early Fathers is that there is no divinely mandated future glory for national Israel." I agree that there is no divinely predicted glory for a future state of Israel, but there is assuredly a consensus prediction of the conversion of the Jews. You say, "here are only a few personalities who even address the issue of Israel in the future," and quote seven, adding "only two Fathers hold out for any future large restoration of faith in Israel." This suggests that you have searched long and hard to see what the Fathers have had to say about this topic, and found only a few quotes, mostly arguing against a future conversion.

Yet with just a little bit of searching around, I have found four more quotes you had missed. (Indeed, I found several others, but not as directly pertinent as the ones I have given).

R. Sungenis: Mark, in reality, this is what you have found: (1) two commentators, one of which disagrees with your view of Elijah and reserves a universal conversion of Jews as a "question," while the other commentator offers no exegesis of Romans 11 to support his conclusion. (2) You offered the view of Chrysostom, which as I said in my last view, bases his conclusion on a uninspired translation of Malachi 4:5, as does John Damascene, and both of which go against Jerome's translation. (3) You offered Gregory, but as you can see, he does not offer any patristic support or Scriptural exegesis to back up his view. (4) You offered Augustine, but at best Augustine's view is equivocal, since he says opposite things in different places. Even Augustine does not cite patristic witness to support even his more positive statements, and even his positive statement lends itself to being interpreted in more than one way.

Further, even if I were to accept Augustine, Chrysostom, Gregory and John Damascene as witnesses, this DOES NOT represent a "consensus" of Fathers. A "consensus" of Fathers is the "unanimous consent of the Fathers." It means that, except for a few detractors, ALL the Fathers took the same view. Pope Leo XIII taught in *Providentissimus Deus* that, unless the Fathers all took the same view, we were not bound to accept them. For example, most of the Fathers took the view that the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6 were angels who had sex with women. Alexander of Alexandria, Chrysostom and Augustine disagreed, and said that it referred to the godly line of Seth. Although in the minority, the view opting for "godly line of Seth" is the one most accepted by the Church today.

Mark: Furthermore, in my own research, I realized that six of the seven quotes you adduce and all the citations are from one source: the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture volume on Romans. This hardly justifies your unequivocal statements about what the Fathers thought on this issue.

R. Sungenis: It makes little difference from what contemporary volume that I cite that Fathers. The important matter is that the Fathers are cited. Since, as is evident from the citations, not all the Fathers agreed on this issue, then it is open for discussion, even today. Thus, when I hear of someone making dogmatic statements that there will be a massive conversion of Jews in the

future due to the witness of a heaven-sent Elijah, I have every right to show that not only is there little patristic witness for such a view, but those who aspire to it offer virtually no precedent for their view, nor any solid Scriptural exegesis that would support their claims.

Mark: And even from this one source, you have been selective. You quote Theodoret as saying "all Israel" means "all those who believe," but another quote from the very same homily, also quoted in the ACCS, says this: "Paul insists that only a part of Israel has been hardened, for many of them believe. He thus encourages them not to despair that others will be saved as well. After the Gentiles accepted the gospel, the Jews would believe, when the great Elijah would come to them and bring them the doctrine of the faith. The Lord himself said as much: 'Elijah will come and will restore all things.'"

So, even if Theodoret understands "all Israel" as meaning "all the faithful," he still believes that there will be a future conversion of the Jews to be grafted back into the true spiritual Israel of the Church.

R. Sungenis: Perhaps, but even in that case, Theodoret doesn't say that the Elijah to come refers to a future coming near the end of time. For all you know, Theodoret may be speaking of the time of Christ when he said that John the Baptist was Elijah. I'm not saying that he is, but only that the information in the quote is not definitive. In any case, I can simply say that Theodoret is working under the same notion of Elijah's future return that Ott said was a misinterpretation of Scripture.

Mark: I would suggest that this also applies to Augustine, who may recognize the Church as the true Israel, but also foresees a conversion of the Jews (indeed, the quote I produced from The City of God was a much more important source to future Church teaching than the quote in ACCS from one of Augustine's many letters.)

I also find that you have shortened the St. John Chrysostom quote in a way that reduces any suggestion of a future conversion ("does not apply it to some distant event in the future"). You quote Chrysostom as saying: "God's covenant will be fulfilled not when they are circumcised...but when they obtain the forgiveness of sins...it will certainly come to pass."

But the full quote is this: "God's covenant will be fulfilled not when they are circumcised, nor when they do other deeds of the law, but when they obtain the forgiveness of sins. If this has been promised but has not yet happened in their case, nor have they enjoyed the forgiveness of sins in baptism, it will certainly come to pass." This language of fulfillment of the covenant that "has been promised but has not yet happened in their case" (which you omitted) sounds more like "a distant event in the future."

R. Sungenis: But again, Mark, even this quote is not definitive, since Chrysostom says "IF....this has not yet happened in their case." But the point is that it HAS happened, and continues to happen, as Paul made clear in Romans 11:5, 14, 23, as a remnant of Jews, beginning at Pentecost, were added to the Church, and "some" of the whole nation is saved, and "regrafted" into the olive tree even though the whole nation was cut off.

Mark: So what do we have? Of the seven you cite, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Jerome (the last three among the most important of all the Fathers) all believe in a future salvation of the Jews (although some in various places talk of the Church, not the Jews, as the true Israel). Origen is mystified, saying says "only God knows" what "all Israel" and "the fullness of the Gentiles" is supposed to mean. Only the heretical Pelagius overtly denies that the salvation of Israel is an event in the future.

R. Sungenis: There were other Fathers who had heretical ideas, but we don't reject their other views out of hand (Hippolytus, Theodore, et al).

Mark: Furthermore, I have found several other Fathers, including St. Gregory the Great and St. John Damascene, who predict a future conversion of the Jews. That makes seven Fathers for a future conversion, Origen neutral, and one heretic against. To me, that sounds like a consensus of the Fathers for a future conversion of the Jews.

R. Sungenis: Again, most of them are equivocal on the issue; they do not cite it as apostolic or early patristic doctrine; they do not exegete the passages in question; they base their interpretation on a faulty translation of Malachi 4:5, and in any case, they do not form a unanimous consent since they are very few in number and vary among themselves. That is why Ott says that such view are in "question," and that the view of Elijah returning is fallacious.

Mark: Now, let's see how this matter was treated by the Medievals.

The Venerable Bede says in his Explanation of the Apocalypse:

"...it is well believed that the wicked Jews will be deceived as well as deceive, but that others will understand the law spiritually through the instruction of the great prophet Elijah, and will be incorporated among the members of the Church, and bravely overcome the enemy."

In a letter to his Abbot Eusebius about his Explanatio, Bede also writes:

"He has foretold that the Jews are to be made subject to the Church, and that there is to be a trial of the world at large, and that He Himself will come quickly."

R. Sungenis: But what happened to Enoch? You quoted John Damascene earlier as saying that both Enoch and Elijah were returning. The coincidence about this is that Venerable Bede and John Damascene lived close to each other, but seem to be confused about who is going to be returning. This again reveals that there was no conclusive patristic support of the view.

Mark: The 10th century French Abbot Adso wrote a treatise of the Antichrist that became very influential in the Middle Ages. In it he wrote:

"Lest the Antichrist come suddenly and without warning and deceive and destroy the whole human race by his error, before his arrival the two great prophets Enoch and Elijah will be sent into the world. They will defend God's faithful against the attack of

the Antichrist with divine arms and will instruct, comfort, and prepare the elect for battle with three and a half years teaching and preaching. These two very great prophets and teachers will convert the sons of Israel who will live in that time to the faith, and they will make their belief unconquerable among the elect in the face of the affliction of so great a storm. At that time what scripture says will be fulfilled 'If the number of sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, their remnant will be saved'."

R. Sungenis: The problem here, Mark, is that the abbot has misread the passage. There are only two passages in Scripture that have these elements, Isaiah 10:22 and Romans 9:27. Isaiah 10:22 reads: O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return; A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. Romans 9:27 quotes from Isaiah 10:22. But you'll notice that neither passage predicts a massive conversion of the Jews, but only what I've been saying all along -- that only a "remnant" will be saved.

Mark: St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a Commentary on Epistle to the Romans, in which he wrote: "The blindness of the Jews will endure until the fullness of the gentiles have accepted the faith. And this is in accord with what the Apostle says below about the salvation of the Jews, namely, that after the fullness of the nations have entered, 'all Israel will be saved', not individually as at present, but universally."

He goes on to make it clear that he is referring here to "the conversion of the Jews at the end of the world."

R. Sungenis: Thomas has every right to his opinion, just as he did with the Immaculate Conception, but that fact is he offers no exegesis or patristic support for the idea of a "universal" conversion. In fact, he is the first to use the word "universal," and thus, it is quite unprecedented.

Mark: Moving on to the Counter Reformation era, the great Jesuit apologist St. Robert Bellarmine writes in *De Summo Pontifice* (I, 3) about "the coming of Enoch and Elias, who live even now and shall live until they come to oppose Antichrist himself, and to preserve the elect in the faith of Christ, and in the end shall convert the Jews, and it is certain that this is not yet fulfilled."

R. Sungenis: First, if this concept is being based on Scripture, as most of them do in reference to Romans 11:25-26, then where is the Scripture that says Enoch is going to return to earth to convert the Jews? There is no such passage in Scripture. Enoch is mention only in Hebrews 11:5 and Jude 1:14 (outside of his OT references), but neither of them speak of him returning. Second, Bellarmine cites no Scripture, nor any patristic witness, to back up the claim.

The only place in Scripture that even remotely suggests something along these lines is Apocalypse 11:5-6, which reads: "And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire."

The problem with this, however, is that the passage does not specifically name Enoch or Elijah. Elijah is sometimes associated with the passage only because he once prayed that it would not rain in Israel (James 5:17-18). But Enoch is not even alluded to, since there is no such action he performed during his lifetime. This is why Enoch is sometimes left out of the predictions (as is the case with Venerable Bede). The only other personage that could fill the description is Moses, since Exodus records him as turning water into blood, yet curiously, none of the aforementioned interpreters mention Moses as a possibility, even though he fits the description better than Enoch.

So what you have, Mark, is a confusing assortment of ideas, with little, if any, Scriptural backing, and that from the very people who claim to be getting their ideas from Scripture, not Tradition. In addition, the Apocalypse is a highly symbolic treatise, especially Chapter 11, of which many exegetes have seen as a symbolic representation of the Church preaching the gospel during the New Testament era, signified by the "two-by-two" formula used in the passage (cf., Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; 2 Cor 13:1; Eph 2:15; 1 Cor 14:29).

Mark: The great exegete Cornelius a Lapide has a commentary on Romans, but I could only find it in Latin. My Latin is rusty, but he seems to say that "all Israel" can be understood either spiritually as meaning all the elect -- whether Jew or gentile -- or literally as meaning all the Jews who will be converted at the end of time, quoting various Fathers and Doctors on both sides.

However, in his commentary on Matthew, which I did find in English, he teaches clearly about the conversion of the Jews at the end of time. Writing on Matthew 17:11-12 ("Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands."), Lapide says that Elias will: "Restore all things: that is, convert the Jews to Christ as the Messiah promised to themselves and their forefathers." He goes on to say that: "Falsely do the Calvinists refer all these things to the first Advent of Christ, and explain both mentions of Elias" viz., in verses 11 and 12 to mean John the Baptist. For they think that Elias, whom Malachi predicted shall come as the precursor of Christ (Mal. 4:5), is John the Baptist, and there is no other who shall come with Enoch before Christ's second Advent."

R. Sungenis: If that is the case, Mark, then why would Ott say that such a view was erroneous?

Mark: Writing on Matthew 23:37-39 ("O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"), Lapide writes:

"It is possible that this passage may be understood of the Jews, who about the end of the world shall be converted to Christ by the preaching of Elias, and who, when He shall presently come to judgment, will acknowledge Him to be the Messiah, the Blessed of the Lord."

R. Sungenis: Mark, did you catch the words "It is possible" in the first part of his sentence? Obviously, Lapide is not offering this as the definitive interpretation for the Church. He is smart

enough to know that all this is quite speculative, since there is very little information to go on. And since he, as you already admitted, equivocates between a literal and spiritual interpretation, he certainly isn't the definitive witness you are looking for. And again, notice that he leaves out Enoch. I think this lack of conviction is even more significant in the case of Lapedo, since of all the medievals, he would be the one person who would know what the patristic and medieval consensus was, since he catalogued most of it.

Mark: In summary, it looks to me like the vast majority of the Fathers, the Medievals the and Counter-Reformation doctors, and recent pre-Vatican II exegetes are all in agreement about a conversion of the Jews before the end of the world (possibly converted by the preaching of Elijah and Enoch as prophesied in Malachi and Revelations) as a sign of Christ's coming.

With St. Augustine, St. Jerome, Pope St. Gregory the Great, St. John Chrysostom, the Venerable Bede, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Robert Bellarmine, and Cornelius a Lapide on my side of the argument, and having shown that all but one of your quotes are from one modern source that gives only snippets of the Fathers, I think the onus of showing that the Fathers and Doctors did not believe in a future mass conversion of the Jews now falls on you.

My other question is, given the broad consensus I have found in Catholic sources saying that there will be such a future conversion of Jews to the faith, some from sources that you must have seen before in your wide reading, why are you so keen to deny this teaching? I do not claim that belief in the future conversion of the Jews, or a future coming of Elijah before the Second Coming, for that matter, are *de fide* teaching. But they certainly seem to represent the consensus of two millennia of Catholic exegesis. What is the purpose in trying to deny this?

R. Sungenis: You don't have a "broad consensus," you have merely a half dozen or so citations, many of which are equivocal, all of which offer no exegesis, little of which cite early patristic support for their view, some of which can be taken in a spiritual as well as literal sense, many of which leave out crucial details (e.g., Enoch), all of which have only the obscure passage of Romans 11:25-26 as their Scriptural base; all of which base their view on the highly symbolic passage in Apocalypse 11:5-6; many of which ignore those against their view; and all who are summed up by one of our greatest theologian/historians as holding a "questionable" view of universal conversion of Jews, and an erroneous view of Elijah, namely, Ludwig Ott.

Mark: I can understand the desire to refute Protestant fundamentalist "dispensationalist" theology, or Catholic modernists like Cardinal Kasper who suggest that the Jewish covenant remains salvific. But these teachings, while they certainly try to use Romans 9-11 to establish their erroneous theology, go far beyond the standard, orthodox Catholic teaching of an eventual conversion of the Jews in the last times. This does not imply a millennial Jewish kingdom or the ongoing salvific validity of the Old Covenant, simply that the Jewish people who were pruned off of the olive tree due to their infidelity at the time of Christ will at the last, in God's mercy, be engrafted back on. I fear that in your desire to refute certain wrong elements of modern theology you are running the risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

R. Sungenis: I understand why you think so, Mark, but with the above reasons I gave you, I hope you can better see why I take the position. Of course, I have been known to be wrong at

times, and I am open to being disproven on anything I say. But considering the less than definitive evidence you've brought forth, I don't feel persuaded to change my view. At best it is an open question. Also, the fact that you didn't interact with any of the exegesis I brought forth in my last post, but relied solely on somewhat equivocal and unclear references from various Fathers and Medievals, there is little I find compelling.

R. Sungenis: There is something interesting you need to know about Chrysostom's interpretation of Malachi 4:5. He makes a blatant error in basing his conclusion of the supposition that it reads "Elijah the Tishbite." This is not correct.

Not knowing Hebrew, Chrysostom and Augustine often end up in unsupported exegesis by relying only on the LXX. Jerome, who knew Hebrew, did not translate Malachi 4:5 as "the Tishbite."

Neither the original Hebrew, nor the Latin Vulgate, had "the Tishbite" added to Elijah. The Hebrew reads ELIYAH HANABIYA (that is, "Elijah the prophet"). The Latin Vulgate reads "Heliam prophetam," while the Douay-Rheims reads "Elias the prophet." There are no Hebrew textual variants with any other reading. Chrysostom is getting his reading from the LXX which has "Elion ton Thesbiten," but this is obviously a mere Jewish interpretation of the passage, not the inspired text. In fact, this may have been the reason the Jews were confused regarding the real nature of Elijah's appearance, and missed his identity being fulfilled in John the Baptist (cf., Matt 16:14; 17:10). Obviously, if they were looking for the "Tishbite" instead of John the Baptist, they would have been misled by their own translation of the Hebrew text, and apparently so was Chrysostom. If he can make such an error with the text, then we certainly can't put much stock in his conclusions about anything else regarding Elijah's appearance.

Mark: Just as a P.S. to my previous reply, I want to address this specific issue. Chrysostom and Augustine were not "confused" about the return of Elijah because of their reliance on the LXX. They looked for a return of Elijah in the flesh because Jewish tradition had long predicted it.

R. Sungenis: How does "Jewish tradition" establish Catholic belief? The "Jewish tradition" also believed that the Messiah would not come as a suffering servant but as a conquering king. Are you saying that we should have paid attention to that "tradition" and perhaps denied that the babe in Bethlehem actually was the Messiah? I don't think so. Moreover, Ott already told you that the idea of Elijah coming-again was from "Jewry," yet he put no stock in that interpretation.

Mark: Elijah (and Enoch) never physically died, but were assumed into heaven bodily. Thus, many predicted their return.

R. Sungenis: The problem here, Mark, is that you are trying to make their translation into heaven to be a cause and effect matter for their return to earth, but that is at best unprovable.

Mark: The "two witnesses" of Revelations 11 have traditionally been understood to be Enoch and Elijah.

R. Sungenis: Only by a relatively few. Moreover, many of them leave out Enoch, as I have noted above.

Mark: Our Lord implies in Matthew 17:11-12 that there will be two comings of Elijah - a coming of the actual at the end of time to "restore all things", but a figurative coming of Elijah in spirit in the form of John the Baptist. Cornelius a Lapide calls it a "Calvinist error" to believe that verses 11 and 12 both refer to John the Baptist.

R. Sungenis: Then I suppose Lapide would accuse Ludwig Ott of holding to a "Calvinist error."

Mark: Furthermore, awareness of the Hebrew text is no proof of accuracy. The LXX has an older textual tradition than the Masoretic text and many of the earlier Hebrew texts. The Church has always recognized the value of the Septuagint. It remains the official Old Testament text of the Greek Church, and the oldest Latin text, the *vetus Itala*, was a direct translation of the Septuagint. Jerome's Vulgate borrowed from Hebrew texts to correct some errors in the *Vetus Itala*, but in other cases it was the Hebrew texts that were in error.

R. Sungenis: I'm afraid you have it exactly backwards, Mark. The Hebrew was the originally inspired text, meticulously copied by the Jews in Palestine, and that's the reason we have a Masoretic text that is as good as it is. I suggest you read Ernst Würthwein's book *The Text of the Old Testament*. Here's one section of his chapter on the comparison of the Septuagint to the Masoretic Text: "...today we recognize that the LXX neither was nor was intended to be a precise scholarly translation. Many other factors and interests played a part in its formation. An uncritical use of it which ignores these factors can only lead to false conclusions. In the following paragraphs a few basic considerations are noted, with the reminder that the LXX differs so greatly from book to book that no generalizations can be made with reservations. (a) If we are tempted to prefer the LXX to the Masoretic text as an older witness to the text, we should recall the unevenness of its own textual tradition. Whereas the consonantal text of the Masoretic Text has remained remarkably constant since the second century, the Septuagint manuscripts even centuries later have widely divergent texts..." (pp. 63-64).

The rest of the chapter adds much more information than I can put here.

In any case, the official translation of the Catholic Church, which resides only in the Latin Vulgate, does not have "Thesbite," rather, it has "prophet," just as the Hebrew text does, so whatever your opinion about the LXX, it has been trumped by the Church's official translation, and that is what I will go by.

Mark: A most important example is the LXX use of "parthenos" (virgin) in Isaiah 7:14 where the Hebrew texts have "almah" (young woman). Was St. Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrong when he quoted the "inaccurate" Septuagint rather than the "accurate" Hebrew in applying this prophecy to the virgin birth of Our Lord?

R. Sungenis: This is quite an elementary mistake, Mark. The word *almah* appears seven times in the Hebrew Old Testament (cf., Gn 24:43; Ex 2:8; Ps 68:25; Pr 30:19; Sg 1:3; 6:8; Is 7:14). None of the passages suggest that *almah* refers to a woman who is married or has had sexual relations.

Conversely, there are explicit indications that *almah* refers to an unmarried woman who has had no sexual relations. First, in Gn 24:43, *almah* is used to refer to Rebecca before she is married to Isaac. Yet in the same context (Gn 24:16), Rebecca is referred to as *bethulah* ("An exceeding beautiful maid, a virgin, and not known to man..."). This interchange of terms means that *almah* could be interchanged with *bethulah*, and was thus understood to designate a virgin. In addition, Rebecca is called a "maid" in the same passage (Gn 24:16), from the Hebrew word *naarah* which, similar to *almah*, refers in Hebrew to a young woman, but also a virgin (see the use of *naarah* in Dt 22:15-29 in which the husband suspects his wife was not a virgin when they married). Identical to the interchange of *almah* and *bethulah* evident in Gn 24:16, 43, in Dt 22:23, 28; Jg 21:12; 1Kg 1:2; Es 2:3 *naarah* and *bethulah* are interchanged. Added to these is the use of *bethulah* in Ex 22:16, which, in a similar context to that of Dt 22, also refers to virginity before marriage.

The usage of *almah* in Pr 30:19 also refers to a virgin. In this passage, "the way of a man with a maid (*almah*)," who is assumed to be a virgin since she is unmarried, is contrasted in the next verse, Pr 30:20, with an "adulterous woman (*isha*)" who is understood as married but having sexual relations with other men. The usage of *almah* in Sg 1:3 leads to the same conclusion, since in the context the maidens are attracted to the loving man of Solomon's Song, implying they are refraining from sexual relations with him so that the loving man can be intimate with his one and only lover. The above passages also show that *almah* refers to more than identifying a girl or young woman. *Almah* has procreative overtones, referring in the main to a young woman who has the potential of engaging in sexual relations but who has refrained for one reason or another. This connotation, of course, would also fit the Blessed Virgin Mary who, tradition holds, took a vow of celibacy. The above analysis is confirmed by the fact that the LXX translates the Hebrew *almah* with the Greek *parthenos* ("virgin") in both Gn 24:43 and Is 7:14, showing that the Alexandrian Jews understood the latter term to be identical with the former. Moreover, the LXX rendering includes the Greek article *hee* in the phrase *hee parthenos*) as does Matthew, following the article *cha* in the Hebrew of Is 7:14 *cha-almah*. Hence, the "sign" is not merely "a virgin," that is, she is not any young woman who shall conceive by normal means, but "the virgin." The stature engendered by the article coincides with the testimony of the greatness of her offspring (cf., Mc 5:3; Is 8:8; 9:5-6; 11:1-10).

Mark: The point I am trying to make is that, regardless of whether Malachi originally wrote "Elijah the Tishbite" or "Elijah the prophet", the Holy Spirit has often used the LX translations and the interpretive traditions of the Church to draw deeper meaning out of the passages than a clinical, literal analysis of the texts would suggest. If we are to really understand what this passage, or any other passage of Scripture, means in a prophetic sense, we have to go beyond parsing the Greek and Hebrew and study how the text has been received and understood in the tradition of the Church.

R. Sungenis: The Holy Spirit didn't inspire the LXX, Mark, and neither did He inspire the Jewish interpretation of the passage. As for the "tradition of the Church," the fact remains that Chrysostom did not know Hebrew, and therefore couldn't even know what the original said. Jerome, which is the one key person representing our "tradition" in regards to judgments about the Hebrew and Greek texts, chose the word "prophet" and rejected the word "Thesbite." THAT

is our tradition, Mark, since every other person who followed in Church history used the Vulgate and read "Heliam prophetam" not "Elion ton Thesbiten."

Mark: This is a general difficulty I have with your exegesis of Romans 11:25-27: you are very keen to show that the grammatical structure of the passage could support your interpretation of the text as denying that it refers to future end times events. But the question is not simply what the grammatical structure of the Greek suggests, but how the text is understood according to the *analogia fidei*.

R. Sungenis: As I explained quite thoroughly above in the analysis of all the "analogy of faith" you brought forward, it is a best equivocal.

Mark: When read in the context of passages like Matthew 17:11 (the future coming of Elijah), Matthew 23:39 (future recognition of the crucified Christ by the Jews), Revelations 11 (the two witnesses, hinting at Elijah and Enoch), and in the context of the Church's understanding of the passage, it has clearly been understood prophetically to refer to a future conversion of the Jews.

R. Sungenis: Matthew 17:11 is not to be interpreted as you assert according to Ott, the very witness you brought forward for your own view. As for Mt 23:39, Lapidé merely said it was "possible" to refer to the Jews in the future, not definite. As for Apocalypse 11, the half dozen citations to which you appealed were equivocal as to whether Enoch was represented. On top of all that, not one of the witnesses ever provide exegesis of the passages, nor cited early patristic support for their interpretation, nor showed that the apostolic tradition demanded their interpretation. If these are the only passages of Scripture you have, the result is you have a weak case at best, since there is no Scripture that makes an explicit and undeniable claim that there will be a mass conversion of Jews at the end of time. As I said in my last post, Apoc 1:7 shows the Jews "wailing" at Christ's return, not being joyful.

Mark: That is why I put more "stock" in St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom's exegesis according to the Church's traditional understanding than I do in your exegesis based on strict attention to the Greek text.

R. Sungenis: Neither Augustine nor Chrysostom "exegeted" Romans 11:25-26. They simply referred to the text. Even at that, Augustine's view is equivocal. As for my "exegesis based on strict attention to the Greek text," you can dismiss it if you wish, Mark, but the Greek text is the inspired and inerrant word of God. Unless you can show a viable and provable alternative to the Greek text, then I'm afraid you don't have much of a case.

One final note, Mark, is that when it comes to prophecy, there really is no one view espoused by the Church. That is precisely why you see such a divergence of opinion and equivocation among even the witnesses you bring forward.

Nevertheless, a universal conversion would simply be totally adverse to everything God has ever done with regard to Jews and Gentiles. Ever since the beginning of time, there have only been a percentage of the world's people who have sought and remained with the Lord. From Abel and Noah, to the time Israel entered Canaan when only two of the original group that left Egypt

remained faithful, to the time of David, there was only a remnant of Jews who believed, even in their glory years. God simply does not do "universal" conversions. He does not coerce people to believe in Him on massive scales or somehow bend the wills of all a particular people in spite of their obstinance. That has never been His way. The constant theme in Scripture is that only a remnant of people will turn to Him out of the free will God gave them.

St. Paul says the same of the Jews in Romans 11:23. He says: "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again."

Notice that their conversion is based on "IF they do not continue in their unbelief" God will graft them in. It is not that God somehow sprinkles some pixie dust on them so that all their wills are irresistibly drawn to God at some future time. Rather, the constant message of Scripture is that God is saving Jews who bend the knee to Him now, and has always been doing so, according to His promise to Abraham, and the sum total of all those will be the "all Israel" who is saved.

Mark 3: First, Robert, I want to thank you for this dialogue. I am going to suggest a few ways in which we may be able to narrow our differences and come to a consensus. Then I would like to propose taking a step back and looking at the question of the relationship of the Church and the Jewish people in a broader context.

R. Sungenis 2: Mark, I understand why you might find Ott supporting your view, but let's read what he says.

On page 486 he writes:

"The conversion of the Jews: In Rom. 11:25-32, St. Paul reveals 'the mystery' : When the fullness, that is the number ordained by God, of the Gentiles has entered the kingdom of God 'all Israel' will be converted and saved. There is question of a morally universal conversion of the Jews."

First, Ott is saying nothing different than what I have said. If you read my essay carefully, I maintain that "all Israel" will be saved when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

Second, Ott offers no exegesis of the text, so we don't know in which direction he is going. As I explained by using the context of Romans 11, God has been saving Jews, and will continue to save Jews, until the end of time. The sum total of all those Jews is "all Israel," and thus it can be safely said, as God promised to Abraham, that all Israel will be saved, but whether this will be a massive conversion in the future is nowhere taught in Scripture, nor does Ott himself say so.

In fact, Ott says just the opposite. He says, "There is question of a morally universal conversion of the Jews." In other words, he knows that there are people, such as yourself, who teach there will be a universal conversion, but to Ott that view is at best a "question."

Mark 3: Yes, you do say "'all Israel' will be saved when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in," but you mean by this something quite different from what the Church has historically understood. You assert that "all Israel" means those Jews who are being converted at the present

time, making a grammatical argument as to why "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" and "and so all Israel will be saved" should not be understood to be sequential events. But the witness of the Church's understanding of this passage is that the salvation of all Israel will occur after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Ott is referring to this conversion of the Jews as one of the signs of the Second Coming, so clearly he does mean something different than what you have said. He believes this conversion will occur after the fullness of the Gentiles have come in. The "question" is not when the event will occur, but the scope. Will it simply be a large-scale conversion of the Jews, or a "morally universal one."

R. Sungenis 3: I beg to differ with you, Mark. There is no one "witness of the Church" on this issue, since by the very citations you have brought forth there is much equivocation among the few Fathers who wrote about it. They diverge on whether the conversion is all-sequential or partly-sequential; on whether it refers to a remnant or a universal salvation; on whether its national or just spiritual; on whether Elijah and Enoch will appear, or only Elijah, or neither of them. None of them refer to patristic precedent for their beliefs (except a casual reference from Augustine to a nameless group of people), and consequently, the few that do offer comments, base their opinions only on what they personally believe Scripture to be teaching. Since they rely on no patristic mandate but their own exegetical understanding of Romans 11, then they leave themselves open to be argued against on that basis. Since none of them offer a detailed exegesis of the passage; or interact with any of the contextual or grammatical issues at stake, and offer virtually no supporting Scripture with accompanying exegesis to back up their claims, then there is virtually no convincing evidence they have to offer. As I said before, we are only bound to them when they are in unanimity on a particular point. And since we are covering a topic that is quite prone and open to various interpretations, as even they themselves admit, then there is simply no "witness of the Church" which you can marshal in this debate.

As for the "sequential" issue, I also beg to differ with you, for I DO see it as sequential. "All Israel" will not be saved until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in. The saving of "all Israel" will not happen, sequentially, until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in. Regardless of whether there are Jews being saved now, the fact is, I am abiding by the grammar of Romans 11:25-26.

As for Ott, if you read it carefully, Mark, he says nothing different than what I just said above. He is careful not to elaborate on what Romans 11:25-26 actually means. All he does is quote the verse and then put a disclaimer on the end saying that a morally universal conversion is in question. There is simply nothing for you to go on here.

R. Sungenis 2: Third, let's look at what Ott says about your Elijah theory. He writes:

"The conversion of the Jewish people is frequently brought into a causal connection with the coming-again of Elias, BUT WITHOUT SUFFICIENT FOUNDATION. The Prophet Malachy announces: 'Behold, I will send you Elias the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers: lest I come, and strike the earth with anathema.' Jewry understood the passage as referring to a physical coming-again of Elias (Ecclus 48:10) but erroneously placed it in the beginning of the Messianic era, and saw in Elias a precursor of the Messiah (John 1:21; Mt 16:14). Jesus

confirms the coming of Elias, but refers it to the appearance of John the Baptist; of whom the Angel had foretold that he would go before the Lord, that is, God in the spirit and in the power of Elias (Luke 1:17): 'He (John) is Elias, who (according to the prophecy of the Prophet) is to come' (Mt 11:14). 'But I say to you that Elias is already come: and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they had a mind (Mt 17:12; Mk 9:13). JESUS DOES NOT SPEAK EXPLICITLY OF A FUTURE COMING OF ELIAS BEFORE THE GENERAL JUDGMENT, PROBABLY NOT EVEN IN MT 17:11 ('Elias indeed shall come and restore all things'), in which the prophecy of Malachias is simply reproduced. JESUS SEE IT ALREADY FULFILLED IN THE APPEARANCE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (Mt. 17:12)."

As you can see, Mark, Ott agrees with my position. Obviously, Ott is aware of the few Fathers that said Elijah would come in the future, but he dismisses them as without sufficient foundation," as I do. Ott agrees that Jesus did not teach it either, but insists that Jesus taught that Elijah came figuratively in the person is John the Baptist.

Mark 3: I wouldn't say that Ott agrees with your position entirely. He simply says that the contrary (traditional) interpretation is not proven. He says that the return of Elijah theory is "without sufficient foundation," and asserts that Jesus does not "explicitly" speak of a future coming of Elijah, "probably not even in Matt. 17:11." It seems to me that he leaves the Elijah theory as open, but not proven, and not as central to the tradition as what he has already asserted: that there will be an end times conversion of the Jews.

R. Sungenis 3: Of course. I leave the Elijah theory "open," too, but that doesn't mean I teach with certainty, as I see some Catholics doing today, that Elijah WILL return to convert the Jews sometime in the future. Moreover, if Ott is leaning in any direction on this issue it is certainly not in entertaining the idea that Elijah will return bodily in the future. That to him is more of a Jewish myth than a Christian truth.

Mark: The Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, edited by Dom Bernard Orchard, 1953, says of Romans 11:25-32: "From the present, (verses) 1-24, St. Paul turns his attention to the future. The time will come when the present problem of Israel's exclusion from the salvation of the Messiah will cease to exist because of her conversion, which will follow the conversion of the Gentiles. The final conversion of Israel could not be known to St. Paul from any natural source." It then goes on to argue that St. Paul deduces the "final conversion of Israel" from the permanence of God's promises and prophecies, which promise the eventual salvation of Israel.

R. Sungenis 2: Again, we have the same problem. Orchard offers no exegesis of the very passage he is citing. He, as other commentators on this passage do without sufficient study, merely proof-text the passage, thinking that a mere citation of it proves their point. As I told John Pacheco, Orchard did not address the Greek text of Romans 11, and thus he was oblivious to the fact that the passage could be saying the very opposite of what he claims it says. Until you offer a commentary that delves into the exegetical issues regarding Romans 11, then citing them really doesn't offer any persuasive evidence.

Mark 3: I hadn't read, or hadn't noticed, John P's earlier citation of Orchard in your debate, as I was focusing on your assertions about the Fathers, so I am coming anew to this issue. Reading your previous dialogue, I realize that you went beyond saying that Orchard didn't offer exegesis of the passage to asserting that he was incapable of doing so, saying "The quote you have from Dom Orchard misses this, of course, since he didn't know Greek," and, regarding the issue of whether a definitive marker of the future tense is necessary in v. 27, Orchard would not be able to catch this."

Now this is absurd! Dom Bernard Orchard is one of the most important Catholic New Testament scholars of the 20th century. Among his many works are "A Synopsis of the Four Gospels in Greek." You couldn't even get a good degree from an English university without a good knowledge of Greek back when Dom Orchard started his career -- let alone become the leading Catholic Biblical scholar.

I suggest that the reason that there is no detailed exegesis of this passage is that he did not think that the standard Catholic interpretation (first, the coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles, then, the conversion of the Jews) was in need of any defence in a commentary intended for a fairly general audience of priests and educated laity.

R. Sungenis 3: Wishful thinking, Mark. As you can see from the information provided to you previously that the contextual and grammatical issues permeate the exegesis of Romans 11, it is simply unconscionable that a modern exegete could propose an interpretation of Romans 11 without recourse to the Greek grammar and context. If Orchard had a working knowledge of Greek, then it was his responsibility to apply that knowledge to Romans 11, for without it, he leaves himself wide open to refutation. A matter as simple as whether the Greek *achri hou* continues the action of the main verb or terminates it is absolutely essential in determining the meaning of Romans 11:25-26, and without acknowledging that Greek variable, no one has any business offering an interpretation of the passage. I find it interesting that Catholics appreciate it is pointed out that the Greek grammar of *heos hou* in Matthew 1:25 can easily be interpreted to continue the action of the main verb, thereby saving Mary's perpetual virginity, yet, because they have a pet belief in the future restoration of Israel, they don't like it when it is pointed out that the very same adverbial construction as that of Matthew 1:25 would make their conclusions somewhat less than dogmatic.

Mark: The more I search the Fathers, the broader the consensus seems to be. To add to the Augustine and Chrysostom quotes I found earlier, here are a few more:

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* (Preface, X, 20):

"After the loss of Job's possessions, after all his bereavements, after all the suffering of his wounds, after all his angry debates, it is good that he is consoled by twofold repayment. In just this way does the holy church, while it is still in this world, receive twofold reward for the trials it sustains, when all the gentile nations have been brought into its midst, at the end of time, and the church converts even the hearts of the Jews to its cause. Thus it is written, 'Until the fulness of nations enters and so all Israel is saved.'"

R. Sungenis 2: Again, Mark, this is vague at best. First, you'll notice that Gregory does not cite any earlier patristic witness. In order for a massive conversion of Jews at the end of time to be the abiding view of the Church, there would have had to be an apostolic teaching that such was the case. As it stands, none of the early Fathers speak of such a massive conversion in the distant future, let alone say they received such teaching from the apostles.

Second, Gregory offers no exegesis of the crucial phrases in the Romans 11 text (e.g., "fullness of the Gentiles," "so all Israel is saved").

Third, Gregory does not specify a massive conversion of Jews, and thus there is nothing that departs from the stipulation in Romans 11 that a "remnant" of Jews will be saved, either now or in the future.

Mark 3: Gregory didn't need to cite earlier witnesses because this was so well known. It is featured prominently in St. Augustine's City of God, one of the most widely read books in Latin Christendom, where it is already referred to as a common belief among the faithful. He offers no exegesis because, again, he didn't feel he had to (and, as I will discuss below, modern scientific exegesis, textual criticism, etc. was unknown to the Fathers).

R. Sungenis 3: Again, we are not looking for the popularity of the belief, but the patristic consensus and unanimity of the Fathers. There is none, and Augustine doesn't point to any. As for your statement that "he offers no exegesis because he didn't feel he had to," is presumptuous and gratuitous, Mark. Not only did Augustine equivocate on this very issue (as I pointed out before), but when he wanted to argue a point and was certain of his position, he spared no "exegesis" or reasoning from the text. You don't catch Augustine "proof-texting" when he wants to drive home a point, but proof-texting is certainly what he does in some instances with Enoch and Romans 11. The reason is plain. There is simply little information to extract from Scripture on this very complicated topic, as is the case with most prophecy. Moreover, Augustine didn't know Greek or Hebrew. He didn't have a reading knowledge of Greek until he was an old man, but by then most of his material had been written, except for the treatises on Predestination.

Mark 3: I do think you make a valid third point, however. There is a tension between the suggestion that "a remnant" will be saved and "all Israel" will be saved. Is "all Israel" all the Jews living in the end times, or simply a remnant -- presumably a large, significant group, but not necessarily the entire Jewish people? This is why Ott says that there is a "question" about a morally universal conversion. Some texts refer to a universal conversion of the Jews, but other important texts refer to a remnant being saved in the last days.

R. Sungenis 3: Well, you're just proving my point. For them to equivocate on such a major point just shows that there was no consensus, and that a major difficulty with the context of Romans 11 was never sufficiently overcome. Of course, I would have little argument with the "remnant" interpretation, for to argue against it would defeat my whole purpose. But it is not so easy for you, for if you reject the "remnant" interpretation, then, in being required to be faithful to the meaning of "all" in the phrase "all Israel," would require you to interpret it as referring to every last Jew in the future conversion you envision. My interpretation is faithful to the word "all," since I say that "all Israel" refers to all the people of Israel who will have been saved from

Abraham to the end of time. Hence, if I really wanted to press the issue with the futurists, the very same futurists who insist that the interpretation of Romans 11:25-26 means that "all Israel" can only refer to a group of Jews at the end of time, then I will be just as persnickety about their interpretation of the word "all." If they say that it really doesn't have to refer to every Jew of the future, then their interpretation can be dismissed out of hand.

R. Sungenis 2: My contention is that your view actually LIMITS the salvation of the Jews, since your view is so fixated on a mass future conversion that you minimize the salvation of the Jews in the present time and since Pentecost. Your view is that God is not already doing a work among the Jews, but is reserving that for some obscure moment at the end of time. But, as the passages from Luke and other citations show, that is not what the New Testament predicts. All those passages speak of God coming to the Jews at the First Coming of Christ, and that is why 3,000 Jews and Gentiles converted on Pentecost Day, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that God would send the Redeemer to them from Zion, as I pointed out in Luke 1:68-79. On the other hand, you have no passage, other than your personal interpretation of Romans 11:25-26, to support your claim of a massive conversion in the future, a passage that not even the person you cited (Ott) sees as proof.

Mark 3: I disagree with this. There have always been Jewish converts to the faith. In recent times, one thinks of St. Edith Stein, former chief rabbi of Rome Eugenio Zolli, doctor and writer Karl Stern, Cardinal Lustiger, author Rhonda Chervin, columnist Robert Novak, former abortionist turned pro-life leader Dr. Bernard Nathanson, etc. Of course God is doing a work among the Jews. But the fact is, Jewish conversions have always been a trickle, not a flood. There has never been a mass conversion of the Jewish people as there was of the Roman Empire, the Franks, the Irish, the English, the Germans, the Goans, the Filipinos, etc. It is passing strange that the people who have been most prepared for the Gospel, heirs of over 1000 years of prophecy pointing towards it, have been among the least receptive to it. What Scripture and Tradition tell us is that this is deliberately the case. God has hardened the hearts of the Jewish people, in part for their rejection of Christ, but also in part because the continued existence of the Jewish people and faith is a witness to many of the truths of Christianity, and because of God's plan of ultimate redemption for the Jewish nation at the end of time. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't encourage Jewish conversion, but that we shouldn't necessarily expect it on a large scale, and certainly shouldn't coerce it. The continued existence of Judaism is part of God's plan of salvation, something which is not the case for any other religion.

R. Sungenis 3: I beg to differ, Mark. Judaism, if you really want to be honest about what it believes of Christianity, is not "part of God's plan of salvation," no more than Islam, being 1,500 hundred years old is part of God's plan of salvation. As for the "trickle" concept, there was always a trickle of true believers in Jewry. There never were large masses who followed God, even in their glory years. Only two from Egypt entered the land of Canaan, yet there were more than a million who left Egypt. The Judges period was marked by continued unfaithfulness. Except for David, Josiah and Hezekiah, all of Israel and Judah's 43 kings had severe problems, two-thirds of them being declared "evil in the sight of the Lord." In Elijah's time there were only 7,000, out of a nation of about 10 million, who didn't bow the knee to Baal. So, if we base what we see today on precedent, there is really no change. Jews are being saved, but it is still a trickle,

and that is because, as God said himself, they are a "stiffnecked" people. It was the very reason he rejected them nationally.

Mark: Now, before going on the Medievals, I have to note that the statements you made regarding the view of the fathers were quite unequivocal. "The consensus among the early Fathers is that there is no divinely mandated future glory for national Israel" I agree that there is no divinely predicted glory for a future state of Israel, but there is assuredly a consensus prediction of the conversion of the Jews. You say, "There are only a few personalities who even address the issue of Israel in the future," and quote seven, adding "only two Fathers hold out for any future large restoration of faith in Israel." This suggests that you have searched long and hard to see what the Fathers have had to say about this topic, and found only a few quotes, mostly arguing against a future conversion.

Yet with just a little bit of searching around, I have found four more quotes you had missed. (Indeed, I found several others, but not as directly pertinent as the ones I have given).

R. Sungenis 2: Mark, in reality, this is what you have found: (1) two commentators, one of which disagrees with your view of Elijah and reserves a universal conversion of Jews as a "question," while the other commentator offers no exegesis of Romans 11 to support his conclusion. (2) You offered the view of Chrysostom, which as I said in my last view, bases his conclusion on a uninspired translation of Malachi 4:5, as does John Damascene, and both of which go against Jerome's translation. (3) You offered Gregory, but as you can see, he does not offer any patristic support or Scriptural exegesis to back up his view. (4) You offered Augustine, but at best Augustine's view is equivocal, since he says opposite things in different places. Even Augustine does not cite patristic witness to support even his more positive statements, and even his positive statement lends itself to being interpreted in more than one way.

Further, even if I were to accept Augustine, Chrysostom, Gregory and John Damascene as witnesses, this DOES NOT represent a "consensus" of Fathers. A "consensus" of Fathers is the "unanimous consent of the Fathers." It means that, except for a few detractors, ALL the Fathers took the same view. Pope Leo XIII taught in *Providentissimus Deus* that, unless the Fathers all took the same view, we were not bound to accept them. For example, most of the Fathers took the view that the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6 were angels who had sex with women. Alexander of Alexandria, Chrysostom and Augustine disagreed, and said that it referred to the godly line of Seth. Although in the minority, the view opting for "godly line of Seth" is the one most accepted by the Church today.

Mark 3: The point is, even if it is not a total consensus, which would be a sign of infallible teaching, there is a strong patristic tendency to interpret Romans 11:25-27 as implying a future conversion of the Jews. You has argued that there was a consensus against this view, which there clearly is not. Since my last reply, John Loughnan pointed me towards a whole series of additional patristic quotes in favour of this view. Fr. Augustin Lemann, himself a Jewish convert of the late 19th century, records, in addition to St. Augustine, the following patristic witnesses to this tradition: Tertullian, L. V, *contra Marcion*, Chap.IX ; Origen, Sixth Homily on the Book of Numbers, towards the end. St. Hilary, *Commentary on Psalm 58* ; St. Ambrose, *Book about the Patriarch Joseph*. St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Chap. XI; St.

Jerome, Commentary on Micheas, Chap. II; Commentary on Malachias, Chap. III, etc.; St Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Genesis, Book, V, etc.; St. Prosper of Aquitaine, The Calling of the Gentiles, Book I, Chap. XXI. Cassiodorus, Commentary on Psalm 102; Preniasius, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Chap.XI. St. Gregory the Great, Liber Moraliu, lib. II, etc.; St. Isidore, Book about the Calling of the Gentiles, Chap. V.

R. Sungenis 3: Mark, these names and references don't really mean much unless you can produce the exact statement that you think supports your view. If you haven't looked any of these up, then you should wait till you do.

Mark 3: Now, we have discussed several of these Fathers before, but Tertullian, Origen (who you had quoted as ambivalent on the identity of "all Israel"), Ambrose, Prosper, Cassiodorus, Preniasius, and Isidore are new additions to the list. The only one of these quotes I could find on line was Tertullian -- the earliest witness to this tradition:

"Christ is the proper and legitimate High Priest of God. He is the Pontiff of the priesthood of the uncircumcision, constituted such, even then, for the Gentiles, by whom He was to be more fully received, although at His last coming He will favour with His acceptance and blessing the circumcision also, even the race of Abraham, which by and by is to acknowledge Him." Tertullian, L. V, contra Marcion, Chap.IX

It is significant that Tertullian writes about this in his critique of the Marcionites, who attempted to throw out the Old Testament on the grounds that the Jewish religion was utterly worthless to Christians. Tertullian argues at length how a knowledge of Jewish law, traditions, liturgy, and Scriptures are essential as witness to Christian truth.

R. Sungenis 3: Correction, the Marcionites attempted to throw out the Old Testament, not the "Jewish religion." The Jewish religion was already thrown out. The Marcionites believed that the OT served no useful purpose for the Christian Church, but the Church retorted that the OT contained valuable principles for the Christian life, namely, the Ten Commandments. As for Tertullian, if he limits the favoring to the last coming, then he is wrong, since no one will be saved at Christ's second coming, for at that time, salvation is over. Moreover, he is also wrong if he limits the favoring to the future, since Luke 1:68-79; Acts 2:16-21; 15:16-18 all say the favoring occurred at the first coming of Christ. The whole point of Paul's argument in Romans 11:1-2 is that "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew," since God saved Paul and is still saving a remnant of Jews today just as He did in the OT, which is precisely what Paul says in Romans 11:3-5.

Mark 3: There is a fuller version of the quote from Cyril of Alexandria, which we already had seen, that makes its importance even more explicit:

'Towards the end of time, Our Lord Jesus Christ will effect the reconciliation of His former persecutor Israel with Himself. Everybody who knows Holy Scripture is aware that, in the course of time, this people will return to the love of Christ by the submission of faith ... Yes, one day, after the conversion of the Gentiles, Israel will be converted, and the Jews will be astonished at the treasure they will find in Christ.'

It would be interesting to go back and dig up these other quotes (and the references in the other lists from Cornelius a Lapide, etc.), but the fact is there are many patristic witnesses to this tradition, and a significant number to the return of Elijah tradition as well.

R. Sungenis 3: "Everybody who knows Holy Scripture"? Then why was the "everyone" so equivocal as to how it was going to occur? Why was did this "everyone" refer to no apostolic-patristic consensus that had such a view? What "Scripture" did this "everyone" rely on to give them such dogmatism, other than the somewhat obscure passage in Romans 11:25-26 and Malachi 4:2 (which we already saw had no consensus of interpretation among them)?

Mark 3: Here, however, is the kicker. Lemann's work is quoted by a priest who you yourself have quoted as "the expert on Catholic/Jewish relations" and "a man who was totally dedicated to our Catholic traditions," Fr. Dennis Fahey in *The Kingship of Christ and The Conversion of The Jewish Nation*.

Fr. Fahey concludes his citation of these sources with this:

"The conversion of the Jewish people to the True Supernatural Messiah is, therefore, certain, in spite of the overwhelming evidence of uncompromising hostility to Him on their part at the present time. Their conversion will be a glorious triumph for the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It will be a special source of exultation for Her, when Her own people will at last acclaim Her Divine Son as their King and welcome as their Queen Her who is their Sister according to the flesh, and who so ardently desires to be their Mother according to the Divine Life of Grace. She will then be able to pour forth anew the heartfelt thanksgiving of Her Magnificat: 'He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy: as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.'"

Now, I strongly disagree with Fr. Fahey on many points. I think his conflation of Orthodox Judaism with Masonic and socialist revolutionism in his notion of "Jewish naturalism" is grossly wrong. There is a huge difference between Orthodox Jews, living according to the Torah and Jewish tradition, and the many Jews who have left their faith for liberalism and secularism. Fahey sees them all as part of the same vast Hebraic conspiracy.

R. Sungenis 3: You'll be surprised to know that in reading Fr. Fahey's treatment of the conversion of Israel, it was at that time I began to do some serious investigation into this issue. I found that the majority of Fr. Fahey's patristic support was wanting. He had about a half dozen or so citations, but I didn't find them either convincing or representative of a unanimity. There were just too many conflicts and contradictions on their interpretations of the text in Romans 11. And again, if these witnesses are going to base their view of Israel's future on an exegesis of the text, then that exegesis better be thorough and exact, otherwise it is not worth the paper it is written on.

Mark 3: I agree with Hilaire Belloc on this point when he says, "We are asked to believe that this political upheaval [the Bolshevik revolution by which the Jews got control of Russia] was part of one highly organised plot centuries old the agents of which were millions of human

beings all pledged to the destruction of our society and acting in complete discipline under a few leaders superhumanly wise. The thing is nonsense on the face of it. Men have no capacity for acting in this fashion . . . moreover the motive is completely lacking. Why merely destroy, and why, if your object is merely to destroy, manifest wide differences in your aims?... The conception of a vast age-long plot, culminating in the contemporary Russian affair, will not hold water."

However, there is no question that Fr. Fahey spent a great deal of time (some would suggest too much time) studying the Jewish question. He was one of the most negative Catholics of the twentieth century in his view of the Jews. And yet he was an ardent defender of the Church's traditional belief in the eventual conversion of the Jews at the last times.

Now let's go on again to the medievals. **Mark:** The 10th century French Abbot Adso wrote a treatise of the Antichrist that became very influential in the Middle Ages. In it he wrote:

"Lest the Antichrist come suddenly and without warning and deceive and destroy the whole human race by his error, before his arrival the two great prophets Enoch and Elijah will be sent into the world. They will defend God's faithful against the attack of the Antichrist with divine arms and will instruct, comfort, and prepare the elect for battle with three and a half years teaching and preaching. These two very great prophets and teachers will convert the sons of Israel who will live in that time to the faith, and they will make their belief unconquerable among the elect in the face of the affliction of so great a storm. At that time what scripture says will be fulfilled 'If the number of sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, their remnant will be saved'."

R. Sungenis 2: The problem here, Mark, is that the abbot has misread the passage. There are only two passages in Scripture that have these elements, Isaiah 10:22 and Romans 9:27. Isaiah 10:22 reads: O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return; A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. Romans 9:27 quotes from Isaiah 10:22. But you'll notice that neither passage predicts a massive conversion of the Jews, but only what I've been saying all along -- that only a "remnant" will be saved.

Mark 3: This gets back to what I said earlier about a tension between "all Israel" meaning "all the Jews" or "a remnant of the Jewish nation" being saved at the end of time. I think the tradition is close to unanimous that this refers to future events, but is not as clear as to the scale of the future conversion. I have found several other important medieval passages that refer to a remnant of the Jews being saved in the end times.

R. Sungenis 3: Mark, it's a little bit more than a "tension." It is a massive contradiction. If "all Israel" means "all the remnant," then we can stop this discussion right here. Your job is to prove that "all Israel" means ALL Israel, both by patristic unanimity and exegesis of Scripture. If you can't, then you have conceded the argument between us, for then it would be the "remnant" by default, and you'll be in my corner.

Mark 2: St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a Commentary on Epistle to the Romans, in which he wrote: "The blindness of the Jews will endure until the fullness of the gentiles have accepted the faith. And this is in accord with what the Apostle says below about the salvation of the Jews, namely,

that after the fullness of the nations have entered, 'all Israel will be saved', not individually as at present, but universally." He goes on to make it clear that he is referring here to "the conversion of the Jews at the end of the world."

R. Sungenis: Thomas has every right to his opinion, just as he did with the Immaculate Conception, but that fact is he offers no exegesis or patristic support for the idea of a "universal" conversion. In fact, he is the first to use the word "universal," and thus, it is quite unprecedented.

Mark 3: There is a big difference between St. Thomas' views on the Immaculate Conception, where he was not followed by the Church, and this issue where he is speaking consistently with what the Fathers and Doctors said before him and after him. I would agree that while many of the earlier quotes seemed to speak of generally all the Jews living at the end times, St. Thomas does appear to be the first to specify a universal conversion.

R. Sungenis 3: Well, this again proves that there is not a consensus of opinion, but a diversity of opinion. The whole issue revolves around whether it is universal or not universal.

Mark 2: Moving on to the Counter Reformation era, the great Jesuit apologist St. Robert Bellarmine writes in *De Summo Pontifice* (I, 3) about "the coming of Enoch and Elias, who live even now and shall live until they come to oppose Antichrist himself, and to preserve the elect in the faith of Christ, and in the end shall convert the Jews, and it is certain that this is not yet fulfilled."

R. Sungenis: First, if this concept is being based on Scripture, as most of them do in reference to Romans 11:25-26, then where is the Scripture that says Enoch is going to return to earth to convert the Jews? There is no such passage in Scripture. Enoch is mentioned only in Hebrews 11:5 and Jude 1:14 (outside of his OT references), but neither of them speak of him returning. Second, Bellarmine cites no Scripture, nor any patristic witness, to back up the claim.

The only place in Scripture that even remotely suggests something along these lines is Apocalypse 11:5-6, which reads: "And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire."

The problem with this, however, is that the passage does not specifically name Enoch or Elijah. Elijah is sometimes associated with the passage only because he once prayed that it would not rain in Israel (James 5:17-18). But Enoch is not even alluded to, since there is no such action he performed during his lifetime. This is why Enoch is sometimes left out of the predictions (as is the case with Venerable Bede). The only other personage that could fill the description is Moses, since Exodus records him as turning water into blood, yet curiously, none of the aforementioned interpreters mention Moses as a possibility, even though he fits the description better than Enoch.

So what you have, Mark, is a confusing assortment of ideas, with little, if any, Scriptural backing, and that from the very people who claim to be getting their ideas from Scripture, not

Tradition. In addition, the Apocalypse is a highly symbolic treatise, especially Chapter 11, of which many exegetes have seen as a symbolic representation of the Church preaching the gospel during the New Testament era, signified by the "two-by-two" formula used in the passage (cf., Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; 2 Cor 13:1; Eph 2:15; 1 Cor 14:29).

Mark 3: Whether Enoch and Elijah are the "two witnesses" is a bit of a side issue. There is fairly universal consensus that Elijah is one of the. The scriptural basis for this is that Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed for all men once to die. The only men who never died in Scripture are Elijah and Enoch. Enoch was known as a prophet of the Apocalypse, and Jude 1:14 quotes from the apocryphal Book of Enoch, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, behold the LORD cometh with ten thousands of his saints." So, it would not be surprising to see Enoch return in an end times context. The apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus (4th century) has Enoch say the following: "I am Enoch who pleased God, and was translated by him. And this is Elijah the Tishbite. We are also to live to the end of the age; but then we are about to be sent by God to resist Antichrist, and be slain by him, and to rise after three days, and to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord." While of course this is not canonical, this does show that the early Church saw Enoch and Elijah reflected in this passage.

I will admit that the Fathers are reading Elijah and Enoch in to their understanding of these passages, but as I will argue below, this searching for symbolic meanings is essential to the Catholic understanding of Scripture.

R. Sungenis 3: I guess the old saying is true that one man's treasure is another man's trash. The treasure you see is that some of them at least think Elijah might return. The trash is that they aren't sure Elijah will come (as Ott agrees), nor that Enoch will be with him. So again, Mark, we don't have any solid evidence, but we do have a lot of speculation. Interpretation of prophecy is filled with it, so I'm not surprised to see it here.

Mark 2: Writing on Matthew 17:11-12 ("Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands."), Lapidé says that Elias will: "Restore all things: that is, convert the Jews to Christ as the Messiah promised to themselves and their forefathers."

He goes on to say that: "Falsely do the Calvinists refer all these things to the first Advent of Christ, and explain both mentions of Elias -- viz., in verses 11 and 12 -- to mean John the Baptist. For they think that Elias, whom Malachi predicted shall come as the precursor of Christ (Mal. 4:5), is John the Baptist, and there is no other who shall come with Enoch before Christ's second Advent."

R. Sungenis 2: If that is the case, Mark, then why would Ott say that such a view was erroneous?

Mark 3: Ott doesn't say this view is erroneous, just not sufficiently proven. Clearly, by 1952 in Germany, even in orthodox Catholic circles, the taste for symbolic, prophetic interpretations of

Scripture had diminished. Lapide might well have accused Ott of following Calvinist error (at least in this one instance).

R. Sungenis 3: No, he does not say "sufficiently proven," rather, "without sufficient foundation," which means that those who propose it have little basis for doing so, and I agree, for the same reasons Ott lists.

Mark 2: Writing on Matthew 23:37-39 ("O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"), Lapide writes:

"It is possible that this passage may be understood of the Jews, who about the end of the world shall be converted to Christ by the preaching of Elias, and who, when He shall presently come to judgment, will acknowledge Him to be the Messiah, the Blessed of the Lord."

R. Sungenis 2: Mark, did you catch the words "It is possible" in the first part of his sentence? Obviously, Lapide is not offering this as the definitive interpretation for the Church. He is smart enough to know that all this is quite speculative, since there is very little information to go on. And since he, as you already admitted, equivocates between a literal and spiritual interpretation, he certainly isn't the definitive witness you are looking for. And again, notice that he leaves out Enoch. I think this lack of conviction is even more significant in the case of Lapide, since of all the medievals, he would be the one person who would know what the patristic and medieval consensus was, since he catalogued most of it.

Mark 3: Lapide is hardly dismissing this interpretation. He has already said explicitly that he expects the return of Elijah to convert the Jews in his discussion of Matthew 17 and Romans 11. The only question in his interpretation of Matthew 23 is whether this is yet additional support for this view.

R. Sungenis 3: The fact that there is no consensus on Matt 23:37-39 that Lapide can point to in order to support his interpretation of Elijah again shows you that the proposition is at best speculative.

Mark 2: In summary, it looks to me like the vast majority of the Fathers, the Medievals the and Counter-Reformation doctors, and recent pre-Vatican II exegetes are all in agreement about a conversion of the Jews before the end of the world (possibly converted by the preaching of Elijah and Enoch as prophesied in Malachi and Revelations) as a sign of Christ's coming.

With St. Augustine, St. Jerome, Pope St. Gregory the Great, St. John Chrysostom, the Venerable Bede, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Robert Bellarmine, and Cornelius a Lapide on my side of the argument, and having shown that all but one of your quotes are from one modern source that gives only snippets of the Fathers, I think the onus of showing that the Fathers and Doctors did not believe in a future mass conversion of the Jews now falls on you.

My other question is, given the broad consensus I have found in Catholic sources saying that there will be such a future conversion of Jews to the faith, some from sources that you must have seen before in your wide reading, why are you so keen to deny this teaching? I do not claim that belief in the future conversion of the Jews, or a future coming of Elijah before the Second Coming, for that matter, are *de fide* teaching. But they certainly seem to represent the consensus of two millennia of Catholic exegesis. What is the purpose in trying to deny this?

R. Sungenis: You don't have a "broad consensus," you have merely a half dozen or so citations, many of which are equivocal, all of which offer no exegesis, little of which cite early patristic support for their view, some of which can be taken in a spiritual as well as literal sense, many of which leave out crucial details (e.g., Enoch), all of which have only the obscure passage of Romans 11:25-26 as their Scriptural base; all of which base their view on the highly symbolic passage in Apocalypse 11:5-6; many of which ignore those against their view; and all who are summed up by one of our greatest theologian/historians as holding a "questionable" view of universal conversion of Jews, and an erroneous view of Elijah, namely, Ludwig Ott.

Mark 3: Let me add a few more medieval and later sources to our "vast cloud of witnesses" on this issue. Father Lemann, who I cited above, cites the following:

Venerable Bede, Commentary on Psalm 58, etc. St. Anselm, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Chap. II ; St. Peter Damian, Sermon 66. St. Bernard, Letter 363 St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter XI, 4 Suarez, Sermon 66

We have already seen St. Bede and St. Thomas, but Sts. Anselm, Peter Damian, Bernard, and the theologian Suarez are new sources to check. In my own further researches, I have come across several more.

R. Sungenis 3: Produce the quotes, Mark, and then we'll talk about them.

Mark 3: The Glossa Ordinaria, the primary medieval source book for Scriptural interpretation, which reflects the consensus of Western Fathers like Augustine and Jerome, says this of Romans 11:27: "Hoc erit in fine quando prædicatione Eliæ et Enoch convertentur Judæi, unde per Malachiam: Mittam vobis Eliam Thesbitem qui convertet corda patrum ad filios, et corda filiorum ad patrem (Mal. IV); ut intelligant filii ut patres, id est ut prophetæ intellexerunt."

My freehand translation:

"This is the prediction that in the end Elias and Enoch will convert the Jews, as Malachi says, 'I will send you Elias the Tishbite who will convert the hearts of the father to the sons and the sons to the father, (Mal. IV)' (Note Enoch gets included here.)"

R. Sungenis 3: Now we're back to Enoch again? What happened to Lapede's view that only Elijah was returning? Moreover, without the context, we don't know whether the GO is accepting, rejecting, or just commenting on what some people believed Mal 4:2 was predicting. Also, we're back to the mistranslation of the Hebrew text of Mal 4:2. It DOES NOT say Tishbite. If you claim that the GO is showing us the "consensus of Western Fathers...like

Jerome," then obviously the GO is misrepresenting Jerome, since his Vulgate did not have the word "Tishbite." Apparently, all the GO is doing is reiterating the same error made by Augustine. Besides, we have our own GO in Ott, and he says the Elijah theory does not have "sufficient foundation."

Mark 3: Pope Innocent III, in a quite negative letter about the Jews to the Kings of France and Germany Regi Francorum, nonetheless prefaces it by saying that it is "not displeasing to the Lord, but rather, acceptable to Him that the Dispersion of the Jews should live and do service under Catholic Kings and Christian princes the remnants of which then will finally be saved (Romans 9:3-24), since in those days Judah will be saved (Jeremiah 33:6-26) and Israel will dwell in mutual trust."

(Notice that this great Pope applies Jeremiah's prophecy of restoration to the Jewish nation in the future, not solely to the first coming or to the Church.)

R. Sungenis 3: This quote doesn't do anything to support your argument. First, Innocent speaks only of a "remnant," and thus we're back to the equivocation between a universal conversion and a remnant conversion. Since Innocent III lived just prior to Aquinas, we then have two witnesses who have diametrically opposed views on the subject. Second, there is hardly sufficient evidence here that Innocent is applying the salvation of the remnant to the distant future. Apparently, you are interpreting the word "finally" as applying to the distant future, but that is hardly provable. In fact, you have Innocent III misinterpreting both Scripture's testimony in Hebrews 8-10, and the teaching of the Church, that Jeremiah 31-33 applies to the first coming. The "branch" that Jeremiah mentions in 33:15 refers to the same Branch in Isaiah 4:2 and 11:1, which refer to the first coming of Christ. The reference to "David" in Jeremiah 33 is fulfilled at the first coming, as Acts 15:16-18 speaks of "rebuilding the tabernacle of David." Luke 1:68-79 assures us that the remembering of the covenant and the salvation to the house of David occurred at the first coming. Acts 2:21-22 tells us that the gospel of salvation to Israel occurred at Pentecost, and 3000 Jews and Gentiles were saved.

Mark 3: Gregory IX and Martin V also use this formula of predicting a future "remnant will be saved":

"Whereas the Jews are made to the image of God, and a remnant of them will one day be saved, and whereas they have sought our protection: following in the footsteps of our predecessors We command that they be not molested in their synagogues; that their laws, rights and customs be not assailed; that they be not baptized by force, constrained to observe Christian festivals, nor to wear new badges, and that they be not hindered in their business relations with Christians."
Martin V, Declaration on the Protection of the Jews, 1419

This view -- the eventual salvation of the Jews (or at least of a remnant at the end times) is hardly a minority position, but so standard that it features in the basic scriptural aid of the medieval church, and papal bulls.

R. Sungenis 3: So now we have a pope who lived almost two centuries after Aquinas (Martin V) who still says that only a remnant will be saved, not the universal salvation envisioned by

Aquinas. Further, there is no indication that Martin does not believe that there is a remnant being saved in his day. The verbal phrase "will one day be saved," is just a vague reference that, in the end, some Jews will be saved. In any case, Martin is not gushing over a Jewish conversion, nor does he expect some spectacular movement of God upon them. If a miraculous and substantial movement of God upon the Jews was the abiding message of the Middle Ages (as you claim) then either Martin missed it, or he didn't believe it. The other possibility, Mark, is that Martin was simply reiterating what the major consensus was -- that there will be no massive conversion of Jews at any time, and that only a remnant of Jews will be saved, just as Romans 11:5, 14, 23 says.

R. Sungenis 2: I have been known to be wrong at times, and I am open to being disproven on anything I say. But considering the less than definitive evidence you've brought forth, I don't feel persuaded to change my view. At best it is an open question. Also, the fact that you didn't interact with any of the exegesis I brought forth in my last post, but relied solely on somewhat equivocal and unclear references from various Fathers and Medievals, there is little I find compelling.

Mark 3: What I am asking you to consider is that there are more important issues than scientific exegesis of passages. The reception of scripture in the Church should take priority over a technical interpretation of what the literal Greek or Hebrew of a text reads.

R. Sungenis 3: What is the "reception of scripture in the Church," Mark? Apparently, it is your interpretation of what the Fathers and Medievals taught on this issue, which, as I have painstakingly shown, is full of equivocations and contradictions. When you give me a unanimity of belief then you have room to accuse me of rejecting the "reception of scripture in the Church." As for "scientific exegesis" and the "technical interpretation of what the literal Greek or Hebrew of a text reads," are you suggesting, Mark, that the Catholic Church would sanction views that are opposed to a what the literal Greek or Hebrew reads? Moreover, as I said earlier, the few Fathers that give their views regarding the future of the Jews base their view on their own personal interpretation of Romans 11, not on a "reception of scripture in the Church." You won't find any of them saying: "Well, this is the view that was passed down to us from the early Church, and thus we must believe it." They do that with the Incarnation and the Trinity, but not prophecies about Israel.

Hence, if they base their views on an exegesis of Romans 11, then it is to Romans 11 we will go. Since that is the case, we're going to need all the "technical" and "scientific" analysis we can muster to understand the "literal Greek or Hebrew of the text," are we not? Or would you suggest that we just glibly go into the text and make some cursory reading of its contents and walk away with a mere impression of what it says? Is that the way Leo XIII or Pius XII taught us to investigate Scripture? I don't think so. In fact, Leo spoke to us about the "revival amongst us of Greek learning which give a strong impetus to biblical studies" (Prov. Deus, 1, B, 2c). He said that Scripture was "dictated by the Holy Spirit" (Prov Deus, 1, A, b). Leo also said that: "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 the older tongues,' to quote St. Augustine, will be useful and advantageous" (Prov Deus, 2, B, 3).

In fact, Leo also taught that one can "push inquiry and exposition beyond what the Fathers have done, provided he carefully observe the rule so wisely laid down by St. Augustine -- "not to depart from the literal and obvious sense..." (Prov Deus, 2, C, d). So you see, Mark, that according to Leo, the literal and obvious sense of Scripture takes precedence even beyond the Fathers, unless, of course, they are in unanimity on a given interpretation, which is obviously not the case regarding Romans 11. Leo's "literal and obvious" sense, and his "revival amongst us of Greek," say only one thing, Mark -- your appeal to avoid "scientific exegesis" and "technical interpretation of the literal Greek" is highly inappropriate.

Mark 2: Just as a P.S. to my previous reply, I want to address this specific issue. Chrysostom and Augustine were not "confused" about the return of Elijah because of their reliance on the LXX. They looked for a return of Elijah in the flesh because Jewish tradition had long predicted it.

R. Sungenis 2: How does "Jewish tradition" establish Catholic belief? The "Jewish tradition" also believed that the Messiah would not come as a suffering servant but as a conquering king. Are you saying that we should have paid attention to that "tradition" and perhaps denied that the babe in Bethlehem actually was the Messiah? I don't think so. Moreover, Ott already told you that the idea of Elijah coming-again was from "Jewry," yet he put no stock in that interpretation.

Mark 3: Jewish tradition does not establish Catholic belief, but it can shape it -- particularly those Jewish traditions which were already known at the time of Christ. (Later Rabbinic traditions, of course, may be false traditions, some developed in direct opposition to Christianity.) The prediction of Elijah's return before the coming of the Messiah was certainly known at the time of Our Lord. But John the Baptist explicitly denies being Elijah (John 1:21). The only way Matthew 17:11-12 can be interpreted consistently with John 1:21 is if 17:12 refers to John the Baptist as symbolically filling the role of Elijah, while Matt. 17:11 still refers to a return of Elijah still to come. The evidence is that the Church continued to look for the coming of Elijah (Revelations 11:3, the Gospel of Nicodemus, Augustine, Chrysostom, etc.)

R. Sungenis 3: Are you now deciding to argue the point from a "scientific" and "technical" exegesis of Scripture, Mark? If you want to get into such a contest, I'll be happy to oblige you, but I find your above appeal to the exegesis of these texts to be quite ironic and hypocritical, since you seem to aver allowing the same analysis to Romans 11. This only shows that, when you think the "technical" interpretation is in your favor, you won't hesitate to use it as an authority. As for your references, using Apoc 11:3 is certainly begging the question, is it not? The Gospel of Nicodemus is apocryphal. And Augustine and Chrysostom based their interpretation of Elijah on a faulty translation of the Hebrew text in the LXX.

Mark 2: Our Lord implies in Matthew 17:11-12 that there will be two comings of Elijah - a coming of the actual at the end of time to "restore all things", but a figurative coming of Elijah in spirit in the form of John the Baptist. Cornelius a Lapide calls it a "Calvinist error" to believe that verses 11 and 12 both refer to John the Baptist.

R. Sungenis 2: Then I suppose Lapide would accuse Ludwig Ott of holding to a "Calvinist error."

Mark: Perhaps! As I've said, it's not surprising that even as orthodox a scholar as Ott is influenced by his times in Germany in 1952 compared to Lapedo writing at the height of the Counter-Reformation.

R. Sungenis 3: Oh, now you claim Ott was influenced by Nazis?? Come on, Mark, what is this? Are you stopping just short of calling Ott an anti-semite? This is the most ridiculous comment you have made in this whole discussion. Please don't bring this issue down to this level, for you will completely turn me off to discussing it any longer with you.

Mark 2: Furthermore, awareness of the Hebrew text is no proof of accuracy. The LXX has an older textual tradition than the Masoretic text and many of the earlier Hebrew texts. The Church has always recognized the value of the Septuagint. It remains the official Old Testament text of the Greek Church, and the oldest Latin text, the *vetus Itala*, was a direct translation of the Septuagint. Jerome's Vulgate borrowed from Hebrew texts to correct some errors in the *Vetus Itala*, but in other cases it was the Hebrew texts that were in error.

R. Sungenis 2: I'm afraid you have it exactly backwards, Mark. The Hebrew was the originally inspired text, meticulously copied by the Jews in Palestine, and that's the reason we have a Masoretic text that is as good as it is. I suggest you read Ernst Würthwein's book *The Text of the Old Testament*. Here's one section of his chapter on the comparison of the Septuagint to the Masoretic Text: "...today we recognize that the LXX neither was nor was intended to be a precise scholarly translation. Many other factors and interests played a part in its formation. An uncritical use of it which ignores these factors can only lead to false conclusions. In the following paragraphs a few basic considerations are noted, with the reminder that the LXX differs so greatly from book to book that no generalizations can be made with reservations. (a) If we are tempted to prefer the LXX to the Masoretic text as an older witness to the text, we should recall the unevenness of its own textual tradition. Whereas the consonantal text of the Masoretic Text has remained remarkably constant since the second century, the Septuagint manuscripts even centuries later have widely divergent texts..." (pp. 63-64).

The rest of the chapter adds much more information than I can put here.

In any case, the official translation of the Catholic Church, which resides only in the Latin Vulgate, does not have "Thesbite," rather, it has "prophet," just as the Hebrew text does, so whatever your opinion about the LXX, it has been trumped by the Church's official translation, and that is what I will go by.

Mark 3: I don't know why you are referring me to a conservative German Protestant scholar, who of course will argue for the superiority of the Rabbinic Hebrew text which the Protestant churches adopted as their canon in opposition to the Catholic Church. In fact, some Protestant scholars have argued that the Masoretic text is infallible. But as the Catholic Encyclopedia says: "The Septuagint is the most ancient translation of the Old Testament and consequently is invaluable to critics for understanding and correcting the Hebrew text (*Massorah*), the latter, such as it has come down to us, being the text established by the Massoretes in the sixth century A.D. Many textual corruptions, additions, omissions, or transpositions must have crept into the Hebrew text between the third and second centuries B.C. and the sixth and seventh centuries of

our era; the manuscripts therefore which the Seventy had at their disposal, may in places have been better than the Massoretic manuscripts."

R. Sungenis 3: That information was compiled long before the new evidence was found by Wurthwein and even Catholic scholars, such as Zerwick, Lyonnet, Sabourin, et al. But the most important fact that you are ignoring, Mark, is that the Catholic Church's own official translation of Mal 4:2 DOES NOT HAVE the word "Thesbite," it has "prophet," and every Catholic English translation has "prophet," not "Thesbite." So you're barking up the wrong tree, Mark. You can argue the superiority of the LXX in many cases, but you simply have no evidence of it in Mal 4:2, and that is the only passage we are discussing with a textual variant.

Mark 3: More recently, the Dead Sea Scrolls have been discovered -- an earlier Hebrew text than the late Hellenistic / early medieval Massoretic version -- and scholars have established that in many places the DSS agrees more closely with the LXX than the Massoretic.

R. Sungenis 3: But we're not arguing about "many places." We are arguing about Mal 4:2 only. If you have some evidence that "Thesbite" is the proper translation, and that all the Masoretic texts are wrong, and that Jerome was wrong, and that the Catholic Church was wrong in allowing Jerome to ignore the LXX in Mal 4:2, please show me.

Mark 3: I am not arguing that one text or translation is "inspired" while the others are not, simply that we cannot make the assumption that the standard Hebrew text is the more accurate one. Furthermore, we must be open to God's work through the Church in passing on truth. Inspiration doesn't simply belong to the inspire authors, but to the Church which preserves and transmits the text from generation to generation.

R. Sungenis 3: If that is the case, Mark, then you just torpedoed your own ship, since the Church has decided to preserve "prophet" in Mal 4:2, not "Thesbite."

Mark 2: A most important example is the LXX use of "parthenos" (virgin) in Isaiah 7:14 where the Hebrew texts have "almah" (young woman). Was St. Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrong when he quoted the "inaccurate" Septuagint rather than the "accurate" Hebrew in applying this prophecy to the virgin birth of Our Lord?

R. Sungenis 3: This is quite an elementary mistake, Mark. The word *almah* appears seven times in the Hebrew Old Testament (cf., Gn 24:43; Ex 2:8; Ps 68:25; Pr 30:19; Sg 1:3; 6:8; Is 7:14). None of the passages suggest that *almah* refers to a woman who is married or has had sexual relations. The usage of *almah* in Pr 30:19 also refers to a virgin. In this passage, "the way of a man with a maid (*almah*)," who is assumed to be a virgin since she is unmarried, is contrasted in the next verse, Pr 30:20, with an "adulterous woman (*isha*)" who is understood as married but having sexual relations with other men."

Mark 3: Pr. 30:19 could be understood to imply sexual relations. Pr. 30:20 is not necessarily a contrast, but could be a parallel. In any case, the Septuagint translators got it right. Later Jewish translators (the Aquila version, etc.) and countless Jewish, liberal, and agnostic exegetes have

argued that they got it wrong. Don't you think this is a case of God working through the translators and the Church which preserved the texts, as well as the original prophet?

R. Sungenis 3: As for Prov 30:19-20, I'm not interested in "implications" or "could be's." If there is nothing definitive there for you, you don't have an argument. Besides, you missed the most important argument, which is that Genesis 24 uses both *almah* and *bethulah* in the same context referring to the same person. As for the LXX, where does the Church teach that "God works through translators" in any direct way? The Church teaches God inspired the original Hebrew, and that the LXX may or may not be correct. I hope you don't believe in the myth that God inspired the 72 translators of the LXX so that they all came out with the same version.

Mark 2: The point I am trying to make is that, regardless of whether Malachi originally wrote "Elijah the Tishbite" or "Elijah the prophet", the Holy Spirit has often used the LX translations and the interpretive traditions of the Church to draw deeper meaning out of the passages than a clinical, literal analysis of the texts would suggest. If we are to really understand what this passage, or any other passage of Scripture, means in a prophetic sense, we have to go beyond parsing the Greek and Hebrew and study how the text has been received and understood in the tradition of the Church.

R. Sungenis 2: The Holy Spirit didn't inspire the LXX, Mark, and neither did He inspire the Jewish interpretation of the passage. As for the "tradition of the Church," the fact remains that Chrysostom did not know Hebrew, and therefore couldn't even know what the original said. Jerome, which is the one key person representing our "tradition" in regards to judgments about the Hebrew and Greek texts, chose the word "prophet" and rejected the word "Thesbite." THAT is our tradition, Mark, since every other person who followed in Church history used the Vulgate and read "Heliam prophetam" not "Elion ton Thesbitem."

Mark 3: We have seen that the Glossa Ordinaria passed on the other version. And of course, every scholar in the Eastern Church would have continued to use the LXX.

R. Sungenis 3: Since when is the GO our authority, Mark? Did the Council of Trent authorize the GO or the Vulgate as our official translation? Did Leo tell us to go to the original Hebrew of the Old Testament or to prefer the LXX?

Mark 2: This is a general difficulty I have with your exegesis of Romans 11:25-27: you are very keen to show that the grammatical structure of the passage could support your interpretation of the text as denying that it refers to future end times events. But the question is not simply what the grammatical structure of the Greek suggests, but how the text is understood according to the *analogia fidei*.

R. Sungenis 2: As I explained quite thoroughly above in the analysis of all the "analogy of faith" you brought forward, it is a best equivocal.

Mark 3: It may be equivocal, in that there are minority views and there is the possibility of other interpretations, but it is a considerable harmony to this view. There is a harmony with other passages in the Old and new testaments, and a harmony of patristic witnesses. Interpretation

according to the analogy of faith means interpreting texts harmoniously with each other, Church tradition, and Catholic doctrine. I believe that the interpretation of Romans 11:25-27 as implying a future conversion of the Jews at the end times is the most obvious way to read this passage in accordance with the analogy of faith.

R. Sungenis 3: You can "think" it all you want, Mark, but you haven't proven it by any stretch of the imagination. There is much more speculation than there is "harmony" in the witnesses. For that matter, you haven't even attempted to exegete the biblical text in any detail, rather, you just keep proof-texting Romans 11:25-27 as if just citing it is somehow going to prove your point.

Mark 2: That is why I put more "stock" in St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom's exegesis according to the Church's traditional understanding than I do in your exegesis based on strict attention to the Greek text.

R. Sungenis 2: Neither Augustine nor Chrysostom "exegeted" Romans 11:25-26. They simply referred to the text. Even at that, Augustine's view is equivocal. As for my "exegesis based on strict attention to the Greek text," you can dismiss it if you wish, Mark, but the Greek text is the inspired and inerrant word of God. Unless you can show a viable and provable alternative to the Greek text, then I'm afraid you don't have much of a case.

Mark 3: As I have said, scientific exegesis, determining the original texts, parsing the grammar, etc., is a very modern way of reading Scripture.

R. Sungenis 3: I suggest you read Leo XIII's encyclical on biblical interpretation before you start making your accusations about "modern way of reading Scripture," Mark.

Mark 3: Traditionally, the Church has read Scripture with an eye to the allegorical meaning. And the "literal" meaning was not understood as a "literalist" interpretation, but as a surface level, common sense interpretation. A common sense interpretation of Romans 11:25-26 certainly sounds like all Israel being saved in 11:26 is an event that follows the fullness of the Gentiles coming in 11:25 chronologically.

Your strict construction of the grammar shows that there may be another possibility, but it hardly negates that surface level meaning that apparently almost everybody who has read this text for 2000 years has understood.

R. Sungenis 3: I don't know what the "allegorical meaning" has to do with this discussion. As for "common sense interpretation of Romans 11:25-26" that "certainly sounds like all Israel being saved," if you claim that this is the plain reading of the text, then I will hold you to it. If you don't believe "all Israel" refers to all the Jews from Abraham to the end of time who will be saved, but instead think that it refers to some future time at or near the end of time, then the plain reading of the text will also require you to interpret "all Israel" as referring to every last Jew in that future time period. "All" Israel does not mean a "vast majority" or a "significant amount," or anything less than every Jew.

Apparently, the only one to see this requirement in a futuristic interpretation is Aquinas (yet Innocent III, Martin V disagreed with him). It is precisely because of this requirement that the futuristic view doesn't make sense, since it requires an unprecedented conversion of Jews that was not even true when they were the apple of God's eye in the OT! At no time in their history was there ever such a massive conversion. At each instance there was only a remnant who were saved. And the irony is that the interpretation that there will be such a massive conversion is all based on one obscure verse in Romans 11 that has several possible interpretations to its words. So if you want to go with the "common sense" or "plain sense" of the text, Mark, then please explain to me how you avoid the plain meaning of the word "all." At least my interpretation is faithful to what that word means.

Mark 3: More generally, as Newman warns us, we run the risk of error if we rely overly on the literal sense of Scripture, which he saw infesting the Protestant Church of his day. In *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, Newman writes of the heresy ridden Church of Antioch:

"[T]he immediate source of that fertility in heresy, which is the unhappy distinction of the Syrian Church, was its celebrated Exegetical School. The history of that school is summed up in the broad characteristic fact, on the one hand that it devoted itself to the literal and critical interpretation of Scripture, and on the other that it gave rise first to the Arian and then to the Nestorian heresy. In all ages of the Church, her teachers have shown a disinclination to confine themselves to the mere literal interpretation of Scripture. Her most subtle and powerful method of proof, whether in ancient or modern times, is the mystical sense, which is so frequently used in doctrinal controversy as on many occasions to supersede any other. In the early centuries we find this method of interpretation to be the very ground for receiving as revealed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Whether we betake ourselves to the Ante-Nicene writers or the Nicene, certain texts will meet us, which do not obviously refer to that doctrine, yet are put forward as palmary proofs of it. {405} On the other hand, if evidence be wanted of the connexion of heterodoxy and biblical criticism in that age, it is found in the fact that, not long after their contemporaneous appearance in Syria, they are found combined in the person of Theodore of Heraclea, so called from the place both of his birth and his bishoprick, an able commentator and an active enemy of St. Athanasius, though a Thracian unconnected except by sympathy with the Patriarchate of Antioch. The case had been the same in a still earlier age;"the Jews clung to the literal sense of the Old Testament and rejected the Gospel; the Christian Apologists proved its divinity by means of the allegorical. The formal connexion of this mode of interpretation with Christian theology is noticed by Porphyry, who speaks of Origen and others as borrowing it from heathen philosophy, both in explanation of the Old Testament and in defence of their own doctrine. It may almost be laid down as an historical fact that the mystical interpretation and orthodoxy will stand or fall together."

In *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, Newman takes up the point again:

"[M]ystical interpretation of Holy Scripture" [is] one of the characteristic conditions or principles on which the teaching of the Church has ever proceeded.

[T]his has been the doctrine of all ages of the Church, as is shown by the disinclination of her teachers to confine themselves to the mere literal interpretation of Scripture. Her most subtle and powerful method of proof, whether in ancient or modern times, is the mystical sense, which is so frequently used in doctrinal controversy as on many occasions to supersede any other. Thus the Council of Trent appeals to the peace-offering spoken of in Malachi in proof of the Eucharistic Sacrifice; to the water and blood issuing from our Lord's side, and to the mention of "waters" in the Apocalypse, in admonishing on the subject of the mixture of water with the wine in the Oblation. Thus Bellarmine defends Monastic celibacy by our Lord's words in Matthew xix., and refers to 'We went through fire and water;' &c., in the Psalm, as an argument for Purgatory; and these, as is plain, are but specimens of a rule. Now, on turning to primitive controversy, we find this method of interpretation to be the very basis of the proof of the Catholic doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Whether we betake ourselves to the Ante-Nicene writers or the Nicene, certain texts will meet us, which do not obviously refer to that doctrine, yet are put forward as palmary proofs of it. Such are, in respect of our Lord's divinity, 'My heart is inditing of a good matter,' or 'has burst forth with a good Word;' 'he Lord made' or 'possessed Me in the beginning of His ways;' 'I was with Him, in whom He delighted;' 'In Thy Light shall we see Light;' 'Who shall declare His generation?' 'She is the Breath of the Power of God;' and 'His Eternal Power and Godhead.'"

Be careful that in your grammatical parsing of the text and sticking to the strict literal sense that you don't willy nilly throw out valuable Church traditions that have found apostolic teaching confirmed in apparently unrelated passages of Scripture.

R. Sungenis 3: After you read Pope Leo XIII's treatise on interpreting Scripture in its "literal and obvious sense," then also realize that I didn't throw out any "valuable Church tradition," since there isn't one to speak of. When you have Aquinas saying "universal" and Pope Martin V says "remnant," and Lapse saying "Elijah" and someone else saying "Enoch," and a host of other divergent interpretations, you don't have a unanimity, Mark, you have your own wishful thinking on this subject.

R. Sungenis 2: One final note, Mark, is that when it comes to prophecy, there really is no one view espoused by the Church. That is precisely why you see such a divergence of opinion and equivocation among even the witnesses you bring forward.

Mark 3: yes, I agree. There is no infallible interpretation of this text proposed as a *de fide* belief. There is a considerable witness in the tradition, however, to the interpretation of this text.

Robert Sungenis 2: Nevertheless, a universal conversion would simply be totally adverse to everything God has ever done with regard to Jews and Gentiles. Ever since the beginning of time, there have only been a percentage of the world's people who have sought and remained with the Lord. From Abel and Noah, to the time Israel entered Canaan when only two of the original group that left Egypt remained faithful, to the time of David, there was only a remnant of Jews who believed, even in their glory years. God simply does not do "universal" conversions. He does not coerce people to believe in Him on massive scales or somehow bend the wills of all a particular people in spite of their obstinance. That has never been His way. The constant theme in Scripture is that only a remnant of people will turn to Him out of the free will God gave them.

St. Paul says the same of the Jews in Romans 11:23. He says: "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again."

Notice that their conversion is based on "IF they do not continue in their unbelief" God will graft them in. It is not that God somehow sprinkles some pixie dust on them so that all their wills are irresistibly drawn to God at some future time. Rather, the constant message of Scripture is that God is saving Jews who bend the knee to Him now, and has always been doing so, according to His promise to Abraham, and the sum total of all those will be the "all Israel" who is saved.

Mark 3: I would accept that this future conversion does not imply a loss of free will, or necessarily imply a unanimous conversion. But there have been large scale conversions of whole nations.

R. Sungenis 3: What you "accept" and what the text demands are apparently two different things. The text says "all Israel," not some. If, as is the case, you see "all Israel" and figure that this must be something more than a remnant, then by what authority do you then retreat from the meaning of "all" that brought you beyond a remnant and then adopt a view that is somewhere between a remnant and all?? You see, Mark, you want your cake and eat it, too. You want to dismiss the remnant idea because you see the word "all," but when someone presses you to take "all" to mean "all," you suddenly develop an aversion and declare that "all" really doesn't mean "all." As for "large scale conversions of whole nations," perhaps you can give me an example rather than just making an assertion. I personally don't know of any. In any case, it never happened in Israel, not even in their glory days.

Mark 3: Furthermore, in the case of the Jews, we have the testimony that their hearts have been specially hardened by God. This leaves open the possibility that he could later soften their hearts so that they could recognize the Messiah they had missed. Elijah's preaching may be the proximate cause of this conversion, which may be accompanied by a traumatic event, such as the persecutions of Antichrist leading many Jews to suddenly recognize who the real Christ was.

R. Sungenis 3: Romans 11:23 says that the hardening will cease when Israel stops their disbelief, not when God performs some kind of miraculous conversion. The only action God does is grafting them in again once they've turned to Him.

Mark 3: Now, I agree that there is no single, infallible interpretation of prophecy. I would also agree that there are ambiguities about this prophecy. (e.g. Will the conversion be accompanied by the return of Elijah? Will Elijah be accompanied by Enoch or Moses? Will all remaining Jews convert, or simply a sizeable "remnant of Israel"). If you accept my qualifications of this teaching, I hope that you will accept that the belief in a future conversion of the Jews as a sign of the end times is a common teaching well established in the tradition. I will agree with you that this teaching is not infallible and not entirely clear, if you will agree with me that the future conversion of the Jews was widely taught by the Fathers, the medievals, and later scholars.

R. Sungenis 3: I will agree that some type of conversion of the Jews was taught by some Fathers and some medievals, beyond that I offer you no qualifiers, since the testimony is much too equivocal and the conclusions much too varied.

Mark 3: The belief that in the end a "remnant will be saved" is one of the factors that has led many Popes to teach at least tolerance and respect for the Jews. The other factor is St. Augustine's theology of Jewish witness -- that the Jewish people continue to exist in order to testify by their existence, by their traditions, and by their Scriptures, to the truth of Christianity. If you are game to continue this conversation, I would like to suggest that Augustine's theology of witness, rightly understood and stripped of medieval polemicism, can still be a useful way to understand the roles of Christianity and Judaism, and why we should respect the continuing presence of Judaism as being part of God's plan, even if we do not believe that the Jewish covenant can save.

R. Sungenis 3: I agree with Augustine about why the Jews are still with us, but if you really want some "polemics" against the Jews as a race of people against Christianity, Mark, then you ought to read some of Augustine's statements against the Jews. He certainly would not have agreed with your insistence that Judaism is somehow beneficial for Christianity. The same type of "polemics" were in the Fathers' testimony about the Jews as was in the Middle Age theologians, for that is where they got it. I suggest you stop trying to make room for Judaism, Mark, for if you continue this line of thinking, you might someday be forced to accept "all" that Judaism has taught, including their repudiation of Jesus Christ that survives intact in their views to this present day. Until if and when Judaism repudiates their denial of the divinity and messiahship of Jesus Christ, I want little to do with them. If somehow you think that placating them with overtures toward the validity of Judaism is somehow going to soften them up, you are only fooling yourself. That is not the way the gospel is to be preached. The model is in Acts 3:12-26.

----- **Mark:** Robert, Thanks for your latest reply. I will reply later in more detail, but not in as many thousands of words as we have used so far, as I think we are down to only a few issues.

For you, the sticking point seems to be whether Rom. 11:25-26 teaches a universal conversion of the Jews, for me it is whether it teaches a future, end times conversion of the Jews.

RS: That is one sticky point. The one related to that is that those who interpret Rom 11:25-26 as a future conversion, NEVER deal with the context of the passage, and if on occasion they do, they misinterpret it (e.g., the connection between 11:14 and 11:15; that God has already fulfilled his promise by saving a remnant; that Jews must themselves cease their unbelief; that "until" does not necessarily mean "cease"; etc). The other is that there are precious few Fathers that deal with the issue, and those that do have different interpretations, as do the Medievals. Considering all these things, the minute someone says to me, "The Catholic Church teaches that there will be a future conversion of Israel," I'll tell them they are wrong. It is merely one idea that some in the Catholic Church held.

I believe (based on the plain sense of the text and the teachings of the Fathers and Doctors) that this text is speaking of a future conversion of the Jews. But I do not necessarily think that "all Israel" means each and every Jew, any more than "all have sinned" in Romans 3:23 implies that the Blessed Virgin Mary has sinned, or that when Matthew 2:3 reports that "all Jerusalem" was troubled along with Herod by the magi's report of a star indicating a new King, that this means

that each and every person in Jerusalem heard the magi's story and were worried by it (many wouldn't have heard about the magi's visit, and some would have been overjoyed by the birth of a new king - e.g. Simeon and Anna).

RS: The meaning of "all" you are pointing out in the above verses refers to EXCEPTIONS to the overwhelming majority. Mary was a mere exception to the "all" of Romans 3:23, and Simeon and Anna were exceptions to the "all Jerusalem" of Matthew 2:3. So unless you prepared to say that there will only be one or two exceptions to a future conversion of "all Israel," then your attempt at lessening the meaning of "all" simply will not wash.

Also, I find it interesting again that you are now trying to support your argument by a "technical" exegesis of Scripture -- the very thing you tried to fault me in your last post.

Mark: Anyhow, for me, the key issue is the futurity of a national conversion of the Jews, not its universality. "All Israel" may merely -mean a large, representative group of the Jewish nation.

RS: At this point, Mark, I'm not interested in "may means." You can't engage in such speculation and then be so dogmatic about its eventuality. Moreover, if you are positing a "national" conversion, then I think you've departed from about 90% of the Fathers before you, as well as Aquinas who sees a spiritual "universal" conversion, and Martin V who only sees a "remnant." This Heinz 57 variety of options is precisely why I am so adamant against those who teach that there is no question of a future conversion of Israel.

Mark: On one other issue, when I suggested that Ott, writing in Germany in 1952, was less likely to look for a symbolic fulfillment of the text than Lapide in the 16th century, I had no intention of implying that Ott was influenced by anti-semitism or Naziism. What I was implying was that he may have been influenced (even mildly and unconsciously) by over a century of German Protestant modernist Biblical exegesis (Schleiermacher, Bultmann, etc.) to accept some of their rationalist critique of Scripture.

RS: Fr. Raymond Brown, Fr. Karl Rahner, et al, were influenced by German Protestant exegesis, but Ott certainly wasn't. He's about as orthodox as they come.
