

The Old Covenant: Revoked or Not Revoked?

A Review of the PBS Documentary:

Jews and Christians: A Journey of Faith

By Robert A. Sungenis, Ph.D.

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More and more Catholics, Protestants and Jews are seeking to overturn 2000 years of Christian teaching concerning the Old Covenant. Although the Church has always taught that the Old Covenant is revoked, what we are now being told by theologians, clerics and lay persons in high places is that it has NOT been revoked. These critics, who refer disparagingly to the traditional doctrine by such names as “supersessionism,” “replacement theology,” “revocation theology,” *etc.*, are all seeking for one thing – to establish the position that: (a) the Jews retain legal possession of the Old Covenant; (b) that this covenant is independent of, but runs concurrently with, the New Covenant; and (c) most hold that the Old Covenant is the means by which God provides salvation to the Jews. We are hearing this new teaching from almost every quarter of the religious world and it is one of the fastest growing problems the Church has ever confronted. At its root, it emasculates the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, and does so for the people who need it the most – the Jews.

Although I am reluctant to borrow an axiom from one of the Enlightenment’s icons, his words are quite apropos in this case. Voltaire once said: “If you wish to converse with me, first define your terms.” As is almost always the case with heterodoxy, the purveyors have a vested interest in confusing the terms, for they know that once the cloak is taken off and the illusion exposed, the game is over. For the last several decades the term “Old Covenant” has been the victim of this shell game. Ever since the dance between the devil and Eve, the best chance heresy has of getting a foothold in a confused mind is by mixing a lot of error with a little truth. Needless to say, this is precisely what has happened in the case of the now popular belief: “The Old Covenant has not been revoked.” Unfortunately, many well-meaning but unsuspecting Catholics have been unduly influenced by its tentacles, and in this essay for *Culture Wars* we will do our best to untie its deadly grip.¹

¹ The following is a quote from a Fr. Lawrence of Vermont regarding this article: “After reading your contribution to the most recent edition of *Culture Wars* magazine, I am more convinced than ever that you possess one of the keenest theological minds in the Church. As a well educated older traditional priest (now inactive), I believe my opinion has some substance behind it. Although I now live in southern Vermont, it would be a valuable experience to meet with you personally even if it meant driving to your area. May Jesus Christ -Lord, Savior and Redeemer bless your life and work. Fr. Lawrence. P.S. You may use my commendation on your web site if you feel it will help in your apostolate. 1-28-2008.” *Culture Wars* has been one of the few Catholic magazines that has consistently

David Rosen the ADL: Distorting *Nostra Aetate*

First, we shall look at a sampling of this new teaching from each of the three major religions, starting with Jewish sources. Rabbi David Rosen, who is chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations and director of the American Jewish Committee, stated the following in a recent interview in the documentary *Jews and Christians: A Journey of Faith* that was aired recently on PBS:

One of the profound areas of focus of the Second Vatican Council was its relationship with the Jews...a document called *Nostra Aetate*...Basically, what this document says is...the covenant between God and the Jewish people is an eternal covenant, never broken, never to be broken, quoting Paul in support of this position.²

The ubiquitous Anti-Defamation League (ADL) says much the same on their website: “Section four of *Nostra Aetate* repudiates the centuries-old ‘deicide’ charge against all Jews, stresses the religious bond shared by Jews and Catholics, reaffirms the eternal covenant between God and the People of Israel, and dismisses church interest in trying to baptize Jews.”³ The article adds: “*Nostra Aetate* repudiates the ancient Christian charge against Jews as ‘Christ-killers’ and reaffirms God’s eternal covenant with the Jewish people.”⁴ For the record, the ADL is an arm of the older organization, *B’nai B’rith*. Since this essay concerns the status of the Jewish Old Covenant, readers should be alerted to the fact that in the Hebrew language *B’nai B’rith* means “Children of the Covenant.”⁵

been willing to speak critically on Jewish issues. Although I was formerly one of the more sought-after and popular Catholic apologists when I was critiquing Protestant theology in the years between 1995-2002 (writing best-selling apologetics books and hosting several programs on EWTN), as soon as I began to speak critically on Jewish issues and point out the severe lack of critical Catholic judgment on them, most of my former friends and colleagues have made it their determined goal to ostracize me from the Catholic community and precipitate my financial ruin, which is particularly disturbing because I have a wife and nine children to support. Every day for the past five years I have experienced malicious character assassinations, half-truths, set ups, deceit, gossip, hatred and assortment of distortions of my life and work that I had hardly dreamed was possible. So far, I have been able to sustain myself and my family with the faithful supporters who appreciate and admire my work. If you would like to help, please send your gracious support to CAI, PO Box 278, State Line, PA, 17263. (CAI is a 501c3 tax-exempt corporation).

² *Jews and Christians: A Journey of Faith*, 2007, a documentary by Gerald Krell and Meyer Odze, which aired recently on PBS (Public Broadcasting System) produced by Auteur Productions, Ltd., and which can be obtained at www.jewsandchristiansjourney.com.

³ http://www.adl.org/main_Interfaith/nostra_aetate_whatisit.htm

⁴ “*Nostra Aetate*: What is it?” http://www.adl.org/ADL_Opinions/Interfaith/20051101-+Nostra+Aetate.htm.

⁵ The original spelling was “B’ne B’rith,” which, because of variants in Hebrew vowel pointing, could also be pronounced “B’nai B’rith.” In any case, B’ne B’rith originated in 1842, ostensibly for Jewish humanitarian reasons. In 1913, the spelling changed to B’nai B’rith and it then became an organization whose main purpose was to thwart anti-Semitism. By the mid-twentieth century, the ADL arm of B’nai B’rith had grown so large that Congressman John Rarick was compelled to give critical testimony before Congress on Dec 6, 1971. Here are his sobering words: “The world’s largest spy network, the ADL...is either too powerful to be curbed or too well embedded to be mentioned or to come under public scrutiny. What is the ADL? It is a private investigative organization engaged in spying and preparing secret dossiers and reports which it uses to suppress free speech and

An even more recent indication of Rosen's resolve is found in his comments immediately after Pope Benedict XVI changed the wording of the Latin Mass prayer for the Jews. Hoping that the pope would excise any reference or intimation that the Jews are to convert to Christianity for their salvation, to Rosen's chagrin, Benedict XVI maintained the Catholic Church's insistence that Jews are to accept Jesus Christ as He is taught in the Christian faith and the salvation He provides.⁶ Rosen's comments were as follows:

It is a disappointment. While I appreciate that the text avoids any derogatory language towards the Jews, it is regrettable that the prayer explicitly aspires for Jews to accept the Christian faith, as opposed to the text in the current universal liturgy that prays for the salvation of the Jews in general terms. All I can hope for is that, through further dialogue, the full implications of the Second Vatican Council's affirmation of the eternity of the Divine Covenant with the Jewish people might lead to a deeper understanding of the value of Torah as the vehicle of salvation for the Jewish people.⁷

As bold as Rosen and the ADL are in interpreting Catholic documents, it is precisely here where the errors begin. *Nostra Aetate* does not mention an "eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people," much less say it was "never broken." *Nostra Aetate* mentions the word "covenant" twice. The first is in reference to the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, which the ADL ignores ("As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock"), and the second is in reference to the Old Covenant but specifies it as an ancient agreement of the past with no stipulation that it exists or is valid in the present ("The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant"). In fact, no document of Vatican II says or even suggests that the Old Covenant is or remains an eternal covenant between God and the Jews.

discussion and to influence public thought and sentiment on an unsuspecting citizenry." Rarick adds that the ADL is a "monstrous Gestapo of the establishment," whose purpose is the "use of its intelligence network as a private super-pressure [organization]," and that it engages in "coerced cooperation of newspapers and other media of communication..." Quoting the words of senator Jack Tenney of California, Rarick continued: "The ADL has become the world's most powerful Gestapo; the brain center of a vast spy network and the intelligence unit of a myriad of Jewish organizations. Their secret agents spy on American citizens. Extensive files and dossiers are compiled on those whom they dislike...Throughout their multitudinous controls of the media of communication, they are capable of destroying reputations and silencing all rebuttal....We are beginning to appreciate its vast spy network sprawling across the nation and throughout the world. Our imagination is staggered by its apparent control of the avenues of communication."

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<http://www.catholicintl.com/articles/Note%20of%20the%20Secretariat%20of%20State%20on%20Latin%20Mass%20Prayer.pdf>. The new prayer states: "Let us pray also for the Jews. May our God and Lord illuminate their hearts, so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, savior of all men. Let us pray. Let us kneel. Arise. Almighty and everlasting God, who desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of truth, mercifully grant that, as the fullness of the Gentiles enters into your Church, all Israel may be saved. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

⁷ "Jewish regret at Pope's 'missed opportunity' in rewritten prayer," *TimesOnline*, Feb 6, 2008, Ruth Gledhill, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article3315419.ece>

Additionally, *Nostra Aetate* does not excuse the Jews for being involved in the death of Christ. It says without equivocation: “Jewish authorities...pressed for the death of Christ.” In this it agrees with Scripture: “...the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men” (1Thess 2:14-15). *Nostra Aetate* only excuses, and rightly so, other Jews of that time who were not involved in his death (NA 4: “...neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion”). Moreover, the Catholic Church prior to Vatican II had never officially taught that “all” Jews committed deicide or that “all” Jews, apart from the rest of the world, are to be held responsible for the death of Christ. In short, *Nostra Aetate* is not teaching new doctrine. It is continuing the official teaching of Catholic tradition.

Rabbi Rosen and the ADL have done the same thing that many other Jewish leaders have done with *Nostra Aetate* – they have put words in its mouth that it does not say. It has become one of the most distorted documents of Vatican II, mysteriously taking on a life of its own. It is consistently cited as teaching all sorts of novel ideas about the Jews that simply are not true. Another example is when *Nostra Aetate* 4 says: “It is true that the Church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed, as if this followed from holy Scripture.” From this statement Jewish commentators have accused the pre-Vatican II Church of teaching from Scripture that the Jews were cursed and rejected, but the truth is, the Catholic Church has never once issued an official statement saying that the Jews were cursed or rejected, much less say that it came from Scripture. Obviously, *Nostra Aetate* is only confirming what the Church has already taught in her tradition. (NB: We know this because all official Catholic teaching regarding the Jews was examined for this essay).

The motivations for Rosen’s and the ADL’s effort to reinterpret *Nostra Aetate* to their own liking was made evident earlier this year when on July 27, 2007, Rosen wrote the following in “The Latin Mass and the Jews” for *The Tidings*: “The Catholic Church has rejected proselytism since the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in the sixties, and has abandoned any institutional ‘mission to the Jews.’ My own organization, the American Jewish Committee, was involved in pioneering this bilateral relationship and has been in the forefront of its development ever since.”⁸ Similarly, the ADL website states: “Section four of *Nostra Aetate*...dismisses church interest in trying to baptize Jews.” But here is the ugly truth: *Nostra Aetate* said no such thing, and neither do any of the sixteen documents of Vatican II. In actuality, similar to other documents of Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate* implicitly called for the conversion of the Jews to Christ:

In virtue of her divine mission, and her very nature, the Church must preach Jesus Christ to the world (Ad Gentes, n. 2). Lest the witness of Catholics to Jesus Christ should give offense to Jews, they must take care to live and spread their Christian faith while maintaining the strictest respect for religious liberty....Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself...As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading.

Since *Nostra Aetate* is teaching the exact opposite of what Jewish leaders are saying, we are thus led to the conclusion that there is a calculated disinformation campaign in the works and things may be coming to a head very soon. The recent flap over Ann Coulter’s remark that Jews are not “perfected” until they become Christians has made the ADL become even more strident in its charges of “anti-semitism”

⁸ July 27, 2007, www.the-tidings.com/2007/072707/rosen.htm

and its assertion that the Old Covenant is still in force for the Jews. In its press release of October 12, the ADL stated:

The Anti-Defamation League strongly condemns Ann Coulter for her anti-Semitic comment that Christians ‘want Jews to be perfected’....Coulter’s remarks are outrageous, offensive and a throwback to the centuries-old teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism. The notion that Jews are religiously inferior or imperfect because they do not accept Christian beliefs was the basis for 2,000 years of church-based anti-Semitism. While she is entitled to her beliefs, using mainstream media to espouse the idea that Judaism needs to be replaced with Christianity and that each individual Jew is somehow deficient and needs to be ‘perfected,’ is rank Christian supersessionism and has been rejected by the Catholic Church and the vast majority of mainstream Christian denominations.

For these very reasons, the ADL has been one of the foremost advocates of enacting *Hate Crime* laws precisely so that people such as Ann Coulter will have great difficulty in saying that Jews should convert to Christianity, since, the ADL claims, it will breed anti-semitic sentiment against the Jews.⁹ Donny Deutsch, on whose show Coulter made the comment, is Jewish, and was subsequently praised by the ADL with these words: “Donny Deutsch is to be commended for his immediate and forceful denunciation of Coulter’s statements, for calling her remarks personally offensive, and for rightly characterizing her suggestion that Jews are inferior to Christians as anti-Semitism.”¹⁰ By the same token,

⁹ October 12, 2007 at http://adl.org/PresRele/ASUS_12/5149_12.htm. The ADL official website advocating the Hate Crime law was deleted as of the writing of this essay (<http://www.adl.org/99hatecrime/intro.asp>).

¹⁰ We do not, however, endorse Ms. Coulter’s terminology or methodology. Instead of saying that Jews should be evangelized to Christianity, her idiosyncratic understanding leads her to view evangelism to Jews as a process of “perfecting Jews,” but the New Testament does not use such language. Although Ms. Coulter meant it as a compliment to Jews since she was trying to respect their heritage, someone of Deutsch’s religious and political sensitivity would not understand Ms. Coulter’s intention. Still, as we note above, organizations such as the ADL know precisely what Ms. Coulter’s intentions are, since it has revealed on its website that it does not want Christians telling Jews they need Jesus Christ and Christian salvation. Below is an excerpt from the dialogue between Deutsch and Coulter: DEUTSCH: Let’s wipe Israel off the earth. I mean, what, no Jews? COULTER: No, we think...we just want Jews to be perfected, as they say. DEUTSCH: Wow, you didn’t really say that, did you? COULTER: Yes. That is what Christianity is. We believe the Old Testament, but ours is more like Federal Express. You have to obey laws. We know we’re all sinners... DEUTSCH: In my old days, I would have argued...when you say something absurd like that, there’s no... COULTER: What’s absurd? DEUTSCH: Jews are going to be perfected. I’m going to go off and try to perfect myself... COULTER: Well, that’s what the New Testament says. DEUTSCH: Ann Coulter, author of “If Democrats Had Any Brains, They’d Be Republicans,” and if Ann Coulter had any brains, she would not say Jews need to be perfected. I’m offended by that personally. And we’ll have more Big Idea when we come back....DEUTSCH: Welcome back to The Big Idea. During the break, Ann said she wanted to explain her last comment. So I’m going to give her a chance. So you don’t think that was offensive? COULTER: No. I’m sorry. It is not intended to be. I don’t think you should take it that way, but that is what Christians consider themselves: perfected Jews. We believe the Old Testament. As you know from the Old Testament, God was constantly getting fed up with humans for not being able to, you know, live up to all the laws. What Christians believe – this is just a statement of what the New Testament is – is that that’s why Christ came and died for our sins. Christians believe the Old Testament. You don’t believe our testament. DEUTSCH: You said...your exact words were, “Jews need to be perfected.” Those are the words out of your mouth. COULTER: No, I’m saying that’s what a Christian is. DEUTSCH: But that’s what you said – don’t you see how hateful, how anti-Semitic... COULTER: No! DEUTSCH: How do you not

the ADL would also be forced to say that the following words of John Paul II, the very pope who tried to show love and respect to the Jews, was anti-semitic:

With Christ, all are called to enter through faith into the definitive Covenant with God, over and above circumcision, the Law of Moses and race. This Covenant is fulfilled and sealed through the sacrifice of Christ, who obtained the Redemption of a sinful humanity. Through Christ's cross was abolished the religious division, which had hardened into ethnic division, between the peoples of the promise that was already fulfilled and the rest of humanity.¹¹

Suffice it to say, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jews is not "anti-semitic" and the Catholic Church has not rejected supersessionism; rather, some high-ranking personalities have merely made it appear that way, as we will see below.

Eugene Fisher and the USCCB: Resurrecting the Mosaic Covenant for the Jews

As disturbing as Rosen and the ADL's vision for the world is, it is even more disturbing to discover how close it comes to various statements made by prominent Catholic institutions, signs of the deplorable state of Catholic theology in our land. On the Boston College website promoting the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning it states: "Until repudiated in 1965 by the Second Vatican Council declaration *Nostra Aetate*, supersessionism was taken-for-granted in Christian thought."¹² Boston College and many other Catholic universities may be following the lead of the USCCB who recently published these provocative words in its *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*: "Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them."¹³ Notice here that the *US Catechism* doesn't even bother with the vague phrase "Old Covenant," but goes directly to the "covenant...through Moses" as the current theological status-marker for the Jews. This is an unprecedented move, but it is not surprising. More and more the USCCB has shown itself to be a predominately liberal institution that has drawn its line in the sand against the Vatican on many occasions. Where there should be absolute outrage from the USCCB on the scandals and heterodoxy occurring within its own rank and file, there is little more than complacency.¹⁴ Similar to the magazines *Commonweal* or *America* produced by liberal

see? You're an educated woman. How do you not see that? COULTER: That isn't hateful at all. DEUTSCH: But that's even a scarier thought. OK

¹¹ *The Church and Racism*, III, 20-21.

¹² http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/education/John_Paul_2_tribute_files/John_Paul_II_tribute.pdf

¹³ P. 131. Copyright 2006 by the USCCB. The USCCB catechism has a "recognitio" but does not possess an imprimatur from the Vatican.

¹⁴ Pertinent examples of how the USCCB continues to turn a blind eye toward the malfeasance within its own ranks is its recent election of Cardinal George as its president and Bishop Gerald Kicanas as its vice-president. As Jason Berry of the *LA Times* put it: "After promising to take a 'zero tolerance' stance toward priests who sexually abuse minors, the church's hierarchy is now reverting to form....In 2003, [Cardinal] George brought in a liturgical consultant, the Rev. Kenneth Martin, who had pleaded guilty two years earlier to molesting a teenage boy. It was wrong, George defiantly said, to make 'permanent pariahs' of priests who sexually abuse children. In 2005, a mother accused a Chicago priest of molesting her 8-year-old son, but George ignored the evidence and let the

Catholic clerics, the USCCB is fast becoming a mouthpiece for modern dissidence and liberalism in American Catholicism. We had a revealing indication of the USCCB's agenda when it joined with the ADL in reviewing a stolen copy of an early draft of Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, which in an *ad hoc* committee of five liberal Jews and four liberal Catholics condemned it as "anti-semitic." When Gibson threatened to sue, the USCCB apologized for its devious actions.¹⁵ In typical fashion, the ADL refused to apologize and more or less accused the USCCB of caving in to Gibson.

Not surprisingly, some of the people on the *ad hoc* committee against Gibson are also featured in *Jews and Christians: A Journey of Faith*, such as Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, author of *Feminist Companions to the New Testament*, who describes herself as a "Yankee Jewish feminist." Levine is a Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville. She is presently featured on the ADL website for a lecture titled: "Preaching and Teaching the New Testament: Promoting Anti-Judaism?" in which she complains that Christian preachers stereotype Jews in the New Testament, and among her examples, she says, is that "Jesus is not killed because of hospitality, and he is not killed by Jews; he is killed by the Roman state on charges of sedition,"¹⁶ despite the fact that: (a) the New Testament clearly says that Pilate sought to release Jesus but the Jews insisted that he be crucified, and (b) no Gospel writer mentions a Roman charge of sedition against Jesus.¹⁷ On the one hand, Levine's assertion is quite a surprising leap for someone who teaches New Testament at a Gentile university. On the other hand, we can understand her viewpoint because, as a Jew, she believes Christianity had no divine impetus since Jesus was not divine. To her, Christianity is just a fortunate political movement that happened to win the day against the Jewish religion because of being misled by the false promises of a deluded leader. Hence, she sees the New Testament as a product of anti-Jewish prejudice, which continues in the modern age, she says, as "anti-Judaism."

priest continue to teach and coach. The next year, that same priest was arrested on charges of molesting another boy. One of Cardinal George's subordinates, Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki, recently said in a sermon that 'the church is under attack' from victims of the sex scandals and their greedy lawyers, and that 'the principal force behind these attacks is none other than the devil.' Blame the victim. Ignore the ugly truth. Meet the new church policy on sexual abuse, same as the old one" (*The Week*, Nov. 23, 2007, p. 12). Regarding Kicanas, the Arizona *Sun-Times* reports: "While rector of Mundelein Seminary in the 1990s, Bishop Gerald Kicanas says he knew about three reports of 'sexual improprieties' against then-seminarian Daniel McCormack. Still, Kicanas supported McCormack's ordination, he told the *Sun-Times*. 'It would have been grossly unfair not to have ordained him,' said Kicanas....McCormack went to prison in July for molesting five boys while assigned to a West Side parish. U.S. bishops are trying mightily at their assembly in Baltimore this week to portray the scandals as largely a problem of the past....'There was a sense that his activity was part of the developmental process and that he had learned from the experience,' Kicanas said. 'I was more concerned about his drinking. We sent him to counseling for that.' McCormack was ordained in 1994. The following year, Kicanas became a Chicago auxiliary bishop. The archdiocese's vicar general, the Rev. John Canary, also worked at Mundelein at the time. He recently told the *Sun-Times* that McCormack should have never been ordained. Kicanas disagrees, saying there was no 'credible' allegation against McCormack. 'I don't think there was anything I could have done differently,' Kicanas said" (<http://www.suntimes.com/lifestyles/religion/648822,CST-NWS-bishop14.article>).

¹⁵ Mark Allesio, *The Remnant*, Sept. 23, 2003.

¹⁶ http://adl.org/main_Interfaith/newtestament.htm.

¹⁷ Jn 19:12-15; Mk 15:6-15; Mt 26:3-5, 14-16; Lk 23:2-5; 1Thes 2:14-15.

Also appearing with Levine in the documentary is Dr. Mary C. Boys, Professor of Practical Theology at Union Theological Seminary, an institution which has been called “one of the most liberal and left-wing schools in America.”¹⁸ Dr. Boys, a Catholic, is also a signer of the 2002 document: “A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People” which advocates the following five half-truths and/or erroneous assertions:

(1) “For centuries Christians claimed that their covenant with God replaced or superseded the Jewish covenant. We renounce this claim”; (2) “Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a faithful Jew”; (3) “With their recent realization that God’s covenant with the Jewish people is eternal, Christians can now recognize in the Jewish tradition the redemptive power of God at work. If Jews, who do not share our faith in Christ, are in a saving covenant with God, then Christians need new ways of understanding the universal significance of Christ”; (4) “Christians should not target Jews for conversion”; (5) “We affirm the importance of the land of Israel for the life of the Jewish people.”¹⁹

A prominent fixture at the USCCB, Eugene Fisher, Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, is also featured in the same documentary with Rosen, Levine and Boys. Concurring with the advocacy of Dual Covenant theology prominently echoed in the documentary, Fisher concludes: “...after all the blood and persecution and discrimination by Christians against Jews in the past, we have a chance to change the course, literally, for the next millennium.” That is certainly correct. Once the Old Covenant is given back to the Jews, it can hardly be taken away from them. It is a heresy that will continue on its own until someone, whether by papal decree or the return of Christ himself, puts a stop to it. In any case, Fisher seems to know what he is doing. In an email dialogue I had with him in the summer of 2007, Fisher kept insisting that the Old Covenant was not revoked. When I asked him quite pointedly what “covenant” in the Old Testament he was referring to, Fisher refused to answer the question and the dialogue came abruptly to a close. So much for abiding by Voltaire’s request.

Identical to Rosen, Fisher’s theological motivation for propping up the Old Covenant came out very clearly in a commentary he made of one small phrase in the 210-page document, “The Jewish People and the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Bible” published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) in 2001. The lone phrase stated: “the Jewish messianic expectation is not in vain.” Despite both the phrase’s novelty and ambiguity, in addition to the fact that the PBC is not an authoritative voice of the Church since it was demoted by Paul VI in 1971 to merely an advisory role,²⁰ nevertheless, perhaps seeing the opening this provocative phrase gave for furthering his agenda, Fisher issued one of the more outlandish commentaries ever uttered by a modern Catholic:

¹⁸ *U.S. News*, cited in *Billy Graham and His Friends*, by Cathy Burns, Ph.D., p. 137. Burns’ 788-page book does a detailed exposé on UTS’s connections to Marxism, Skull and Bones and its outright denial of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. I personally know many professors from Union Theological Seminary and I can vouch for Burn’s thesis.

¹⁹ Allessio, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Apostolic letter, *Sedula Cura*, June 27, 1971, “On New Laws Regulating the Pontifical Biblical Commission.” See for a brief and revealing history of the Pontifical Biblical Commission by noted scholar Monsignor John F. McCarthy at <http://www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=4679> (*Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Jan. 2003).

If you put off the moment that Jews will come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah until the end of time, then we don't need to work or pray for the conversion of Jews to Christianity. God already has the salvation of Jews figured out, and they accepted it on Sinai, so they are OK. Jews are already with the Father. We do not have a mission to the Jews, but only a mission with the Jews to the world. The Catholic Church will never again sanction an organization devoted to the conversion of the Jews. That is over, on doctrinal, biblical and pastoral grounds. Finito.²¹

Of course, no one at the USCCB raised an eyebrow at what appears to be a blatant heresy, at least anything that was ever put in official print.

Fisher's wave was picked up later that year when on November 6, 2002, William Cardinal Kasper, president of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, spoke at the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College. Kasper asserted that

Christians take a different missionary approach toward Jews than toward followers of other non-Christian religions....This does not mean that Jews in order to be saved have to become Christians; if they follow their own conscience and believe in God's promises as they understand them in their religious tradition, they are in line with God's plan, which for us comes to historical completion in Jesus Christ," which position results, Kasper concluded, in the fact that there is "no Catholic missionary activity toward Jews as there is for all other non-Christian religions.

He then added: "But while Jews still expect the coming of the Messiah, Christians believe he has come as Jesus and will be revealed at the end of time as the Messiah for Jews and for all nations."²² The most disturbing result of Kasper's rejection of two millennia of Catholic teaching is how little outcry there was from the modern Catholic community.

Other cardinals followed suit. In one of his articles Fisher makes mention of a 1995 book published by Sacred Heart University Press, which, he says, is "a volume of essays in honor of Cardinal John O'Connor of New York under the title, *Toward Greater Understanding*." It contains essays by well known cardinals, such as: Bernardin, Cassidy, Keeler, Law and O'Connor, and by prominent Jews such as Chaim Herzog, Elie Wiesel, David Novak, and Rabbis Mordecai Waxman and Walter Wurzbarger, a select group of co-religionists promoting the "eternal covenant between God and the Jews" and "Jews can be saved as Jews" doctrine.²³ Cardinal O'Connor, former archbishop of New York, has the legacy of stating on *Nightline* (a feature of ABC network who had the audacity to air the show on Christmas day – the birth of Christ), when asked whether the former Catholic, Steven Dubner, "has your blessing" in

²¹ *The Jewish Week*, January 25, 2002, previously at www.thejewishweek.com but has since been removed. According to *Zenit*, May 30, 2003, it was Eugene Fisher and Rabbi Eugene Korn, National Director of Interfaith Affairs at the Anti-Defamation League and Adjunct Professor of Jewish Thought at Seton Hall University, who formed the *ad hoc* committee to review the stolen copy of a draft of Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," before the film was ever produced.

²² John Thavis, *Catholic News Service*, Nov. 7, 2002.

²³ www.jcrelations.net/en/?id=810

converting to Judaism: “Oh yes! Oh yes! He didn’t need it. He had my blessing, if you want to call it such, because I believe that’s what the truth teaches.” O’Conner, Kasper, Keeler and Fisher are prime examples of the convoluted state of Catholic theology in America and abroad that has brought about the devastation Pope St. Pius X warned us would come with the onset of “modernism.”

Later O’Conner added: “Oh, I think there’s a healing message in Steven’s story. Christ came into the world as a Jew. He could have come as a Chinaman, as an American... [but] ethnically, religiously as a Jew. He practiced Judaism. We believe he was the Son of God, but he came for everybody.” The ABC commentator then tells us that Steven told his Catholic mother what the Cardinal had said, and “that made things easier for her,” and the “mother told Steven to sit down with a rabbi and discuss how faith will fit into his life and the life of his new bride.”²⁴ The Council of Constantinople had some harsh words for clerics like O’Connor: “But whoever presumes to compare or to introduce or to teach or to pass on another creed to those wishing to turn from the belief of...the Jews or from any heresy whatsoever to the acknowledgement of truth, or who (presumes) to introduce a novel doctrine or an invention of discourse to the subversion of those things which now have been determined by us, [we declare] these, whether they are bishops or clerics, to be excommunicated.”²⁵

Even those Catholic institutions that in the past have put up a good fight against the liberal agenda show signs of weakening and succumbing to the *status quo* of unbridled ecumenism. At the *Eternal Word Television Network* (EWTN) the pressure to conform to the “no Gospel to the Jews” agenda made its way into EWTN’s popular “Catholic Questions and Answers” program. Headed by Catholic “expert,” Fr. Vincent Serpa, a question appeared on August 14, 2003, stating: “Must I, as a Jew, convert and believe that Jesus is the Messiah and is God, or does the current Catholic church teach that I may be saved by my being a Jew. Also, isn’t it a given that anti-Semitism will arise from Mel Gibson’s movie?” The answer given was as follows: “Would that you were given the grace to recognize Jesus as the Son of God and could join the Catholic Church. But if you honestly cannot accept Him as such, by living a life as a devout Jew, you can reach Heaven. This is what the Catholic Church teaches. AND Mel Gibson’s movie, “The Passion of the Christ” does NOT contradict this. Fr. Vincent Serpa, O.P.” As Catholic author and columnist, Christopher Ferrara, Esq., writes: “Responding to a small storm of criticism from Catholics who remember what the Church teaches about Jewish conversion, Fr. Serpa ‘clarified’ his answer by making it even worse. He stated: ‘Those who honestly (the key word here is “honestly”) cannot see Jesus by means of the light of faith, can still be saved by that same Jesus Christ, even though they do not realize it – providing that they seek God and try in their actions to do His will, *etc.* as above.’”²⁶ This, of course, is a total distortion of Pius IX’s teaching in *Quanto conficiamur moerore* in 1863 regarding the doctrine of Invincible Ignorance. Pius IX did not say someone could be saved by “being a Jew.” He said it could be possible for others to be saved “who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion and who zealously keep the natural law and its precepts...”²⁷ Obviously, the “Jacob” who wrote into EWTN was

²⁴ 12/25/98 videotape N981225-01, “The Faith of Our Fathers,” on file.

²⁵ Denzinger, 293.

²⁶ “The Blind Guides of EWTN,” *Catholic Family News*, October 2003, p. 6

²⁷ Denzinger, 1677.

not “ignorant of our most holy religion,” since he knew its requirements better than many pew-sitting Catholics. To say, as Fr. Serpa did, that someone would be excused from these requirements simply because he could not “honestly” accept them is a heresy of the highest order. Imagine if Adam and Eve said to God that they should be excused from condemnation because they “honestly” couldn’t bring themselves to believe God’s word over the devil’s. Or imagine if someone said, “I know the Catholic Church teaches that abortion is wrong, but I “honestly” cannot accept it because I believe the embryo is just a mass of tissue.” Common sense tells us the answer to these questions. In light of the stress on “honesty,” it is Fr. Serpa who is not being honest about the Catholic religion.

The Harrisburg Diocese and the USCCB

Referring back to the *United States Catechism’s* provocative statement on page 131 (“Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them”), the relevance of the USCCB’s liberal stance on the Jews was brought home to me loud and clear when the bishop of my diocese, Kevin C. Rhoades, denied an imprimatur to my book *The Apocalypse of St. John* and cited page 131 as one of his proofs that my book, amazingly enough, because it called for the conversion of the Jews and held them responsible for their historic disbelief in Christ, had a “lack of adherence to authoritative Church teaching on Judaism.” He made this accusation without pointing out even one example in the book where I had violated Church teaching, and further added that he would accept no more discussion on the issue. I later found out that Rhoades was in league with the USCCB on this issue, since a few months later he invited me to a meeting with Fr. James Massa, Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the USCCB, in an effort to dissuade me from pointing out some of the very things I am writing in this essay. At the meeting, Massa specifically mentioned *Culture Wars* as one of the venues he would like to see excised from my literary repertoire, suggesting also that E. Michael Jones should stick to “writing about music.”

During the meeting, the vicar general, Fr. William King, JCD, made a remark to the effect that, as Catholics, “we don’t believe in supersessionism any longer.” Although I did not make a response at that time, I knew upon leaving the building the erroneous theology he, Rhoades and the USCCB were attempting to propagate to unsuspecting Catholics. Although I did decide to calm some of the storm by removing Jewish articles from my website so that, as the bishop requested, they could be edited for “tone,” when I subsequently wrote a new article whose “tone” was proper but insisted that: (a) the Jews are responsible for their disbelief in Christ, (b) the Jews are no longer the people of God but can become such by believing in Jesus Christ, (c) that there exist no other unfulfilled promises to the Jews except the promise to save them if they turn to Christ, I was then told by the bishop that my opinions showed a lack of “charity and respect for the Jewish people and for Judaism itself.” He then took back his previous offer to allow me to change the “tone” of my articles and forthwith ordered me to stop writing about the Jews and Judaism altogether. I subsequently wrote the bishop a letter saying that, whereas I was willing to cooperate fully when he told me, (quoting his own words), that he would “allow [me] to continue publishing and speaking on those matters of Catholic doctrine which pertain to the Jewish covenant and the role of Israel in salvation history, provided that you take an approach quite different in tone and content from the one pursued in the past,” if he wanted to reverse his position once again and censor me, he would have to do so under the aegis of a canonical trial, at which time I would appeal to the Vatican in order to have the matter fully adjudicated, and at which time I would be quite happy to expose the belief in Dual Covenant theology that he and USCCB were apparently promoting. After four months, there has

been no response from the chancellery. Reverend Massa, however, recently responded to Pope Benedict XVI's preservation of the Latin mass prayer for the conversion of the Jews by glibly commenting that the prayer will be recited by a "tiny minority of Catholics and they will hear it in Latin."²⁸ That Fr. Massa did not congratulate the pope who, amid an inordinate amount of pressure from Jewish antagonists, preserved the tradition of the Catholic Church to evangelize the Jews, but instead made it appear as if the majority of Catholics will be insulated from this vital truth, suggests that neither Massa nor the USCCB at large see the pope's move as either a positive development in the advance of Catholicism or a necessary clarification for the salvation of the Jews.

Rhoades' allegiances are not difficult to discern. His lifelong mentor is William Cardinal Keeler who was the previous bishop of Harrisburg and who ordained Rhoades to that position in 2004. It appears that he and Keeler are on the same wavelength when it comes to reinterpreting Catholic doctrine to accommodate the Jews. Keeler was the lone representative for the USCCB who signed the *Reflections on Covenant and Missions* document with Jewish rabbis in 2002 that, among other erroneous statements, concluded the following: "...a deepening Catholic appreciation of the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people, together with the divinely-given mission to Jews to witness to God's faithful love, lead to the conclusion that campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church."²⁹ Here we notice the same cause-effect relationship that was apparent in Rabbi Rosen and Eugene Fisher's thesis, that is, since the Jews have an eternal covenant with God, they thus have their own salvation program, and are not to be the targets of Christian conversion efforts. Is there any reason why we should not call this heresy?

Inside the USCCB, however, there seems to be a virtual war taking place between its liberal and conservative members. As much as Fisher, Keeler, O'Conner and a preponderance of bishops it houses are pushing for the "no Gospel to the Jews" agenda, there are still some rays of light. Recently the CDF asked Bishop William Lori, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Doctrine, to publish a critique of the book written by Fr. Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously* (Maryknoll, 2004) due to the book's stance that non-Christian religions are independent paths to salvation. Fr. Phan, who holds the Ellacuria Chair of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University's Department of Theology, was apparently a big enough target for the CDF to silence. While only Lori signed the 15-page critique, it was crafted by the help of six other bishops (Blair, Gomez, McManus, Serratelli, Vigneron and Wuerl). Overall, the document is a refreshing reassertion of Catholic truth concerning salvation. It quotes heavily from the CDF document *Dominus Iesus* and also makes many independent reaffirmations of Catholic teaching. For example, it says that Phan's book "is seriously undercut...by the fact that the autonomy attributed to non-Christian religions is such as to call into question the very idea of Christian mission to members of such religions." It further condemns the assertion in Phan's book "that God has positively

²⁸ "Conservative Rabbis to Vote on Resolution Criticizing Pope's Revision of Prayer," *New York Times*, Neela Banerjee, Feb. 9, 2008.

²⁹ Under mounting pressure, Keeler backtracked and later said that the RCM document "does not represent a formal position taken by the USCCB." Keeler, however, did not retract anything in the RCM document. Moreover, columnist Chris Ferrara revealed that "Bill Ryan of the USCCB's Office of Communications advised me personally that RCM is no 'working document' but a final document" (*The Remnant*, August 31, 2002). To this day Keeler has still not retracted anything written in the RCM document, and neither have any of the other bishops in the USCCB.

willed non-Christian religions as alternative ways of salvation,” which then “brings with it far-reaching and radical consequences for the practice of Christian mission...” In one concluding statement that seems to be a direct rejection of Keeler’s 2002 *Reflections on Covenant and Missions* document, Lori’s report faults Phan for “leading the reader to conclude that there is some kind of moral obligation for the Church to refrain from calling people to conversion to Christ and to membership in his Church....This call for an end to Christian mission is in conflict with the Church’s commission, given to her by Christ himself: ‘Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...’” (pp. 9-10). Although the document does not specifically mention the Jews or any other non-Christian religion, it is easy to see from the tenor of the document that the Jews are not considered an exception to its rule.³⁰

Stephen Katz and Christopher Leighton: Repudiating Supersessionism

Stephen T. Katz, Jewish philosopher and director of the Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies at Boston University also appeared in the *Jews and Christians* documentary and stated these astounding words: “So Jews associate mission [Christian evangelism] with violence...with force...with bloodshed...with conversion. And again, mission indicates the theology of supersessionism, that the Church does not recognize Jews as Jews can be saved.” The purpose of the *Jews and Christians* documentary was made quite clear by this time. It was for the express purpose of indoctrinating unsuspecting Catholics to the idea that the Catholic Church has changed her mind and is now teaching that Jews have their own salvation program with Moses and don’t need Christianity. Unfortunately, as the evidence shows, it is also a teaching that many Catholic bishops are falling over backwards to promote. As much as our last pope made friendly ties with the Jews, his friendliness had one purpose, as he says in *Redemptoris Missio* (1, 5): “...since for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, salvation can come only from Jesus Christ.” Or as the Council of Trent put it: “...but not even the Jews by the very letter of the law of Moses were able to be liberated or to rise therefrom....God sent to men Christ Jesus...that He might...redeem the Jews, who were under the Law...”³¹ Of course, the *Jews and Christians* documentary consistently implies that if you don’t accept its new teaching that Jews can be saved in their own religion, then you are a bigot, and worst of all, you may ultimately be lumped in with those who put Jews in concentration camps during World War II. As Katz asserts in the documentary: “...you could not have Auschwitz had you not had the long pre-history made possible by Christian anti-Judaism.”

Next on the documentary’s roster was Protestant preacher Christopher Leighton. First a little background. At the announcement of Cardinal Keeler’s retirement, the July 7, 2007 *Baltimore Sun* noted Leighton as saying: “Keeler did “extraordinary things for Jewish relations, nationally and internationally....His example set a standard of excellence that placed important demands for Protestants to enter out of their own insularity and enter into interfaith conversations.” The *Sun* further comments:

³⁰ Available for download at www.usccb.org/dpp/StatementonBeingReligiousInterreligiously.pdf.

³¹ Denzinger 793-794. Or as the Council of Ephesus stated it: “For when the leaders of the holy nations perform the office of ambassador entrusted to them, they plead the cause of the human race before divine Clemency, and while the whole Church laments with them, they ask and pray that the faith may be granted to infidels; that idolaters may be delivered from the errors of their impiety; that the veil of their hearts may be removed and the light of truth be visible to the Jews; that heretics may come to their senses through a comprehension of the Catholic faith; that schismatics may receive the spirit of renewed charity; that the remedy of repentance may be bestowed upon the lapsed; that finally after the catechumens have been led to the sacraments of regeneration, the royal court of heavenly mercy may be opened to them” (Denz. 139).

“Rabbi Mark Loeb of Beth El Congregation in Pikesville added that Keeler has been ‘long trusted in the Jewish community as a friend.’ The Rev. Richard T. Lawrence, pastor at St. Vincent de Paul in Baltimore, said that when Keeler was appointed in 1989, he worried that the new archbishop might embrace a ‘monolithic, my-way-or-the-highway brand of Catholicism,’ and attempt to change what has been a liberal congregation.” The documentary then shows us why Leighton considered Keeler such a comrade in arms – Leighton, like Keeler, decried the doctrine of supersessionism. Here are his astounding words from the same documentary telling us that the hymn, *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* is akin to an anti-semitic rant:

It is stunning to see the subtle, and not so subtle ways, in which a Christian teaching of contempt comes...in the very habits and basic practices of the Church....One of the hymns... ‘O Come, O Come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel’ ...is another way of saying Israel’s own story has no relevance to the salvation of the world. So the hymn itself not only carries a triumphalism, a supersessionist bias, but it also writes Israel out of its own story.

John Paul II: A Little Ambiguous about the “Old Covenant”

In light of the foregoing, the question that soon surfaces is: from whence has all this error and confusion originated? Unfortunately, we must admit that some of it appears to have come from the somewhat vague and ambiguous phraseology John Paul II employed on various occasions in his speeches. He made some rather obscure references to the “Old Covenant” that could easily be misunderstood if the listener is not properly educated in Catholic doctrine. However, from a thorough analysis of all his comments on the Jews, it is evident that John Paul knew the precise truth about the Old Covenant, but this truth, on many occasions, did not manifest itself as clearly as it should have. As a result, his hearers made up their own minds as to what he intended and unfortunately created all kinds of erroneous ideas and heretical conclusions. One of the more unfortunate examples of this process occurred during John Paul II’s November 17, 1980 speech in Mainz, Germany, in which he stated: “The first dimension of dialogue, that is, the meeting between the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God, and that of the New Covenant, is at the same time a dialogue within our Church, that is to say, between the first and the second part of her Bible.”³²

Before we show examples of how his Mainz speech was systematically exploited by Jewish leaders, let’s first explain why it had such potential for confusion. The problem is that the Old Testament scriptures speak of many and various covenants, such as, the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12-22), the Mosaic covenant (Exodus 20), the Davidic covenant (2 Chronicles 21:7), and a few others.³³ These covenants can become quite confusing if they are not sorted out and categorized correctly. The potential

³² Until recently, I believed that John Paul II’s reference to the Old Covenant referred to the Old Testament Scriptures, since he finished his sentence with “that is to say, between the first and the second part of her Bible,” but I have discovered that this is not the correct view of his meaning, as we will see.

³³ Some of these covenants even had different phases or applications. For example, the Abrahamic covenant had several components, one to Abraham and his descendants (Gn 13:15; 17:7); another only to Abraham’s descendants (Gn 12:7; 15:18), and a third that says the word “descendant” is in the singular because it referred to Christ, not Israel (Gal 3:16). The Mosaic covenant had two phases, the Sinai covenant (Ex 20) and the Horeb covenant, known as the “second law” (Deut 5), although both are categorized as the “Mosaic” covenant.

difficulty with John Paul II's above statement ("the Old Covenant, never revoked by God") arises because the phrase "Old Covenant" has been traditionally employed to refer only to the Mosaic covenant not the Abrahamic or Davidic covenants. One reason our tradition has done so is that the precise phrase, "Old Covenant" (Greek: *palaias diathekes*)³⁴ appears only once in the New Testament, 2 Cor 3:14, and there the context specifies that it refers only to the Mosaic covenant.³⁵ The New Testament alludes to the Old Covenant in other places, but different terminology is employed (e.g., Heb 7:18: "prior commandment"; Heb 8:7 "first [covenant]"; 8:13: "he has made old the first"; Heb 10:9: "the first [covenant]"). Hence, if one wanted to be as close to Catholic tradition and Scripture as possible, he would consistently use the phrase "Old Covenant" to refer exclusively to the Mosaic covenant. If not, then obviously confusion will result.

Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium: The Old Covenant is Revoked

Before we show what John Paul II actually meant by his use of the phrase "Old Covenant," we need to document where Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium clearly show that the Mosaic covenant has been legally abrogated. There is a good reason why Cardinal Ratzinger said in 1999: "Thus the Sinai covenant is indeed superseded,"³⁶ for it is the perennial teaching of the Catholic Church that the Old Covenant, the Mosaic covenant, as a legal entity, has been abrogated, and it is not applicable, legally, to anyone today, including the Jews. Here are just some of the many statements that teach this truth:

- **Hebrews 7:18:** "On the one hand, a former commandment is annulled because of its weakness and uselessness...";
- **Hebrews 10:9:** "Then he says, 'Behold, I come to do your will.' He takes away the first [covenant] to establish the second [covenant]...";
- **2 Corinthians 3:14:** "For to this day when they [the Jews] read the Old Covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away";
- **Hebrews 8:7:** "For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another";
- **Colossians 2:14:** "Having canceled the written code, with its decrees, that was against us and stood opposed to us; He took it away nailing it to the cross";

³⁴ Παλαιᾶς διαθήκης

³⁵ As Cardinal Ratzinger put it: "What strikes us first of all is that Paul makes a firm disjunction between the covenant in Christ and the Mosaic covenant; this is how we usually understand the difference between the 'Old' and the 'New' Covenant. Paul's sharpest contrast between the two Testaments is to be found in 2 Corinthians 3:4-18 and Galatians 4:21-31. Whereas the term 'New Covenant' comes from prophecy (Jer 31:31) and so form a link between both parts of the Bible, the expression 'Old Covenant' occurs only in 2 Corinthians 3:14" (*Many Religions – One Covenant*, 1998, pp. 52-53).

³⁶ Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant*, p. 70.

- **Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis***, para. 29: “...the New Testament took the place of the Old Law which had been abolished...but on the gibbet of His death Jesus made void the Law with its decrees fastened the handwriting of the Old Testament to the Cross”;
- **The Catechism of the Council of Trent**: “...the people, aware of the abrogation of the Mosaic Law...”;
- **Council of Florence**: “that the matter pertaining to the law of the Old Testament, of the Mosaic law...although they were suited to the divine worship at that time, after our Lord’s coming had been signified by them, ceased, and the sacraments of the New Testament began”;
- **Council of Trent**: “but not even the Jews by the very letter of the law of Moses were able to be liberated or to rise therefrom”;
- **Cardinal Ratzinger**: “Thus the Sinai [Mosaic] Covenant is indeed superseded” (*Many Religions – One Covenant*, p. 70).
- **St. John Chrysostom**: “Yet surely Paul’s object everywhere is to annul this Law....And with much reason; for it was through a fear and a horror of this that the Jews obstinately opposed grace” (*Homily on Romans*, 6:12); “And so while no one annuls a man’s covenant, the covenant of God after four hundred and thirty years is annulled; for if not that covenant but another instead of it bestows what is promised, then is it set aside, which is most unreasonable” (*Homily on Galatians*, Ch 3);
- **St. Augustine**: “Instead of the grace of the law which has passed away, we have received the grace of the gospel which is abiding; and instead of the shadows and types of the old dispensation, the truth has come by Jesus Christ. Jeremiah also prophesied thus in God’s name: ‘Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...’ Observe what the prophet says, not to Gentiles, who had not been partakers in any former covenant, but to the Jewish nation. He who has given them the law by Moses, promises in place of it the New Covenant of the gospel, that they might no longer live in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit” (*Letters*, 74, 4);
- **Justin Martyr**: Now, law placed against law has abrogated that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one; and an eternal and final law – namely, Christ – has been given to us, and the covenant is trustworthy...Have you not read...by Jeremiah, concerning this same new covenant, He thus speaks: ‘Behold, the days come,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...’” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch 11).³⁷

³⁷ The Fathers are in absolute consensus that the Old Covenant had been revoked and replaced by the New Covenant. The above is just a small sampling of their agreement.

Exploiting John Paul II: Mary C. Boys, *America*, and *Commonweal*

Many liberal leaders, being bent as they are toward resurrecting the Jews as having an independent relationship with God apart from Christianity, purposely twisted John Paul II's words to mean that the Mosaic covenant was not revoked. We already saw a crude example of such an attempt in the 2006 *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* which says on page 131: "Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them." Another example occurred in 2002 when, after Cardinal Avery Dulles declared that the Old Covenant was revoked,³⁸ the aforementioned Mary C. Boys, along with her colleagues Dr. Philip Cunningham and Dr. John Pawlikowski, contested his words in the notoriously liberal Jesuit magazine, *America*:

Thus, we are troubled by Cardinal Dulles' assertion that the Letter to the Hebrews offers 'the most formal statement of the status of the Sinai Covenant under Christianity.' Without further analysis, he quotes Hebrews...Christ 'abolishes the first [covenant] in order to establish the second' (Heb. 10:9).' Cardinal Dulles implies that Catholics believe that God's covenant with the people of Israel is obsolete. In contrast, we argue that official Catholic teaching today has, in the 1993 PBC formulation, 'gone its own way' and 'set aside' the opinion of the author of Hebrews about Israel's covenant. As 'Reflections' notes, Pope John Paul II has on many occasions declared that Jews are 'the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God,' 'the present-day people of the covenant concluded with Moses,' and 'partners in a covenant of eternal love which was never revoked.'³⁹

A third example occurred in the attempt by a similar liberal Jesuit magazine, *Commonweal*, when it put the following words in the pope's mouth as the interpretation of the Mainz speech: "The direct extraordinary gift John Paul II gave to Jewry was his historically unprecedented affirmation of the

³⁸ "The Covenant with Israel," *First Things*, Nov. 2005 (http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=256).

³⁹ "Theology's Sacred Obligation: A Reply to Cardinal Dulles," *America*, Oct. 14, 2002. In the next paragraph, Boys, *et al.*, make this erroneous conclusion about Scripture: "The magisterium can explicitly contradict an idea of an individual New Testament author because the Catholic tradition is one of commentary, not *sola scriptura*. The author of Hebrews, convinced that he was living in the final stages of human history, could argue that the Old Covenant had yielded to the New. Two millennia later, however, in a church whose pope has prayed for God's forgiveness for the sins of Christians against Jews, such an assertion is unacceptable. The constant disparagement of post-biblical Judaism through the ages, and general ignorance of it, encouraged European Christians to marginalize and even at times demonize Jews, thus providing a fertile seedbed for the Shoah." Suffice it to say, Boys' view is precisely the reason the state of Catholic theology today is in a shambles, since Catholic theologians seem no longer capable of accepting the words of Scripture as divinely inspired and inerrant truth for our lives. Political agendas supersede Scripture. The facts are these, however: the Catholic magisterium has never stated, either in tradition or today, that it can "explicitly contradict an idea of an individual New Testament author," much less say that the words of their epistles were only the author's personal or mistaken opinions about Christ and the covenants. Nowhere did John Paul II say or imply that he was overturning the statements in Scripture regarding the Jews or the covenants. Sad to say, Boys' view is the kind of convoluted hermeneutics that is taught at many Catholic institutions today, including the ultra liberal Protestant institution, Union Theological Seminary, where Boys teaches, and the very seminary at which Fr. Raymond Brown, who was the foremost advocate of biblical errancy, taught until his death in 1998.

validity of the Jewish covenant, that is, of Judaism.”⁴⁰ As we can see, *Commonweal* merely seized upon John Paul’s vague reference to the “Old Covenant” and replaced it with the words “Jewish covenant” and “Judaism.” Of course, as we have witnessed, this same distorted view of the Old Covenant has also been promoted by Cardinal Keeler, Cardinal Kasper, Eugene Fisher, Rabbi Rosen, the ADL, and all the other sources we have mentioned thus far. It is a conspiracy of the most frightening proportions.

John Paul II’s Clarification: The Old Covenant is with Abraham, not Moses

To put our minds at ease, we can safely conclude that all of the above liberal interpretations are fallacious and could easily be classified as heretical. The simple fact is, John Paul II has never said that his statement, “the Old Covenant, never revoked by God” referred to the Mosaic covenant, and neither did any of his post-Vatican II predecessors. He has clearly stated that his use of the phrase “Old Covenant” was in reference to the Abrahamic covenant and no other. This fact was made clear in the pope’s Sydney speech of November 26, 1986, in which he said:

It will continue to be an explicit and very important part of my mission to repeat and emphasize that our attitude to the Jewish religion should be one of the greatest respect, since the Catholic faith is rooted in the eternal truths contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, and in the irrevocable covenant made with Abraham...for it is the teaching of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that the Jews are beloved of God, who has called them with an irrevocable calling.

Unfortunately, this is one of the only times John Paul II clarified the specific covenant to which he was referring. Be that as it may, the pope was quite correct. The Abrahamic covenant, at least in its salvific dimensions, has never been revoked. Heb 6:13-18 explains that God sealed the Abrahamic covenant with an oath, which makes it irrevocable. But what many miss is that the remaining verses (Heb 6:19-13:14) explain that Jesus Christ and his New Covenant salvation program are the center piece of Abraham’s irrevocable covenant, not the Old Covenant with Moses. To be sure, God made another covenant for Abraham’s physical descendants, the Jews, so that they could inherit the land of Canaan and receive circumcision as their identity marker (*cf.* Gen 15:18-21; 17:1f). But Scripture is clear that those particular covenants, which concerned the acquisition of the promised land, were completely fulfilled, to the letter,⁴¹ and it also reveals that it was fulfilled because of the oath God made to Abraham, despite the wickedness of the Jews (Deut 9:5-6).⁴² However, because of their continued disobedience, little by little

⁴⁰ April 22, 2005 issue.

⁴¹ Joshua 21:43-45: “Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land which he swore to give to their fathers; and having taken possession of it, they settled there...Not one of all the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass”; 1Kings 8:56: “Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised; not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he uttered by Moses his servant”; Nehemiah 9:7-8: “Thou art the Lord, the God who didst choose Abram and bring him forth out of Ur of the Chaldeans and give him the name Abraham; and thou didst find his heart faithful before thee, and didst make with him the covenant to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite; and thou hast fulfilled thy promise, for thou art righteous.”

⁴² Dt 9:5-6: “Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land; but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know

God took the land away until it was completely decimated by the Romans soon after the New Covenant was inaugurated. At the same time, their covenant of circumcision was also terminated.⁴³ What remains unfulfilled, at least in a complete sense, is the spiritual or heavenly dimension of Abraham's covenant. As John Paul II put it:

In the Old Covenant the object of the promise was the possession of a land where the people would be able to live in freedom and in accordance with righteousness (*cf.* Dt 6:20-25). In the New Covenant the object of the promise is the 'Kingdom of Heaven'... This same reality of the Kingdom is referred to in the expression 'eternal life'... It is attained in its perfection only after death, but in faith it is even now a light of truth...⁴⁴

This is the very reason that the Hebrew epistle says that Abraham and Sarah "died in faith, without receiving the promise" (Heb 11:13, 39), since it later explains that they were "looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:10) and "a better land, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb 11:16). "Heaven" does not refer to a piece of real estate on this present earth but to the next life, when Abraham and Sarah are raised from the dead to dwell with God for eternity. If God had revoked *that* particular covenant with Abraham, both he and Sarah would never receive what was promised to them, thus God made it irrevocable.

John Paul II's Impact on the Issue

So now that we know John Paul II was referring to the Abrahamic covenant, what does this do for the "Old Covenant has not been revoked" advocates who are seeking to establish or re-establish an exclusive covenant between God and Israel so that the Jews can have their own salvation program apart from Christianity and perhaps be granted the land of Palestine by divine conquest?⁴⁵ The pope totally

therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people."

⁴³ *cf.* Mt 8:11-12; 23:37-38; Lk 21:24; Heb 4:6-8; 10:16-18; Eph 2:11-16; Col 2:11-17.

⁴⁴ *Veritatis Splendor*, I, 12.

⁴⁵ One other anomaly is that the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says these words in para. 121: "The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant has never been revoked." The addition of this clause is somewhat odd, as if the author just tacked it onto the sentence without a sufficient reason. It carries even more ambiguity than when John Paul II used the clause in his Mainz speech. What "Old Covenant" is the Catechism referring to? It gives no direct indication. If it has the Mosaic covenant in view, it is heresy. If it has the Abraham covenant in view, it is superfluous, because the Old Testament Scriptures retain their "permanent value" with or without the Abrahamic covenant as a confirmation of that value. The other possibility is that "Old Covenant" is a synonym for the Old Testament Scripture since it is obvious that the Church has never revoked Scripture. Perhaps the sentence in para. 123 could help in this regard since it specifies that "The Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament under the pretext that the New has rendered it void." Perhaps the catechism feels justified in using "Old covenant" to represent the Hebrew Scriptures because in various contexts the word "covenant" is identical to the word "testament." Both are allowable translations of the Greek word *diatheke* or the Hebrew word *berith*. (See, for example, how the *Douay-Rheims* uses the word "testament" whereas the *New American Bible* uses

destroyed their wishes. Not only did he do so by showing us that the remaining part of the Abrahamic covenant is a spiritual covenant, we can also reflect on these additional truths:

1. Abraham was given his initial call, his promise, and his justification when he was a Gentile, not a Jew. The whole thrust of St. Paul's argument against the Jews' supposed right to claim an exclusive covenant with God is that Abraham received his covenant with God before he was circumcised, that is, before he became a Jew (Rom 4:9-11).⁴⁶ It is further stated that God chose the exact time to make the initial covenant with Abraham precisely so that Abraham could be the father of the Gentiles (Gal 3:6-8; Rom 4:11-12).⁴⁷ It wasn't until much later in his life that Abraham was circumcised so that he could also become the father of the Jews, who were chosen specifically at this time to produce the Christ. Once Christ came, the Jewish covenant of circumcision was abrogated, but not the covenant made with the whole world. As such, the "irrevocable covenant with Abraham" is not an exclusive covenant with the Jews, but a covenant for everyone in the world who wants a faith relationship with Abraham's God, whether they were born Jew or Gentile. As John Paul II put it: "If the people of Israel were aware of a special bond with God, they also affirmed that there was a Covenant of the entire human race with him and that, also in the Covenant made with them, all peoples are called to salvation: 'All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you,' God told Abraham."⁴⁸ This is precisely why Heb 11:39-40 says that when Abraham finally receives his promised land, faithful Christians, whether converted Jews or Gentiles, we will be there with him to claim it.
2. Scripture tells us that the Abrahamic covenant has transitioned into and became the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. They are one and the same. This is precisely why St. Paul could use the example of Abraham, who was justified by grace, as an object lesson to educate the early Church in New Covenant soteriology (*cf.* Rom 4:1-24; Jam 2:21-24). Already in Luke 1:68-79, Zachariah

the word "covenant" in the following verses: Heb 7:22; 8:6-10; 9:4-20; 10:16, 29). The other curious feature of the catechism's "for the Old Covenant has never been revoked" clause is that it has no footnote attached to it, which is not the case with the sentence before it or after it. This means that the catechism's author could not find any reference to this clause in authoritative Catholic sources, including Vatican II. No wonder there has been so much confusion created by this clause. The clause needs to be excised from para. 121 because it serves no useful purpose.

⁴⁶ Rom 4:9: Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

⁴⁷ Gal 3:6: Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." 7 So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith. Rom 4:11-12: 11: He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, 12 and likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

⁴⁸ *The Church and Racism*, III, 20.

equates the birth of Christ and his future mission on the cross with God “remembering his holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father...to give his people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.” It is the reason Jesus said in John 8:56 that Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ. It is why Acts 3:25-26 says that the covenant to Abraham concerned the coming of Christ to forgive sins. It is why Gal. 3:16 says that Abraham’s “seed” in the covenant promise was Christ alone. It is why Gal 3:17-22 then separates the Mosaic law from the Abrahamic covenant, and completes the section by saying that those who are in Christ are the “seed of Abraham” (Gal 3:29). The New Testament is just saturated with this truth. It is the same reason that although John Paul II never stated that the Mosaic covenant is irrevocable, he stated at least a dozen times in his encyclicals that the New Covenant is eternal and irrevocable and that the Old Covenant has been fulfilled.⁴⁹

Hence, those who have tried to use the clause in the pope’s Mainz speech (“the Old Covenant, never revoked by God”) to teach that the Jews still retain legal possession of the Mosaic covenant and can be saved by it have not only put words into John Paul II’s mouth that he did not say, they have manifestly contradicted the clear teaching of Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium, which says that the Mosaic covenant has been annulled. Because we know for a certainty that John Paul II meant that the “Old Covenant” referred to the spiritual Abrahamic covenant not the earthly Mosaic covenant, the Fishers, the Keelers and the USCCB have no basis whatsoever to even suggest that the Jews have their own covenant and their own salvation program.

John Paul II’s Impact on Romans 11:29’s “Irrevocable Gifts and Calling”

In addition to showing that the Abrahamic covenant is not an exclusive covenant between God and Israel, John Paul II’s 1986 speech in Sydney puts a complete damper on current attempts to commandeer Romans 11:29’s unique phrase (*viz.*, “the gifts and call of God are irrevocable”) as referring to a special

⁴⁹ Here is a sampling: *Mulieris Dignitatem*, V, 11 (“At the beginning of the New Covenant, which is to be eternal and irrevocable, there is a woman: the Virgin of Nazareth”); *Redemptoris Custos*, VI, 32 (“This just man, who bore within himself the entire heritage of the Old Covenant, was also brought into the beginning of the New and Eternal Covenant in Jesus Christ. May he show us the paths of this saving Covenant...”); *Dominicae Cena*, II, 9 (“This restoration cannot cease to be: it is the foundation of the new and eternal covenant of God with man and of man with God”); *The Church and Racism*, III, 20 (“If the people of Israel were aware of a special bond with God, they also affirmed that there was a Covenant of the entire human race with him and that, also in the Covenant made with them, all peoples are called to salvation: ‘All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you,’ God told Abraham”); *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 (“It is the sprinkled blood. A symbol and prophetic sign of it had been the blood of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, whereby God expressed his will to communicate his own life to men, purifying and consecrating them (cf. Ex 24.8; Lev 17.11). Now all of this is fulfilled and comes true in Christ: his is the sprinkled blood which redeems, purifies and saves; it is the blood of the Mediator of the New Covenant ‘poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’ (Mt 26.28)”); *Pastores Dabo Vobis* II, 12 (“The priest finds the full truth of his identity in being a derivation, a specific participation in and continuation of Christ himself, the one high priest of the new and eternal covenant”); *Familiaris Consortio* II, 13 (“Indeed, by means of baptism, man and woman are definitively placed within the new and eternal covenant, in the spousal covenant of Christ with the Church”); *Gaudete in Domino II* (“Such is the joy of the Mosaic Passover, which happened as the prefiguring of the eschatological liberation which would be wrought by Jesus Christ in the paschal context of the new and eternal Covenant”).

covenant God made exclusively with the Jews. As we have seen in the foregoing facts, the only irrevocable covenant that Scripture knows is the Abrahamic covenant, which is now called the New Covenant in Christ. It was initially made with Abraham when he was a Gentile, thus it was never exclusively for the Jews. As such, Romans 11:29's "gifts and call" can only refer to what Jews and Gentiles have in common – the "gift" of salvation and the Gospel "call" to receive it. It saved Jews by grace in Elijah's day (Rom 11:5) and St. Paul still invites the Jew to become saved by it today (Rom 11:14, 23). God will never revoke the call of salvation because the offer is promised as long as the earth abides (2Cor 6:1-2) and it was made for the very purpose of saving the Jew (Lk 1:68-79; Ac 3:19-26). As *Ad Gentes* 7 makes very clear, this irrevocable call is given to all Jews and Gentiles to accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior:

...For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, himself a man, Jesus Christ, 'neither is their salvation in any other'...Everyone, therefore, ought to be converted to Christ...Hence those cannot be saved, who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded through Jesus Christ, by God, as something necessary, still refuse to enter it, or to remain in it...And so, today as always, missionary activity retains its full force and necessity.

Knowing all this information, we can also make it clear for everyone what John Paul II meant when he added these words to his speech in Sydney: "...for it is the teaching of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that the Jews are beloved of God, who has called them with an irrevocable calling,"⁵⁰ or when he said in Miami in 1987 that the Jewish people are "partners in a covenant of eternal love that was never revoked."⁵¹ According to his context and all his other encyclicals, his meaning is very simple: the "irrevocable calling" is the unchanging and persistent call to repentance in Jesus Christ that began with Abraham and continues today (Acts 3:25-26; Rom 4:1-22). Additionally, by accepting Jesus Christ and the New Covenant, the Jews can become "partners" with the Gentiles in that eternal covenant, for the Jews, according to John Paul II, do not have their own covenant with God for salvation, for as he noted in the same speech: "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The Pontifical Biblical Commission: Misleading Statements on the Covenant

As liberal as it has become in the last few decades, we see misleading statements issued right under the pope's thumb from his own Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) in its December 2001 paper titled: *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*.⁵² For example, one paragraph states: "For Paul, Jesus' establishment of 'the new covenant in [his] blood' (1 Co 11:25), does not imply any rupture of God's covenant with his people, but constitutes its fulfillment." This is at best a half-truth, since the abrogation of the Mosaic covenant *certainly did* create a "rupture" between God and Israel, although, as we noted above, it is true that the Abrahamic covenant remained in force and the Jew was

⁵⁰ November 26, 1986 in Sydney, Australia.

⁵¹ September 11, 1987 in Miami, Florida.

⁵² *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, Dec. 2001, authored by twenty-five Catholic theologians. Since most of these theologians come from the liberal ranks of Catholic scholarship, their views are often at odds with traditional teaching. In any case, the PBC is not an authoritative arm of the Church since it was demoted to only an "advisory" role in 1971 by Pope Paul VI. See note at #18.

invited to become part of it, thus continuing the call to salvation without “rupture” (*cf.* Rom 2:28-29; 3:28-4:11).

The PBC also said: “He includes ‘the covenants’ among the privileges enjoyed by Israel, even if they do not believe in Christ (Rom 9:4).” This is also a half-truth. Today, Israel cannot “enjoy” the Mosaic covenant, for it has been annulled. The only covenant they can “enjoy” is the Abrahamic covenant, but that is a covenant for both Gentile and Jew, and one can only “enjoy” it when he accepts Christ as the Son of God.

The PBC then says: “Israel continues to be in a covenant relationship and remains the people to whom the fulfillment of the covenant was promised, because their lack of faith cannot annul God’s fidelity (Rom 11:29). Even if some Israelites have observed the Law as a means of establishing their own justice, the covenant-promise of God, who is rich in mercy (Rom 11:26-27), cannot be abrogated.” But Israel, as a national or ethnic group of people, is NOT in a covenant relationship with God. Their exclusive covenant with God, the Mosaic covenant, was annulled. Although they remain “the people to whom the fulfillment of the covenant was promised,” the reality is, unless each and every one of them accept and fulfill their part of the covenant promise, which requires them to convert to the New Covenant in Christ (*i.e.*, the Abrahamic covenant of Galatians 3:16ff), then they cannot have, and will not have, any covenant with God. Although the Jews can be loved and respected, they cannot be in some quasi-covenant relationship with God before they convert to the New Covenant. Legally speaking, one is either in a covenant or not in a covenant.

Moreover, for the PBC to say that the Jews’ lack of faith cannot annul God’s fidelity goes without saying. As Paul says in 2Tim 2:13: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.” But God’s “fidelity” does not mean that God is required to give Israel an automatic and unconditional covenant with Him when they, at large, have refused to cooperate with him on his terms; rather, God faithfully invites the Jew to become part of the saving covenant with Abraham and allows him to do so when the Jew repents of his sins and receives Jesus Christ as God and Savior (Rom 11:14, 23). If we or the Jews do not make the decision to become a member of God’s saving covenant, then, as St. Paul says in the previous verse: “If we deny Him, He will also deny us” (2Tim 2:12).

Mark Shea’s New Wrinkle in Dual Covenant Theology

Without the benefit of correct theology on the Old Covenant, many Catholic lay teachers have succumbed to the concept of Dual Covenant theology. It is promoted as the new doctrine that all enlightened people should now embrace. For example, on his blog site a few months ago, Mark Shea, founder and writer for *Catholic and Enjoying It!* stated that “the Old Covenant remains in force for unbaptized Jews.” In a recent article for the *National Catholic Register* (NCR) Shea raised an alarm against what he sees as the: “...sweeping and highly problematic proposition: the notion that the covenant with Moses has been ‘revoked.’”⁵³ Knowing that his view will raise the hackles of his critics (which he presently terms as “Reactionary Dissenters”), Shea attempts to smooth over his novel theology, on the one hand, by assuring us in *NCR* that “Christians are not bound by the Mosaic Law,” and does the same

⁵³ “The Law and the Covenant,” *National Catholic Register*, Part 2, November 4-10, 2007.

in an article for *Crisis* magazine's new website venture, *InsideCatholic*, stating: "But it is loony for Christians...to now be putting themselves under the Law of Moses. As Paul hammers home again and again, those who are in Christ are no longer bound by the works of the law."⁵⁴ On the other hand, Shea clarifies that he has not completely departed from the current liberal consensus, for he holds that "it does not follow from this that the Mosaic Covenant has therefore been 'revoked.'"⁵⁵ Perhaps modeling the Puritans, Shea desires to introduce some sort of 'halfway' Mosaic covenant.

As we might suspect, the proof Shea garners for the half of the Old Covenant he says is not revoked is the same one that many other Old Covenant advocates have used – the ambiguous phrase from John Paul II's Mainz speech: "the Old Covenant, never revoked by God."⁵⁶ As such, Shea made the same mistake, namely, assuming John Paul II was referring to the Mosaic covenant when, as we noted above, the pope made it very clear in his 1986 Sydney speech that he was referring to the Abrahamic covenant. Shea is apparently unaware of John Paul II's view since in the next few paragraphs of his *NCR* article he castigates those who insist that the irrevocable covenant applies only to the Abrahamic covenant. Inadvertently, he is also castigating John Paul II, the very authority he had hoped to use as his support.⁵⁷

In another instance, Shea attempted to refute E. Michael Jones when the latter asserted in a recent article that the Old Covenant has been revoked. Shea retorted:

Romans 7 knows absolutely nothing of a notion that the covenant with the Jews has been revoked. On the contrary, it insists that unbaptized Jews are "married" to the Law and that the only way they can get out of the marriage is by death – the death of baptism and rebirth in Christ. So, contrary to Jones, the notion that it is somehow newfangled or wimpy to reject the notion that the old covenant has been revoked is simply false. Paul believed exactly this, following his Master. The reality is that the Old Covenant has been *transcended*. A Jew cannot abandon the covenant even if he wants to, because God still holds it binding. However, he can transcend it through Christ and entry into the new and everlasting covenant. The old covenant cannot save – but then the Church has never said it can, despite Jones' suggestion that John Paul was trying to suggest just this.

Shea says much the same in his November 2007 piece for the *National Catholic Register*: "So far from saying the Law of Moses is revoked, which would necessarily mean that it no longer has the power to condemn, Jesus, John and Paul assume unbaptized Jews are still bound by the Law." He concludes

⁵⁴ "You may remember the Reformation," *InsideCatholic.com*, Sept. 28, 2007.

⁵⁵ "The Law and the Covenant," *National Catholic Register*, Part 2, November 4-10, 2007.

⁵⁶ "The Law and the Covenant," *National Catholic Register*, Part 3, November 11-17, 2007.

⁵⁷ Shea states: "Some Reactionary Dissenters simply reject all this outright, saying, 'To say that the Mosaic Covenant has not been revoked in the normal manner of speech is contrary to the faith...'" In one paragraph, Shea, again using the term "Reactionary Dissenter," quotes my words but without revealing my name: "Unfortunately, today there is a lot of confusion occurring because of the vague and ambiguous use of the phrase 'Old Covenant' by prelates and theologians. They purposely don't tell you which definition of 'Old Covenant' they are using, and thus a lot of people think when they see 'Old Covenant has never been revoked' it means that the Jews still have a covenant with God. They don't. The only covenant in force today is the New Covenant..." (*ibid*).

with: “The Covenant of Moses cannot save – but it is well within the pale of Catholic orthodoxy to regard it as still binding upon unbaptized children of the Old Covenant...”⁵⁸

Interestingly enough, we note here that Shea’s purpose in resurrecting the Mosaic covenant is different than that proposed by Rosen, the ADL, Keeler, Fisher and the USCCB. The latter group believes the Old Covenant can be employed to save or condemn the Jew, but Shea holds that the Old Covenant only condemns the Jew. Nevertheless, in order to condemn, Shea must also believe that the Old Covenant must still be valid and unrevoked. As it were, Shea has the Old Covenant walking on one leg while his more liberal contemporaries have it walking on two. As Shea sees it, “if the Law of Moses has been revoked, its penalties cannot apply to those who seek salvation through it.” Hoping to prove his case by an appeal to Paul’s analogy between marriage and law in Romans 7:1-4, Shea concludes:

Paul’s entire point is that unbaptized Jews are ‘married to the Law of Moses...and cannot escape that covenant....So, contrary to Reactionary Dissent, the notion that the Mosaic Covenant has been revoked is false according to both Our Lord and the Apostle to the Gentiles. Apart from Christ, says Paul, the Law of Moses still has the power to condemn and has therefore not been rendered null and void.’⁵⁹

Shea’s view is certainly a new twist on the Old Covenant, but it is erroneous, nonetheless. As we noted earlier, when the New Testament speaks of the revocation of the Old Covenant (Heb 7:18; 8:7-13; 10:9; 2Cor 3:6-14) it makes no distinction between a salvific and a condemnatory Old Covenant, and neither did any of the magisterial Catholic teachings we cited earlier. These authorities simply and correctly state that the Old Covenant is revoked, period. There is a good reason for their absolutism: the New Testament makes no claim that the Old Covenant remains in force to condemn anyone, much less “unbaptized Jews.” The reason is as follows: in matters of both salvation and damnation, Jews and Gentiles are under the jurisdiction of Jesus Christ, his Church and the New Covenant, not the Old Covenant. It is Christ, not Moses, who is the “Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy,” and his judging applies to Jews and Gentiles (*cf.* James 4:8; Mt 12:36-37; Rm 2:16). Similarly, as Heb. 10:28-31 teaches, it is no longer the “two or three witnesses of the Mosaic law” that condemn the sinner, but the three witnesses of the Trinity: “the Son of God,” “the Spirit of grace,” and “the living God,” which is manifested through the Church in the New Covenant (*cf.* Mt 16:18-19; 18:17-18; 1Tim 3:15; 1Cor 5:1-5; Acts 5:1-11).

Shea’s mistake is a common one. Merely because St. Paul alludes to “law” in Romans 7:1-4 does not mean that he is either referring to the Mosaic Law or that the Mosaic Law is still legally in force. In 1 Cor 9:9, for example, Paul says, “It is written in the Law of Moses: You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.” Obviously, Paul is not saying that the Mosaic law concerning oxen still has legal force; rather, Paul is merely extracting the Mosaic principle of providing for the needs of the worker, in this case, the Gospel preacher. Likewise, whatever law is cited or practiced today in Christianity, whether it is natural law, Mosaic law, canonical law, *etc.*, it is only because the Church, under its own legal authority, decided to incorporate those particular principles into the New Covenant. The Church, under the New Covenant,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

has the power to decide which doctrine and practices are most beneficial for the Christian community, leading her to incorporate various laws from the Old Covenant, albeit with her own modifications (*e.g.*, Rom 13:1-10; Acts 15:28); while discarding others as useless (Col 2:16; Acts 15:10-12). But whatever law is utilized, it will be legalized and controlled by the New Covenant, not the Old. At the present time, the Old Covenant's purpose is to serve as a model, a precedent, a teacher, for the divine principles that will be needed to allow the New Covenant to function as efficiently as it possibly can. But there is only one covenant that has legal force; there is only one covenant that can save and condemn; there is only one covenant that God recognizes today, and that is the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

The idea that the New Covenant would borrow principles from the Old Covenant should not be hard for us to understand. We have many good examples from which to appeal, such as the relationship between the US Constitution and the Magna Carta. The Magna Carta had some very beneficial insights concerning law and life. These were incorporated into the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.⁶⁰ The Magna Carta itself became obsolete and was revoked, but whatever principles were borrowed from it, they became part of the Constitution, and it was only from the Constitution that those principles acquired legal force. In the same way, Scripture declares that the Old Covenant was legally revoked (Heb 7:18; 10:9) but its spiritual and moral principles were utilized in the New Covenant (Heb 10:16-18; Gal 5:14; 1Co 9:9; Rm 7:7-12). It is the same reason that the 1994 *Catholic Catechism* spends most of Part Three on the Ten Commandments – not because the Mosaic Law still has legal force but because the Church adopted the principles of the Mosaic Law into the New Covenant.

As for Shea's contention that in Romans 7:1-4 St. Paul is specifically referring to "unbaptized Jews," the reality is, Paul does not even mention the Jews in Romans 7. Paul himself was a *baptized* Jew yet he is applying Romans 7 to himself and every other baptized Jew and Gentile Christian to whom he is writing. It is precisely because Paul's audience in Romans 7 includes all people that he appeals to universal marriage law in verses 1-4, since all societies, especially the Roman society to whom he is writing, had strict laws stipulating that marriage was terminated upon the death of a spouse. The Roman citizenry was steeped in the study of law, as were the Greeks before them, and this is why Paul says in verse 1: "for I am speaking to those who know the law." Hence, the Romans would have easily understood Paul's analogy, but his analogy does not mean that Roman law or Jewish law would have any legal force in determining the laws of the Christian faith. Similarly, in Romans 7:7-8, Paul appeals to one of the laws of the Decalogue ("I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet'") but this does not mean that the Mosaic Law still had legal force to damn the sinner; rather, Paul merely says the Law makes a person conscious of the coveting latent in the human heart. What he now does with the information will be decided by the New Covenant, not the Old. The law can perform the task of conviction whether it is in legal force or not, just as the Magna Carta could stipulate that all men are created equal even though the Magna Carta has no legal force today.

⁶⁰ "Magna Carta was the most significant early influence on the extensive historical process that led to the rule of constitutional law today. Magna Carta influenced many common law and other documents, such as the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights, and is considered one of the most important legal documents in the history of democracy" (Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta).

Shea also appeals to Jesus' statement in Mt 5:17 to support the idea that the Old Covenant is not revoked: "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets: I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them." He then makes the following anachronistic conclusion: "According to Matthew, the Law and the Prophets have not been abolished."⁶¹ If Shea is right, then why does the epistle to the Hebrews insist on the exact opposite, saying: "For...there is the abolishing⁶² of the former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness, for the Law made nothing perfect" (Hb 7:18)? Or why does the same author insist that Jesus himself "takes away"⁶³ the first in order to establish the second" (Hb 10:9)? If Shea's view is correct, we then have an obvious contradiction between what Shea says Jesus means in Mt 5:17 and what Jesus is said to have done in Hb 10:9. Perhaps this contradiction is the reason Shea never quotes from these particular passages in Hebrews when he is writing on the legal status of the Old Covenant.

The matter is easily solved if we realize two important things: First, Jesus uttered the words of Matthew 5:17-18 when he was on the Old Testament side of the cross. At that particular time, he could not abolish the Old Covenant, for he and every other Jew were required to fulfill it to the letter until the New Covenant was established. Not until he died on the cross did the proper time come for the abolition of the Old Covenant, for it was only then that the temple curtain was torn in two to indicate that the Old Covenant had reached its fulfillment and ceased to be legally valid (Mt 27:51). Until then, Jesus had the right to bind every Jew to all the prescriptions in the Mosaic Law, and could also tell them, as Shea reminds us, "the one who accuses you is Moses" (John 5:45). Obviously, Jesus could not have abolished the Old Covenant when he was preaching the Sermon on the Mount, otherwise, he would not have been able to fulfill the prophecies of his death and conclude them with "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Second, Jesus' intent was not to abolish the Law to the extent that we could not use its ethical principles in the New Covenant. Legally speaking, the Old Covenant is revoked. Ethically speaking, it remains very much alive. One of the greatest ways the New Covenant could pay compliment to the Old Covenant and thus "fulfill" the Old Covenant's hoped-for purpose is to incorporate some of its divine principles into the teachings of the New Covenant. But again, whatever is taken from the Old Covenant is under the jurisdiction of the New Covenant, not the Old. The key to deciphering the whole ball of wax is understanding the difference between the legal and the non-legal. Unfortunately, not many Catholics today are knowledgeable about this crucial juridical aspect and thus the confusion regarding the status of the Old Covenant persists.

Cardinal Ratzinger, the Jews, and Romans 9:4-5

In a related matter, on Shea's blog was a statement from a person named "David" who quoted remarks from Cardinal Ratzinger's letter, "The Heritage of Abraham: The Gift of Christmas," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 December, 2000. David's purpose, it seemed, was to support the idea of giving possession of the Old Covenant to the Jews of today. The cardinal wrote:

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Greek: ἀθέτησις (athetesis), "to annul, to set aside, to abolish, to make of no effect, declare invalid, remove" (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, Greek lexicon, p. 21)

⁶³ Greek: ἀναίρειν (anairei), "to take away, to destroy, to do away with, to eliminate" (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, Greek lexicon, p. 54)

...first of all that he might grant to us Christians a greater esteem and love for that people, the people of Israel, to whom belong ‘the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs are the patriarchs, and from them comes Christ according to the flesh, he who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen’ (Romans 9:4-5), and this not only in the past, but still today, ‘for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable’ (Rom 11:29).

David’s opinion, as he makes clear by emphasizing in the blog what I have underlined above, is that the Jews retain legal possession of all the items listed in Rom 9:4-5. But if that is the case, then we are in a real theological dilemma, because it would require that the Mosaic law (which Paul refers to in Rom 9:4 as “the giving of the law”) should have legally continued right into our day and never ceased, including all the “eye for an eye” laws (Ex 21:24); stoning for adultery (Dt 22:13f); rejection for castration (Dt 23:1), *etc.* Likewise, all the ceremonial laws (which Paul refers to in Rom 9:4 as “the worship”) should have continued unabated, including mandatory circumcision, the temple cult, *etc.* The most egregious crime would be that committed by the Catholic Church, since she apparently ignored these legal stipulations of Rom 9:4-5 for the last 2000 years. Amazingly enough, that opinion is precisely what many Jewish leaders are today accusing the Catholic Church of doing.

If he desires to rescue the Church from this crime, David cannot claim that only some of the items in Rom 9:4-5 apply to the Jews of today and the rest do not, since Rom 9:4-5 does not make any legal distinctions among the items it lists. As we can see, David has backed himself into a corner. His basic problem is that, like Shea, he has failed to see that St. Paul is not saying that the Jews have legal possession of any of the items in Rom 9:4-5. The Greek grammar helps us to see that Paul is merely indicating that these items *originated* from the Jews.⁶⁴ If this were not the case, then Paul would have clearly contradicted himself when he said that the “giving of the law” and “the worship” was superseded by the New Covenant (*cf.* Heb 7:18; 10:9; 2Cor 3:6-14; Gal 3:10-12; 5:1-4; Col 2:15-16). In fact, the supersession of the Mosaic Law is the very reason that all the civil and ceremonial laws of Israel have been replaced by the canons and sacraments of the Catholic Church.

Some of Shea’s colleagues try to escape this logic by proposing that “Israel’s call-vocation-election occurred before the Sinai Covenant, and is therefore independent of that Covenant; the vocation itself...is rooted in the call and vocation of Abraham...the ‘gifts’ of Rom 11:29 are quite likely a reference to the

⁶⁴ The Greek of Romans 9:4-5 contains no verb, which further proves the point that the Jews do not possess these privileges currently. That is, the verse does not say: “to whom belong the adoption as sons...” since neither the word “belong” nor any other verb appears in the verse. This is why even the New American Bible translates it without a verb: “They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.” In such cases, the Greek is merely making a general remark that the adoption, the covenants, and all the other items listed in verses 4-5 originated with the Jews, not that they are still legally possessed by the Jews. This meaning is proven by the fact that one of the items in Rom 9:4-5, “Christ according to the flesh,” is also missing a verb. Obviously, the Jews at large do not possess Christ presently, since the whole point of Romans 9-11 is to point out how obstinate the Jews have been against Christ and that only a remnant have accepted him at any given time in history. The point of the verse is to say that Christ originated from the Jews, not that the Jews possess Christ.

privileges of Israel enumerated in Rom 9:4-5, including the ‘covenants.’”⁶⁵ This opinion is equally erroneous. Since Paul includes “the giving of the law” and “the worship” in Rom 9:4-5, the Sinai [Mosaic] covenant simply cannot be excluded from the verse. In addition, Paul uses the word “covenants” in the plural in Rom 9:4, thus including more than the Abrahamic covenant. Logically, if it is claimed that the “irrevocable gifts and call” of Rom 11:29 refer to the “covenants” (plural) of Rom 9:4-5, then we are faced with another contradiction, for then Heb 7:18; 10:9 could not say that a covenant has been revoked, and Jer 31:31-33 could not say that God will make a New Covenant to replace the former covenant.

If the argument is then advanced that the “irrevocable gifts and call” do not apply *in toto* to Rom 9:4-5 but only to the Abrahamic covenant specifically, this will negate the popular attempt to apply Rom 11:29 exclusively to the Jews. As we noted earlier, the whole thrust of Paul’s teaching regarding Abraham is that he received his call and promise when he was a Gentile (*cf.* Gen 12:3; 15:6; Gal 3:6-8), thus upsetting the Jew’s reliance on Abraham as their exclusive father and covenant maker (Rom 4:9-11). Barring the land and circumcision covenants we noted previously, the only covenant God made exclusively with the Jews is the Mosaic covenant. But Abraham’s irrevocable covenant is for both Jew and Gentile. Logically, then, the “irrevocable gifts and call” of Rom 11:29 cannot refer to some unique covenant waiting to be resurrected exclusively for the Jews; rather, it is the gift and call of salvation that is now and has always been embodied in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ and which has irrevocably called the Jew and the Gentile to salvation for the last 2000 years (*cf.* Lk 1:68-79; Rom 2:9-10; 11:27; Heb 10:16-18).

Additionally, contrary to what some are teaching today, the Jew’s response to Rom 11:29’s irrevocable call is not guaranteed, and thus St. Paul says in the same chapter: “if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen [the Jews] and save some of them” (Rom 11:14). He reiterates the same wish a few verses later: “if they [the Jews] do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted in” (Rom 11:23). Obviously, having already been given the grace to respond, it is up to the Jew to answer the call, as it has always been. Hopefully, as at Pentecost when 3000 were baptized in one day, the Jew will answer the call. And we also hope that the Gentile, now resting in Abraham, will not take advantage of his position. To him, Paul gives a solemn warning: “if you continue his kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom 11:22). In brief, what is irrevocable is God’s gifts and call; what is not irrevocable is our individual participation in the gifts and call, whether we are Jew or Gentile.

Hence, Cardinal Ratzinger’s point in “The Heritage of Abraham,” especially if we compare it to the very next sentence of his paragraph (namely, “In the same way, let us pray that he may grant also to the children of Israel a deeper knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth”), should not be understood to teach that the Jewish race still has legal possession of the items listed in Rom 9:4-5. The cardinal made it very clear in his book *Many Religions – One Covenant* written two years prior (1998) that “The Sinai covenant is indeed superseded.”⁶⁶ Since the Sinai covenant (which included the items in Rom 9:4-5), is superseded, it has no legal standing today. The dictionary meaning of “superseded” is that the former is abrogated and replaced by another. Consequently, the cardinal was merely seeking to bring us into dialogue with the Jews about Jesus Christ by having us recall that the Jews are the very people who once had in their

⁶⁵ Jacob Michael: “The Irrevocable Calling and Gifts: A Reading of Rom 11:29,” private paper, 2006.

⁶⁶ Page 70.

possession a very intimate covenantal relationship with God. These are not Buddhists or African Hottentots who never knew God, but a people very familiar with the God of Abraham that we also know. As such, the cardinal sought to reinforce that the Jews are still looked upon with love and concern, for God still wishes to give them the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls by having the Church “dialogue” with them. That is what Vatican II’s “dialogue” was meant to do – bring the Gospel to the Jews and Muslims in an inoffensive manner so they can have all they need to convert their souls to Jesus Christ. It is not, as some suggest, to resurrect Old Covenant worship and laws so as to give today’s Jews an exclusive relationship and salvific pathway to God. The only pathway to God is the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. If the Jew deliberately and knowingly rejects Jesus Christ as God, then he cannot be saved.

Roy Schoeman’s Three Old Covenants

Some of the more prominent voices promoting the idea that the Church has dispensed with the doctrine of supersessionism come from popular Jewish converts. For example, Roy Schoeman, in his book *Salvation is from the Jews*,⁶⁷ claims the following:

We have seen how, at the very outset of Christianity, many held the mistaken belief that one must be a member of the Old Covenant to be eligible for participation in the New. This error was quickly corrected, but was soon followed by another known as ‘supersessionism’ – that the Old Covenant had been entirely replaced (or superseded, hence, ‘supersessionism’), made null and void, by the New. This view dominated Christian theology for much of the past two thousand years. It has only recently been definitively rejected by the Church.⁶⁸

Identical to others who made the same mistake, Schoeman’s main evidence for the so-called “definitive rejection” of supersessionism comes from a footnote he supplies containing a reference to John Paul II’s 1980 Mainz speech – a speech we have shown earlier does not support the position. In addition, similar to Rabbi Rosen, the ADL, and the USCCB, Schoeman seeks support by a reference to *Nostra Aetate*, yet without giving any specific verbiage from the document that proves his point.

But with Schoeman there is a different twist. On the one hand, he denies supersessionism, but on the other hand he denies Dual Covenant theology as “a new and perhaps even more pernicious error [that] has emerged – that the Old and New Covenants are two ‘separate but equal’ parallel paths to salvation, the one intended for the Jews, the other for Gentiles.” The reason for this dichotomy is that Schoeman has an ulterior motive for pointing out the error of dual covenants, for in the following paragraph he introduces an alternate view that, by his own admission, was never taught previously in Catholic theology. He writes: “This book proposes a third alternative – that as the Old Covenant was brought to fruition by the New at the first coming, so will the New Covenant be brought to fruition by the Old, by the return of the Jews at the Second Coming.”⁶⁹ Irrespective of Schoeman’s wish to see the Jews convert to Christianity (which we all wish for), the first rule of hermeneutics is that we cannot get there by manipulating biblical

⁶⁷ Ignatius Press, 2003.

⁶⁸ Page 352.

⁶⁹ Page 353.

language to our own liking or side-stepping the tradition of the Church. This confusion occurs when Schoeman, as we will see below, switches to a different definition of the “Old Covenant” in midstream, which is why we opened this essay requesting, in reminiscence of Voltaire, that the participants first define their terms.

At an earlier point in his book, Schoeman gave us a rather clear definition of the “Old Covenant.” He writes:

...according to Christianity the efficacy of such sacrifices should already have ended at the time of the crucifixion...For it was then that the Old Covenant, with its animal sacrifices for the atonement for sins, was replaced by the New Covenant...As the letter of Hebrews puts it: Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service...⁷⁰

Hence, Schoeman leads us to understand that the “Old Covenant” refers specifically to the Mosaic covenant (since it was the only covenant with animal sacrifices), and thus, at least in this instance, Schoeman agrees with the consensus of Catholic teaching that the Mosaic covenant was replaced by the New Covenant.

So why, on page 352, does Schoeman reverse himself and say, as we noted above: “This error...was soon followed by another known as ‘supersessionism’ – that the Old Covenant had been entirely replaced (or superseded, hence, ‘supersessionism’), made null and void, by the New”? The former page (p. 129) says the New replaced the Old, the latter page (p. 352) says the New did not replace the Old. The answer probably lies in Schoeman’s use of the word “entirely” on p. 352 (although he never explicitly says so). As I can surmise, similar to what we saw with Shea, Schoeman wants some sort of ‘halfway’ Old Covenant for the Jews. Whatever he envisions the Old Covenant to be, he allows a good portion of it to be “replaced by the New Covenant” (p. 129) but not “entirely replaced” (p. 352).

Schoeman can do all this, at least in his own mind, because on page 352 he has changed the definition of the “Old Covenant,” but without telling his reader. On page 129, Schoeman clearly used “Old Covenant” to refer to the Mosaic Law. On page 352 it no longer refers to the Mosaic Law, but Schoeman doesn’t tell the reader what other covenant he has in mind, yet still calls it the “Old Covenant.” Since the Old Covenant has apparently taken on a new identity, Schoeman feels justified in reversing his earlier view (p. 129) so that he can now say that Old Covenant has *not* been replaced by the New, at least not “entirely.”

If this isn’t already confusing, Schoeman introduces yet another change in definition on page 353. This time the Old Covenant is linked with Old Testament prophecy – prophecy that Schoeman believes foretells of a “return of the Jews at the Second Coming.” For Schoeman, then, the Old Covenant can be big or small or somewhere between the two extremes, depending on his exegetical needs at the moment. Needless to say, it is one of the more convoluted views being circulated today.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Page 129.

⁷¹ On page 352, Schoeman corners himself to the point that he leaves no options to identify the Old Covenant. Old Testament prophecy cannot be in view, since at no time did “Christian history...for the last two thousand years” ever say that Old Testament prophecy was superseded by the New Covenant for Schoeman to say it was an

Rabbi Cove and Fr. Massey: Desensitizing Young Catholics

In regards to Dual Covenant theology, there are other aspects to the *Jews and Christians* documentary that are quite alarming. For example, Rabbi Howard Cove, who is on the faculty of Conwell-Egan Catholic high school, tells an inquiring Catholic school girl in the documentary: “Jewish people don’t identify God as Jesus, or the Son of God as Jesus.” Cove apparently sensed the seriousness of this statement and immediately offered this disclaimer: “One of the things you should know is that even though I may say things that aren’t consistent with what you believe, I’m not trying to challenge your faith.” The message to this little girl is the same as it has always been from the Jews – they are simply not going to believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Obviously, things have not changed much in two thousand years since, as St. Paul warned in 1 Cor 1:23 and John Paul II reiterated in *Veritatis Splendor* (3, 85): “We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the pagans.” Without Cove using the precise words, he essentially told the girl that Jesus was a fraud, a charlatan the likes of which we have never before seen in history. At this point, Rabbi Cove probably could have convinced the girl that the following words of Pope Eugene IV were those of a racial bigot: “It firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart ‘into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels,’ unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock...”⁷²

To the question: “Can you tell me what a priest and rabbi have in common?” Rabbi Cove answers: “We believe in the best of human nature; we believe in the ability of human beings to change...to evolve, to come to new understandings...of how we relate to other people and to God.” Note the duplicity. In his prior statement to the girl, Cove claimed he was *not* going to “challenge” her beliefs, but in the subsequent statement he reveals that he expects her to “evolve into a new understanding” of how she practices her faith, implying that she must accept him even though he denies the divinity of Christ, the cardinal doctrine of Catholicism. The accompanying priest in the room, Fr. Guy Massey (the only priest to graduate from the Jewish Theological Seminary), took his cue from Rabbi Cove and said to the girl: “To be able to see you and to say ‘God has great things in store for you’...and we are kind of calling you to that awareness.” In other words, the “great things” to which this Catholic girl can look forward is being indoctrinated with the “new awareness” that it is perfectly acceptable to believe that Jesus is not who he claimed to be; that it is now kosher to regard him as well-meaning but deluded fabricator; and that God’s rejection of Israel was based merely on a divine overreaction to Jewish disbelief.

“error.” Similarly, it cannot refer to the Abrahamic covenant, since at no time did “Christian history” say that the Abrahamic covenant was superseded by the New Covenant. But it cannot refer to the Mosaic covenant either, since Schoeman already told us on page 129, and assented to its truth, that the covenant of “animal sacrifices” [the Mosaic covenant] was “replaced” by the New Covenant. So it remains a complete mystery what “Old Covenant” Schoeman is referring to on page 352. For the record, others, such as Ariel Ben Ami of *Catholics for Israel* (www.israelcatholic.com), believe that the Jews still have an irrevocable covenant with God that was not abolished by the New Covenant, which covenant authorizes the Jews to possess the land of Palestine by divine right. Schoeman also believes that land acquisition in Palestine is part and parcel with the fulfillment of the Old Covenant (pages 306-310), as do most Dispensational Protestants and Jewish Zionists.

⁷² Denzinger, 714.

It wasn't surprising, then, to see Fr. Massey say: "I recognize this [Judaism] as a way to God. That is why I will join them in the synagogue in the morning...I hope we will see the two groups as partners in faith." In answer to a question from a Jewish girl: "Ok, so do you believe in one God or three?" Massey responds: "One God, three distinct experiences of that one God." Note the word "experiences" rather than "Persons." Long ago the Catholic Church had condemned the "experience" answer, otherwise known as Modalism or Sabellianism, in the first centuries of the Church. Apparently, Massey is so "challenged" by Rabbi Cove's influence on the discussion that he can't even use the words for the Trinity that the Church has approved and which have been on the tip of the tongue of every faithful Catholic for two millennia. If a priest can't do it, what can we expect of high school students under peer pressure? We wonder how well the following statement from Pope Damasus would go over in the classroom if some bright Catholic boy or girl defended their Catholic faith and said: "If anyone thinks well of the Father and the Son, but does not rightly esteem the Holy Spirit, he is a heretic, because all heretics who think erroneously about the Son of God and the Spirit are found in the perfidy of the Jews and the pagans."⁷³

The Double Standard: Jews Excused, Muslims Condemned

Ironically, where Jews get a free pass to deny the divinity of Christ, Muslims are not so fortunate from the pen of Catholic writers. For example, in an *Op Ed* column titled, "Apostate University" appearing in *Catholic World Report* for October 2007, Mark Shea complains about the Jesuits who have "apostasized" from the Catholic faith due to their fraternizing with Muslims who "deny the deity of Christ." The ironic thing is, everything Shea says about the Muslims can be applied just as well to the Jews. The effect is quite noticeable when we cross out all of Shea's uses of the words "Muslim" and "Islam" and replace them with the words "Jew" and "Judaism." Shea begins:

"Meet the Reverend Ann Holmes Redding. Every Friday she prays with her ~~Muslim~~ Jewish group at the ~~All-Islam~~ All-Jewish Center in Seattle. Every Sunday morning, she dons the robes of Episcopal priest and goes to church at St. Clement of Rome Episcopal Church. Turns out she thinks she is both Christian and ~~Muslim~~ Jewish. ~~Muslims~~ Jews are puzzled by this. 'I don't know how that works,' said Hisham Farajallah, president of the ~~Islamic~~ Jewish Center of Washington. The problem is that confounding bit about Jesus being God which ~~Islam~~ Judaism tends to reject. 'The theological beliefs are irreconcilable,' said Mahmoud Ayoub, professor of ~~Islamic~~ Jewish studies and comparative religion at Temple University in Philadelphia. ~~Islam~~ Judaism holds that God is one, unique, indivisible. 'For ~~Muslims~~ Jews to say Jesus is God would be blasphemy,' he said." Later in the piece Mr. Shea writes: "So they send their kids off to SU in the fond illusion that when they take a course on the New Testament, they will be learning it from somebody who can, at some elemental level, think clearly enough to know that Christianity and ~~Islam~~ Judaism are flatly contradictory concerning what the New Testament says about Jesus Christ."

Unfortunately, we have yet to see Shea write so boldly and clearly about the Jews' disbelief in Christ as God. Rather, in vogue today among Shea's political and ideological alliances is the consistent demonization of Muslims and the continual portrayal of Jews as innocent victims who deserve a divine pass. Essentially, it is a Philo-Judaic/Anti-Muslim gospel. We can imagine what an outcry Shea and his

⁷³ Denzinger, 81.

colleagues would mount if, as Peter W. Miller does when he makes a parody of Cardinal Keeler's *Reflections on Covenant and Missions* document with the Jews, someone were to quip:

What if Cardinal Egan (to select a bishop at random) was appointed as head of the USCCB Committee on Catholic-Muslim Dialogue and released a statement which made the claim that 'due to increased respect toward the Muslim people fostered by Vatican II and post-9/11 dialogue, the Catholic Church now considers Mohammed a divine prophet and efforts to convert the Muslims theologically unacceptable'? Then on the date of its release, Egan was quoted as saying this document represented a 'significant step forward' which showed 'an essential compatibility' between Catholicism and Islam. Would American Catholics await word on just how 'official' these statements are before deciding the level of concern and response justified? Would 'Recent Statements Not Official' still be a more prudent headline than 'High-Ranking Cardinal Spreads Heresy and Apostasy'?⁷⁴

As Orwell once said, it is now time to restate the obvious. Our job as Catholic evangelists is not to elevate the Jews and denigrate the Muslims. Our job is to dialogue politely with both of them, pointing out the spiritual blindness and theological errors in each group and directing them exclusively to the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, the same it has been for the last two millennia. As even John Paul II stated in *Tertio Millennio*, 53: "In this dialogue, the Jews and Muslims ought to have a preeminent place...avoiding the risk of syncretism and of a facile and deceptive irenicism." Or as he says in *Redemptor Hominis*, 11: "The Council gave particular attention to the Jewish religion, recalling the great spiritual heritage common to Christians and Jews. It also expressed its esteem for the believers of Islam, whose faith also looks to Abraham."

"The Chosen People": The Church or the Jews?

Evangelical Protestants are teaching the same things. Most of them are Dispensationalists who believe Israel is divinely ordained to take over not only Palestine but a greater part of the Middle East, while the Muslims and Arabs, who are not as fortunate on the divine scale of things, are to be pushed aside, violently if need be. The familiar names such as Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Paul Crouch, Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, Jack van Impe, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Richard Land, Ralph Reed, Charles Stanley, Gary Bauer, Franklin Graham and John Hagee are just some of the many personalities appearing on our Protestant-dominated airwaves preaching the Israel-loved/Muslim-hated gospel. Just one example will suffice to make one aware of what is occurring across our land on a daily basis: John Hagee, pastor of a 19,000-member Protestant church in San Antonio, wears a Jewish prayer shawl when he preaches. So strong is his allegiance to the Jews that he unabashedly proclaims:

In Christian theology, the first thing that happens when Christ returns to Earth is the judgment of nations. It will have one criterion: How did you treat the Jewish people? Anyone who understands that will want to be on the right side of that question. Those who are anti-Semitic will go to eternal damnation.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ "From Ratisbonne to Reflections," *Seattle Catholic*, Sept. 18, 2002.

On a recent broadcast he asked the television audience in a demeaning manner: “Is your Church teaching Replacement Theology?” “Does your Church teach that it is the New Israel?” and then offers books and lectures to correct your view.⁷⁶ Show after show Hagee proclaims how divinely favored are the Jews and how evil are the Muslims. He also appears on popular talk shows, one of the most recent in early October 2007 with Donny Deutsch, the commentator who recently condemned as “anti-semitic” Ann Coulter’s statement that Jews should become Christians (whereas Hagee appears indifferent to whether Jews should become Christians). Not surprisingly, Hagee was awarded the “Humanitarian of the Year” award by the San Antonio *B’nai B’rith* Council, the first time the award was ever given to a gentile. He was presented the ZOA Israel Award by U.N. Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick, and the ZOA Service Award by Gov. Mark White, and numerous other honors and accolades from national Jewish Organizations for his unwavering support of Israel. His message goes to 160 television stations, 50 radio stations, and to 99 million homes each week. It is reported that he has monthly, sometimes weekly, talks with George Bush. He has been to Israel 22 times and has spoken with every prime minister of Israel since Menachem Begin. Some of his ten books have made the *New York Times* best-seller list. So fanatical is he that in his new book, *In Defense of Israel*, Hagee makes the astounding claim that the Jews cannot be blamed for rejecting the Messiah because Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah. He insists that Jesus’ demise was purely a Roman plot. So infatuated is Hagee that he believes the only reason Cornelius received the Gospel from St. Peter in Acts 10 is because it was his reward for giving alms to Jewish people.⁷⁷

Hagee’s heresies speak for themselves. The fact is, the Catholic Church has always taught that the Church is the “New Israel” and the new “Chosen People” of God. The Catholic Church officially holds to Replacement Theology and has rejected Dual Covenant theology. In fact, one of the primary sources telling us that the Church, not the Jews, is “The People of God” is *Nostra Aetate*:

⁷⁵ *In Defense of Israel*, p. 118 and <http://www.religionnewsblog.com/15024/end-times-religious-groups-want-apocalypse-soon>, “End Times Religious Group Wants Apocalypse Soon,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 2006, Louis Sahagun, Times Staff Writer. Hagee, and all other Protestant Dispensationalists, base their view on the fact that God told Abraham in Gn 12:3: “I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, revised from its 1909 version, stated in the 1967 version concerning Gn 12:3: “There was a promise of blessing upon those individuals and nations who bless Abram’s descendants, and a curse laid upon those who persecute the Jews....It has invariably fared ill with the people who have persecuted the Jew – well with those who protected him. For a nation to commit the sin of anti-Semitism brings inevitable judgment” (Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 19-20). What Hagee, Scofield, and the rest of Dispensational Evangelicalism ignore, however, is that Gn 12:3 does not mention anything about “the Jews,” since the promise in Gn 12:3 was made to Abram when he was a Gentile, not a Jew, so the promise was not applicable to Jews, then or now (cf. Gal 3:6-8; Rom 4:9-10). All we know for sure is that it was applicable to Abram as long as he lived, and there were many indications in his life that God kept his promise (Gn 12:10-20; 14:12-16; 14:18-20; 18:22-33; 20:1-18; 21:22-32).

⁷⁶ Aired October 6, 2007.

⁷⁷ Ac 10:2: <http://www.jhm.org/support-israel.asp>.

- (1) It is true that the Church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or cursed... (*Nostra Aetate*, 4).
- (2) “All these things, however, were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant, which was to be ratified in Christ, and of that fuller revelation which was to be given through the Word of God Himself made flesh. “Behold the days shall come saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the house of Judah...I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...For all of them shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, saith the Lord. Christ instituted this new covenant, the new testament, that is to say, in His Blood, calling together a people made up of Jew and Gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God” (*Lumen Gentium* 2, 9);
- (3) “Thus the Apostles were the first budding-forth of the New Israel, and at the same time the beginning of the sacred hierarchy” (*Ad Gentes*, 1, 5).
- (4) “Thus the apostles were the seed of the new Israel and at the same time the origin of a sacred hierarchy” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 551).
- (5) “Israel according to the flesh, which wandered as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God (cf. Neh 13:1; Num 20:4; Deut. 23:1ff.). Likewise the new Israel...is also called the Church of Christ (cf. Mt 16:18)” (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, Part 2, 25).
- (6) “For in every consecrated person the Israel of the new and eternal covenant is chosen. The whole messianic people, the entire Church, is chosen in every person whom the Lord selects from the midst of this people; in every person who is consecrated for everyone to God as His exclusive possession” (John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum*, III, 8).
- (7) “From the moment of Christ’s coming, the expectation of the People of God has to be directed to the eschatological Kingdom which is coming and to which he must lead ‘the new Israel’” (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, VI, 20).
- (8) “According to the Letter to the Ephesians, the bride is the Church, just as for the Prophets the bride was Israel. She is therefore a collective subject and not an individual person. This collective subject is the People of God, a community made up of many persons, both women and men. ‘Christ has loved the Church’ precisely as a community, as the People of God” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, VII, 23).
- (9) “...this restructuring of the social order finds its basis and its justification in Jesus’ claim that he, with his community of disciples, forms the origin and center of the new Israel” (Pope Benedict, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 2007, p. 114).
- (10) “The People of God of the New Covenant is the Church of Christ” (John Paul II, *Libertatis Conscientia* V, 58).

We can go a step further: at no time in its history has the Catholic Church officially designated the Jews who lived in the last two millennia after the death of Christ as the “Chosen People,” “People of

God,” or any similar term. All references in official Catholic teaching to the Jews as being the Chosen People refer only to Jews who lived in the Old Testament, prior to the death of Christ.

The “New Perspective” on Paul: Sociology Instead of Soteriology

Other groups that are pushing for the rejection of supersessionism are the theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, who advocate what has been dubbed, “The New Perspective on Paul.” Not surprisingly, two of its more prominent advocates, Krister Stendahl, professor emeritus of Harvard Divinity School and author of *The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West* (1970), (now reprinted under the title: *Paul Among the Jews and Gentiles*), and James Dunn, co-author with Alan Suggate of *The Justice of God: A Fresh Look at the Old Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (1993), have cameo appearances in the aforementioned documentary *Jews and Christians: A Journey of Faith* as supporters of Dual Covenant theology. In their books, Stendahl and Dunn reject the traditional interpretation which views St. Paul’s writings as “a contest between grace versus works.” Dunn, for example, holds that the emphasis on ‘grace versus works’ is merely a product of the polemics circulating during the Reformation period between Luther and the Catholic Church. The New Perspective asserts that the Jew of the first century believed he was already within the grace of God, and thus a struggle between grace and works could not be Paul’s concern. Hence, the central issue concerning the Justification controversy, they claim, is sociological rather than soteriological; a matter of ‘Jew versus Gentile,’ not ‘grace versus works.’ The main challenge for the Jew, Dunn claims, is not one of relinquishing his dependence on works and resigning himself to God’s grace, but of accepting Gentiles as part of the covenant community, and letting them share in the graces of God that the Jew already has. In short, Dunn’s thesis is that the Jew was not so much proud of his works as he was proud of his grace! Of course, Dunn has a huge problem overcoming clear verses such as Rom 9:31-32 (“but that Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works”) but these are typically ignored.

Following Stendahl, other Protestants such as Lloyd Gaston (“Paul and the Torah,” in *Antisemitism and the Foundation of Christianity*, 1987) and Stanley Stowers (*A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews and Gentiles*, 1994) have taken the theory so far as to say that Jews and Gentiles have “separate but related ways” to salvation, with Israel continuing to live by the law as the means to procuring its salvation. Dunn also seeks to apply his interpretation to our current day, teaching that mankind’s real challenge is that he must learn to accept all peoples regardless of race, religion or ethnic background, since we are all God’s children.

All in all, the “New Perspective” on Paul is just what it says, a “new” perspective whose novelty qualifies it as a suspect interpretation of Holy Writ. When we discover that the New Perspective originates predominately from liberal theologians who advocate some type of dual covenant theology wherein the Jews are given a unique spiritual status and salvific redemption based on the idea that there is an exclusive and eternal covenant between them and God, we understand why the Catholic Church never embraced it. Astute Protestants don’t embrace it either. For example, Mark Seifrid writes:

Thus the false dichotomy which Dunn draws between universalism (Paul) and particularism (Judaism) obscures the issues at stake...It is true that Paul does not regard his opponents as seeking to secure salvation solely by their own efforts, but that does not mean that ‘merit theology’ is thereby excluded...If Paul was fundamentally concerned with nationalistic

sentiment, why does he begin by addressing the human being, not the Jew? Why does he begin with personal soteriological implications of passing moral judgments on others [Rom. 2:1-11]? Even when Paul speaks rhetorically to the Jew, he does not deal with simple ethnic pride, but with the assumption that the knowledge of God's will mediated by the Law brings moral superiority [Rom. 2:17-24]...Circumcision was indeed a 'national boundary marker,' but Paul here assumes that it also was a claim to religious preeminence mediated by the Law, and consequently constituted an assurance of salvation. It is this claim which he attacks in Rom 2 (*Justification by Faith*, 1992).

Ultimately, Dunn's view empties the epistles of their salvific content and turns them into social gospels. But this is what liberal theology has always done – water down Christian doctrine to the lowest common denominator so that everyone can accept everyone else's religious beliefs. Consequently, it is not at all surprising to hear Dunn say in the documentary: "The one thing I would like to change is that both Jews and Christians see each other, first of all, most of all, and continually, as individual persons made in the image of God." The focal point is on "God" but Jesus Christ is taken out of the equation. But this is precisely why Scripture refers to Christ as the "stumbling stone" (Rom 9:32). Most reasonable people can accept the existence of "God," but few can accept that Jesus Christ is God, especially the Jews. Not surprisingly, most liberals and the seminaries from which they emanate (*e.g.*, Stendahl's Harvard Divinity School; Boys' and Brown's Union Theological Seminary, *et al.*) have ridiculed the fundamental beliefs of Christianity relentlessly. They find it easy to accept Jewish theology because, to one degree or another, they have long since rejected the divinity of Christ, the inerrancy of Scripture, original sin and the final judgment. Their chief concern is about getting along in this life so that everyone's fortunes can be preserved without resorting to bloodshed. "Salvation" is achieved precisely when you become enlightened to the fact that it's not worth fighting over Christian doctrine. Gospels of this nature are often tempting for battle-weary Christians who may be tired of the "fight" as Paul calls it in 2 Timothy 4:7. But the fact is, we consigned ourselves to the "fight" when we sinned in the Garden of Eden, and the fight will not stop until Christ returns on the Last Day, especially the battles that are waging inside the very halls of the Church (*cf.* 2Cor 11:1-15; 1Pet 4:17-18). Until that time, we are not to be searching for utopia on earth and we are not to be ruled by the "let's just get along" mentality at the expense of Christian doctrine, the same doctrine for which our Fathers were martyred in order to provide us an unbroken link to the knowledge of our salvation.

Liberals also try to break down our resolve by claiming that no one knows all the answers to life and therefore we must accept everyone's religion regardless of the differences we have (*e.g.*, accept Judaism even though it regards Jesus Christ as a deluded fraud). In the *Jews and Christians* documentary, Jewish scholar, David Gordis, President of Hebrew College of Massachusetts, states:

Can we develop that sense of modesty...that none of us has absolute answers, none of us has access to absolute truth. We are all struggling to have some understanding of the nature of human experience. We can learn from each other...we can engage in this process of *taqan olam*, repairing the world together whether we are Christian, or Jews, or Muslims.

This is the typical Hegelian dialectic that has pervaded so much of Enlightenment thought in the modern age. The truth is, we do, indeed, have absolute answers, and they come in the form of: (a) divine revelation in Scripture and Apostolic teaching; (b) the preservation of that revelation in Tradition; and (c)

the decision of how to properly interpret that revelation from the Catholic magisterium. But the world seeks to convince us that we are ignorant and still groping for answers, and they do this because they are desperately seeking for a porthole to enter our souls to advance their own agenda and ultimately destroy us. As God told the Jews of the Old Testament when they were on the verge of ruin: “My people are destroyed by lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6), and so it is the same today. Let us hope that Catholics will remain faithful to the absolute knowledge God has given them; to maintain the teachings of the tradition; to distinguish between the bellows of heretics and the official teachings of the Church; and to trust in Scripture as the inerrant divine word.

Robert A Sungenis, Ph.D.

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Appendix

In reading my article, one of the patrons of our apostolate came across two more quotes from John Paul II that reinforce the teachings I have presented. In these quotes, John Paul II shows the distinction between the legal side of the Old Covenant that has been revoked, and the non-legal or spiritual side that has not been revoked but continues in the New Covenant. This is the most important distinction for understanding this issue. Here are the quotes. The most significant statements are underlined:

Footnote 52 from *Dives in Misericordia*.

In describing mercy, the books of the Old Testament use two expressions in particular, each having a different semantic nuance. First there is the term *hesed*, which indicates a profound attitude of goodness. When this is established between two individuals, they do not just wish each other well; they are also faithful to each other by virtue of an interior commitment, and therefore also by virtue of a faithfulness to themselves. Since *hesed* also means grace or love, this occurs precisely on the basis of this fidelity. The fact that the commitment in question has not only a moral character but almost a juridical one makes no difference. When in the Old Testament the word *hesed* is used of the Lord, this always occurs in connection with the covenant that God established with Israel. This covenant was, on God’s part, a gift and a grace for Israel. Nevertheless, since, in harmony with the covenant entered into, God had made a commitment to respect it, *hesed* also acquired in a certain sense a legal content. The juridical commitment on God’s part ceased to oblige whenever Israel broke the covenant and did not respect its conditions. But precisely at this point, *hesed*, in ceasing to be a juridical obligation, revealed its deeper aspect: it showed itself as what it was at the beginning, that is, as love that gives, love more powerful than betrayal, grace stronger than sin.

This fidelity *vis-a-vis* the unfaithful “daughter of my people” (cf. Lam. 4:3, 6) is, in brief, on God’s part, fidelity to himself. This becomes obvious in the frequent recurrence together of the two terms *hesed we’emet* (grace and fidelity), which could be considered a case of hendiadys (cf. e.g., Ex. 34:6; 2 Sm. 2:6; 15:20; Ps. 25(24):10; [40](39):11-12; [85] (84):11; [138](137):2;

Mi.7:20). “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name” (Ez. 36:22). Therefore Israel, although burdened with guilt for having broken the covenant, cannot lay claim to God’s *hesed* on the basis of (legal) justice; yet it can and must go on hoping and trusting to obtain it, since the God of the covenant is really “responsible for his love.” The fruits of this love are forgiveness and restoration to grace, the reestablishment of the interior covenant.

The second word which in the terminology of the Old Testament serves to define mercy is *rahamim*. This has a different nuance from that of *hesed*. While *hesed* highlights the marks of fidelity to self and of “responsibility for one’s own love” (which are in a certain sense masculine characteristics), *rahamim*, in its very root, denotes the love of a mother (*rehem*, mother’s womb). From the deep and original bond – indeed the unity – that links a mother to her child there springs a particular relationship to the child, a particular love. Of this love one can say that it is completely gratuitous, not merited, and that in this aspect it constitutes an interior necessity: an exigency of the heart. It is, as it were, a “feminine” variation of the masculine fidelity to self expressed by *hesed*. Against this psychological background, *rahamim* generates a whole range of feelings, including goodness and tenderness, patience and understanding, that is, readiness to forgive.

The Old Testament attributes to the Lord precisely these characteristics, when it uses the term *rahamim* in speaking of him. We read in Isaiah: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Is. 49:15). This love, faithful and invincible thanks to the mysterious power of motherhood, is expressed in the Old Testament texts in various ways: as salvation from dangers, especially from enemies; also as forgiveness of sins--of individuals and also of the whole of Israel; and finally in readiness to fulfill the (eschatological) promise and hope, in spite of human infidelity, as we read in Hosea: “I will heal their faithlessness, I will love them freely” (Hos. 14:5).

In the terminology of the Old Testament we also find other expressions, referring in different ways to the same basic content. But the two terms mentioned above deserve special attention. They clearly show their original anthropomorphic aspect: In describing God’s mercy, the biblical authors use terms that correspond to the consciousness and experience of their contemporaries. The Greek terminology in the Septuagint translation does not show as great a wealth as the Hebrew: Therefore it does not offer all the semantic nuances proper to the original text. At any rate the New Testament builds upon the wealth and depth that already marked the Old.

In this way, we have inherited from the Old Testament – as it were in a special synthesis – not only the wealth of expressions used by those books in order to define God’s mercy, but also a specific and obviously anthropomorphic “psychology” of God: the image of his anxious love, which in contact with evil, and in particular with the sin of the individual and of the people, is manifested as mercy. This image is made up not only of the rather general content of the verb *hanan* but also of the content of *hesed* and *rahamim*. The term *hanan* expresses a wider

concept: It means in fact the manifestation of grace, which involves, so to speak, a constant predisposition to be generous, benevolent and merciful.

In addition to these basic semantic elements, the Old Testament concept of mercy is also made up of what is included in the very *hamal*, which literally means to spare (a defeated enemy) but also to show mercy and compassion, and in consequence forgiveness and remission of guilt. There is also the term *hus*, which expresses pity and compassion, but especially in the affective sense. These terms appear more rarely in the biblical texts to denote mercy. In addition, one must note the word *emet*, already mentioned: It means primarily solidity, security (in the Greek of the Septuagint: truth) and then fidelity, and in this way it seems to link up with the semantic content proper to the term *hesed*.

Footnote 2 from *Redemptoris Mater*:

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