

## A Successful Dialogue on the Old Covenant

### Participants: Art Sippo and Robert Sungenis

After replying to the inquiry of a BTF patron regarding Dr. Art Sippo's review in New Oxford Review of Paula Fredrickson's book on Augustine and the Jews, I sent a copy of my reply to Art, which can be found on our website at <http://bellarmineforum.xanga.com/714912478/question-190---review-in-nor-saying-old-covenant-is-not-revoked/>

This prompted Art to reply to me, after which we struck up a friendly but forthright dialogue about the meaning and revocation of the Mosaic covenant. The dialogue ended in a great success, as Art and I both agreed on the conclusion, that is, the Mosaic covenant, as a legal system, has been revoked, but many of its moral and religious principles live on in the New Covenant.

\*\*\*\*\*

In a message dated 10/20/2009 1:07:46 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, ArtSippo writes:

Hi bob!

Thanks for the tip. I should clarify what I meant by the Old Covenant not being revoked but superceded. In the Early Church the first Christian Disciples -- including the Twelve Apostles and St.Paul -- continued to be practicing Jews. As such, they never saw the coming of Jesus to be the terminus of the OT covenant but rather its fulfillment. As such the OT covenant was never revoked, but with the coming of Jesus the OT reached its goal not its terminus. We still continue to study the OT today to discern moral principles and to help explicate Christian beliefs and practices. The observance of the OT laws is not mandatory now for anyone though following some of its precepts can be permitted as a devotional practice albeit only with a distinctly Christian understanding. For example, the Passover Seder was the foundational ritual out of which the Mass developed and it is interesting to experience what it has meant to Jews and how it was transformed in Christ as the Church's legacy.

Let's face it. Biblical Judaism ended in 70 AD after the temple was destroyed exactly 40 years after Jesus died on the Cross. There is an interesting section in Tractate Yoma of the Bavli that speaks about this. What we have today is not the same Jewish religion that Jesus practiced. What we have now are people trying to create an Homage to the REAL THING that ended so long ago. Yet God NEVER officially revoked the OT and its rules. It has become our legacy and we now must appropriate the OT legacy as Catholics as our own and not try to Judaize the Church but rather BAPTIZE the OT.

Please remember that finding something positive in the Jewish practices is not the same thing as agreeing with the Jewish understanding. We have our own understanding of the truth which can NEVER agree with contemporary Judaism. But we can understand what Jews do sincerely in practicing their religion and JP11 and BXVI have tried to do this. But they NEVER said that we would not accept Jewish converts because, frankly, no one can be saved under heaven apart from Jesus Christ. Period.

I think St. Augustine was far too negative about the Jews as were many of the Fathers. That was a different social milieu. But I think he made a good start and the direction towards which he was moving would further develop in another time and place.

Today we all have to learn to get along. As followers of Christ we need to take the initiative to love our neighbor in a way that may not be possible for them to even comprehend. And if we are betrayed in our attempts to take a positive view of others, it is the others who will be disgraced not us.

Art

\*\*\*\*\*

October 20, 2009, 5:39pm

RS: Art, let's see if we can work this out. I think we are real close. Bear with me here.

First, I'm not sure what you mean by "the first Christian Disciples...continued to be practicing Jews," because you don't give any examples or scripture passages. Prior to that evidence, yes, there were a few instances in the NT that the first Christians observed some Jewish ritual, but these were very rare and most, if not all of it, was by concession, not because they were teaching Christians that the Mosaic practices would be the norm. (Knowing you as I do, I'm almost certain that you don't mean that the early Christians intended on making a common practice of engaging in Jewish rituals).

AS: As such, they never saw the coming of Jesus to be the terminus of the OT covenant but rather its fulfillment. As such the OT covenant was never revoked, but with the coming of Jesus the OT reached its goal not its terminus. We still continue to study the OT today to discern moral principles and to help explicate Christian beliefs and practices.

RS: Yes, praise God! But you need to be real clear on this when you use the term "revoked." When the Church (and Scripture and the Fathers and medievals) have used the term "revoked" they are referring to the LEGAL termination of the Mosaic covenant, not the practical use of its moral or worship principles. That is a crucial difference. Unless we specify otherwise, "revoked" has been commonly used in the LEGAL sense. So when someone today says "The Old Covenant is not revoked," the first thought I have is that he is trying to establish legal validity to the Mosaic covenant for the Jews, and this is most often the case, as it was recently in the United State Catholic Catechism for Adults on page 131. If so it is heretical, and this was the main reason it was excised from the catechism.

AS: The observance of the OT laws is not mandatory now for anyone though following some of its precepts can be permitted as a devotional practice albeit only with a distinctly Christian understanding. For example, the Passover Seder was the foundational ritual out of which the Mass developed and it is interesting to experience what it has meant to Jews and how it was transformed in Christ as the Church's legacy.

RS: Whether or not the Passover Seder was the "foundational ritual" for the Mass really does not determine this issue. (I personally don't see much of the seder in the Last Supper, at least as the basis for the Last Supper, but that is not important here). For, by the same token, we could say that circumcision was the "foundational ritual" for Baptism, and we can, as you suggested, "appreciate" the derivation. But it is quite another issue to practice circumcision for religious reasons. There was a good reason Florence said not to – because it would give legitimacy to circumcision as a religious practice, and thus give legal validity to the Mosaic law. When I see Catholics today who make a practice of the seder meal, I often see behind it a motivation of giving legitimacy to modern Judaism. But this is very dangerous because, as I think you agree, modern Judaism is a universe apart from the Judaism of the OT. The Judaism of the OT believed in Christ, Son of the Father. The Judaism of today repudiates Jesus Christ, and thus we cannot give any legitimacy to it today, seder or no seder.

AS: Let's face it. Biblical Judaism ended in 70 AD after the temple was destroyed exactly 40 years after Jesus died on the Cross. There is an interesting section in Tractate Yoma of the Bavli that speaks about this. What we have today is not the same Jewish religion that Jesus practiced. What we have now are people trying to create an Homage to the REAL THING that ended so long ago. Yet God NEVER officially revoked the OT and its rules. It has become our legacy and we now must appropriate the OT legacy as Catholics as our own and not try to Judaize the Church but rather BAPTIZE the OT.

RS: Again, you need to be very precise on your terminology since this whole issue is determined on what we mean by our words. I don't know precisely what you mean when you say "the OT and its rules." This is too vague and ambiguous. Are you referring to the OT in general or to the Mosaic law? If the latter, when you then say that "God never officially revoked" it, bells go off in my head because the word "officially" is

normally a LEGAL term. On the other hand, if you mean only that the OT's general teaching about morality was never revoked by God, then I have no argument. I only ask that you be clear about what you mean, and it would be much better not to use the term "revoked" when saying this important distinction.

Would you agree with this statement: "The Mosaic law was legally abrogated and replaced or superseded by the New Covenant, but the Mosaic law, as a system of morality that was based on divine law, is still of some practical use for us today."

If you can agree to this, then we are on the same page, and I only ask that you help me to disseminate this understanding to others. I find that when people discuss this issue, they invariably fail to distinguish the LEGAL from the NONLEGAL, and THAT causes all the problems.

AS: Please remember that finding something positive in the Jewish practices is not the same thing as agreeing with the Jewish understanding. We have our own understanding of the truth which can NEVER agree with contemporary Judaism. But we can understand what Jews do sincerely in practicing their religion and JP11 and BXVI have tried to do this. But they NEVER said that we would not accept Jewish converts because, frankly, no one can be saved under heaven apart from Jesus Christ. Period.

I think St. Augustine was far too negative about the Jews as were many of the Fathers. That was a different social milieu. But I think he made a good start and the direction towards which he was moving would further develop in another time and place.

Today we all have to learn to get along. As followers of Christ we need to take the initiative to love our neighbor in a way that may not be possible for them to even comprehend. And if we are betrayed in our attempts to take a positive view of others, it is the others who will be disgraced not us.

RS: If anything, we want to show love to the Jews for the sake of their souls. But as much as you want to appeal to them, we have to remember that Judaism today rejects the cardinal doctrine of Christianity – Christ's divinity. As such, we must tell them, as lovingly as possible, that their religion is false and cannot save them, instead of trying to placate them. I know this is difficult, but preaching the Gospel has never been easy, Jew or no Jew.

Let me know what you think.

Bob

\*\*\*\*\*

In a message dated 10/20/2009 10:51:45 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, ArtSippo writes:

Hi Bob;

I did not give examples of the continuity of Jewish practice in the Early Christian movement because I didn't think I needed to do so. Jesus himself said:

Mat 5:17 "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them.

5:18 For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

5:19 Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The phrase "until all is accomplished" is open to interpretation. I see it referring to the Eschaton and not to the work of Christ in 1st Century Palestine.

Then there is the fact that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem continued to keep Kashruth leading St. Peter to do so in Antioch to placate his visitors (Gal 1). St. Paul was not angry because St. Peter kept Kashruth. he was annoyed that he withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentiles and sent them the wrong message.

We are told:

Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Acts 21:17-26 When we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

On the following day Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present.

After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; they are all zealous for the law,

and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs.

What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.

Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;

take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law.

But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity."

Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself with them and went into the temple, to give notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for every one of them.

Acts 25:8 While {St. Paul} answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all."

I think that these verses make it clear that St. Paul was an observant Jew and did not act as if the Jewish law had been legally revoked.

In fact I would ask you to produce one biblical verse which says that the Jewish Law has been revoked and that Jewish Christians are expected NOT to observe it. I have never found any such text.

What I have found is this:

Gal 3:23- Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed.

So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian;

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.  
For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.  
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

It was not the Law that had changed, but Christians who have been changed.

1Cr 13:9- For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect;  
11

but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.  
When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

The covenants of Abraham was never revoked even though Moses' covenant superceded it. It remained in force as St. Paul clearly saw and taught. In like fashion the Mosaic Law and its promises have been transferred to the Church. The morality of the OT, several of the prayer forms, and our attitude towards liturgy is part of our patrimony from Judaism. So are Purgatory, the Decalogue, the oneness of God, and the witness of the OT to Christ.

The OT covenants have not been revoked. They remain in force but with the coming of Christ they have been superceded and their benefits have been transferred to us.

As to the symbolism of the Seder in the Mass, I am surprised that you have not understood what I meant. Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Third cup of the Seder when the unleavened Afikomen was eaten. This Afikomen was the 2nd of three matzohs hidden until the end of the meal which had been broken before being hidden. It was originally eaten with the last piece of the Passover Lamb and is considered to represent the Passover Lamb. (For us Christians, that is the Lamb of God.) The Third Cup was the [Birkat Hamazon](#) "the cup of blessing/redemption". It is self-explanatory. Jesus drank the Fourth cup on the cross which consummated the Seder and represented the End Times which are the times in which we live.

Understanding the Seder the celebration of the redemption of the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt also celebrates their redemption from sin. It is this imagery that Jesus carried over into the Mass.

Art

\*\*\*\*\*

October 22, 10:14am

RS: Art, I think this can be explained very easily. First, let me say that I appreciate your pointing out the eschaton. That phase of Matthew 7:17-19 is often missed by commentators.

But your particular interpretation proves too much for your case. If "until all is accomplished" had only the eschaton as its terminus, then nothing could be fulfilled before the eschaton. In other words, even though the eschaton can serve as the fulfillment of some of "the Law and the Prophets," the eschaton cannot be the fulfillment of ALL the Law and Prophets.

We both agree that Jesus came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill. But the crucial point is that the fulfillments take place in increments. Most of the Law was fulfilled at Christ's first coming, but most of the Prophets will not be totally fulfilled until Christ's Second Coming (cf. Daniel 12:2; 9:27; Zech 14; Ezk 40-48), a lot being fulfilled with his First Coming (cf. Isa 53; Daniel 9:24-26).

But this also means that since not one jot or tittle will pass away until either the Law or Prophets are fulfilled, then once either the Law or Prophets are fulfilled, then that portion of the Law or Prophets will pass away.

Hence, when Jesus fulfills the Passover (as Paul says in 1 Cor 5:7), then the OT Passover passes away, as do all the ceremonies that typified the suffering and death of Christ. Once fulfilled, there is no longer any use for them, and thus they pass away. That is the corollary point of Matthew 5:17-19 that I think you missed.

As it stands, then, Matthew 5:17-19 actually refutes the idea that the Mosaic law would still be mandated after Christ's First Coming, since Jesus specifically said that it would "pass away" once it was fulfilled. Jesus fulfilled it, so it passes away immediately; it doesn't have to wait for the eschaton.

Now, if it wasn't the case that the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets comes in increments, and you insist that it refers only the eschaton, then you must bring back every belief and practice of the Mosaic law. For example, you then have an obligation to bring back the practice of going to Jerusalem for the three major feast days. You must bring back the Cherem and tell the Jews to execute every Gentile near Jerusalem that doesn't want to be made a slave of the Jews. You should bring back public stoning for adultery, and deny full citizenship to the castrated. You should demand circumcision for every male at 8 days old, and if people miss the day, then you should call for their execution. You should set up temple worship, complete with daily and annual sacrifices in Jerusalem, and find some way of restoring the priesthood. In fact, you must bring back every Mosaic law without exception, for if there is one law you ignore, you will be guilty of the whole law and condemned (Gal 3:10-11). And if the Jews don't want to do any of these things, then they will have to be executed as well (which would include most of the world's Jewish population, since most of them don't follow these laws).

You cannot go partway. Either you take the whole law or you take none of it. You cannot pick and choose which laws you are going to keep legally valid, since the Mosaic law forbade such dissection of its rituals and regimens.

You have the additional problem that no Father, medieval, saint, doctor, pope, council or catechism has seen Matthew 5:17-19 as referring only to the eschaton. As you saw in my last email, it can easily be shown from Catholic history that the Fathers unanimously held to the abrogation of the Mosaic law at Christ's first coming, not the eschaton. The Councils did the same.

Scripture will also give you a tough road to haul, Art. First, if Hebrews 7:18; 8:1-13; 10:9; Col. 2:15; 2Cor 3:6-14 all say that the Old Covenant was annulled and replaced by the New Covenant, then obviously "until all is accomplished" of Matthew 5:18 cannot refer only to the eschaton, otherwise, you leave Scripture contradicting itself. By these passages in Hebrews, Scripture is drawing the parameters around the interpretation of Matthew 5:17-19.

RS: "Observant Jew"? If by that you mean that Paul, after he became a Christian, lived and taught that one is to adhere to all the precepts of the Mosaic law, and that his life as a Christian, except for Christ, was no different than his former life, I beg to differ. An "observant Jew," if we use that term as it is normally understood of a Jew who kept the whole law, was not Paul's practice. In fact, Paul repudiates that idea in Philippians 3:5 when he says of himself "as to the Law, a Pharisee...having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law." It is one thing to say that Paul allowed certain Jewish rituals for the sake of his preaching to the Jews, but it is quite another to claim that Paul was an "observant Jew" and followed every jot and tittle of the Mosaic law. The two positions are entirely different.

I think the way to deal with this, Art, is to say that in regards to the Judaizers who were insisting on the practice of the Mosaic law for salvation, Paul was totally against this. Galatians is quite clear about this aspect of the discussion.

On the other hand, I am willing to concede to you that Paul, at times, believed it best to allow certain Jewish practices for the sake of the Jewish mind set. This follows his own teaching that "to the Jews I

became as a Jew” when preaching the Gospel to win souls (1 Cor 9:20). When the practice of Jewish rituals did not threaten Christian salvation, it is easy to see that Paul considered them mere adiaphora, harmless, so to speak.

Hence, we can be clear on two points: (1) when salvation was the issue, the Mosaic law was not required, and, in fact, was condemned because it was non-salvific. (2) when appeasing Jews toward the Christian Gospel, certain practices of the Mosaic law were allowed by concession, for the sake of the Jewish conscience (even though many Jews in the first century forsook altogether their previous rituals).

Unless these distinctions are clearly made, the issue will become a cause for error, and even heresy.

RS: Here again we must make the proper distinctions. Jewish Christians were “expected” to observe the Mosaic rituals to one degree or another simply because they were Jewish people. Generations of Jews would come and go before these rituals finally dissipated. There was no harm in this, so says Paul. But there was a big difference between sincere Jewish Christians who could not let go of their Jewish rituals and the fanatical Judaizers who were insisting on Mosaic rituals in order to be saved. In regards to the issue of salvation, the New Testament is adamant that the Mosaic law cannot save, and it never could save.

The Mosaic law could not save, but it could condemn, for as Paul says, for one transgression of the law one would be guilty of the whole law (Galatians 3:10-11). Our catechism says the same: “Because of sin, which it cannot remove, it remains a law of bondage. According to St. Paul, its special function is to denounce and disclose sin...” (para 1963).

If that is the case, then the Mosaic law, as a LEGAL power that condemns the whole human race in sin, must be lifted so that salvation can be applied. But one cannot merely wish the legal power of the Mosaic law away. It must be legally annulled, abrogated, revoked, in full. Only then can it be replaced by a new covenant. That is why Hebrews 7:18 says “the first commandment was annulled and replaced by a better commandment.” It is why Hebrews 8:13 says the first covenant was already becoming obsolete in Jeremiah’s day, and disappeared when Christ came. It is why Hebrews 10:9 says “he takes away the first [covenant] to establish the second [covenant].” That is why Colossians 2:14 says that Christ “canceled out the writ of debt consisting of decrees against us...having nailed it to the cross.” These are legal cancelations, for Hebrews 7-10 is nothing but the legal replacement of the Mosaic covenant with the New Covenant.

You need to incorporate these passages, and many like them, into your understanding, Art. You cannot merely glom on to Matthew 5:17-19 and think that it answers the question. The Bible is one cohesive whole. You can certainly believe in preserving Jewish practices as adiaphora all you want and I won’t bother you, but when you neglect to read and consider the clear language of the above passages which all teach that the Mosaic covenant has been annulled because of its condemnatory nature, then you haven’t reached the summit yet, and you become more detrimental to the process than helpful.

AS: The covenants of Abraham was never revoked even though Moses’ covenant superseded it. It remained in force as St. Paul clearly saw and taught.

RS: “Superseded” means that the Mosaic law would have replaced the Abrahamic covenant, but that didn’t happen. We need to be careful how we use the word “superseded.”

Moreover, the Abrahamic covenant was a salvation covenant, the Mosaic covenant was a law covenant that didn’t offer salvation. The two are entirely different.

The Mosaic covenant was added because the Jews needed a more specific covenant for their purpose and needs, mainly as a tutor to Christ and as a convictor of sin, not as a salvific covenant. As Paul says in Galatians 3:19: “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions.” But if it was the convictor of sin and, as Paul says in Gal 3:22, it “shut up all men under sin,” then it had to be revoked in order to free men from its condemning grip.

The Abrahamic covenant, in being a salvation covenant for the world, was originally made when Abraham was a Gentile, for Paul makes the point that Abraham received the promises BEFORE he was circumcised. That is why Paul says in Galatians 3:6-8 that nations' salvation was in view when God made the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

AS: In like fashion the Mosaic Law and its promises have been transferred to the Church. The morality of the OT, several of the prayer forms, and our attitude towards liturgy is part of our patrimony from Judaism. So are Purgatory, the Decalogue, the oneness of God, and the witness of the OT to Christ.

RS: I heartily agree, but we borrow from the Mosaic law just as the US Constitution borrowed from the Magna Carta, as a practical help in guiding us, not as an in-force and valid legal entity that demands we accept its principles under pains of death and damnation. The Old Testament is very valuable. I read and study it more than the New Testament. But as I said about Matthew 5:17-19, once any portion of the OT "Law and Prophets" are fulfilled, then according to what Jesus said, that portion passes away. We merely keep the memory of them when we incorporate their principles in our own New Covenant worship.

AS: The OT covenants have not been revoked. They remain in force but with the coming of Christ they have been superceded and their benefits have been transferred to us.

RS: Again, you need to be careful with your language, and you need to make the proper distinction between legal and non-legal, otherwise you do an injustice to all the passages in Hebrews that speak of the revoking of the Old Covenant. "Revoke" is normally a legal term, and superseded means that the previous entity has been replaced. If the Mosaic law is not revoked, in the legal sense, then Colossians 2:14-15 is wrong and the Law will still condemn us.

AS: As to the symbolism of the Seder in the Mass, I am surprised that you have not understood what I meant. Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Third cup of the Seder when the unleavened Afikomen was eaten. This Afikomen was the 2nd of three matzohs hidden until the end of the meal which had been broken before being hidden. It was originally eaten with the last piece of the Passover Lamb and is considered to represent the Passover Lamb. (For us Christians, that is the Lamb of God.) The Third Cup was the [Birkat Hamazon](#) "the cup of blessing/redemption". It is self-explanatory. Jesus drank the Fourth cup on the cross which consummated the Seder and represented the End Times which are the times in which we live. Understanding the Seder the celebration of the redemption of the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt also celebrates their redemption from sin. It is this imagery that Jesus carried over into the Mass.

RS: That is certainly possible, but it is not provable, because the Gospels simply don't mention anything about Four cups. Moreover, the Greek words that are used in the Gospel accounts are often devoid of Jewish seder background. I've written on this in the past, but I don't want to get into it now. Understanding the Old Covenant's revocation is much more important.

\*\*\*\*\*

In a message dated 10/23/2009 11:48:00 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, ArtSippo writes:

Hi Bob!

Just few comments. The phrase "until all is accomplished" is not an easy one to interpret. I agree with you that the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets of necessity must be incremental and that milestones along the way include the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost just to name a few. But we also need to include such things as the conversion of the Roman Empire, the founding of Christendom, the creation of the universities, Missionary work, and the general progress of Christianized civilization. The Law and the Prophets depict the eventual worship of the one God of Israel by all the nations of the Earth which is still a work in progress. It is also true that the total triumph of the Messiah over the forces of evil has not happened yet. Jewish anti-missionary apologetics emphasizes

that Jesus did not fulfill all of the expectations for the Messiah, and they are right. But if you look to Revelation we see that the more military and 'political' triumphs of Christ are reserved for the Second Coming. This also solves the mystery of the Jewish expectation (seen at Qumran for example) that there would be 2 Messiahs: Messiah Son of Joseph and Messiah Son of David. The former was identified with the suffering Servant from Isaiah 53 and was expected to die fighting for Israel while the later was to be a triumphant warrior king. Having Jesus die, rise, and then return in glory allows him to complete the entire prophetic vision of the Messiah from the OT.

So in my view "all" will not be accomplished until the Second coming.

I think I need to clarify what I mean by the Old Covenant never being revoked. It is clear that the current forms of modern Rabbinic Judaism are not and cannot be considered valid expression of the true religion revealed by God. The coming of Jesus has transferred the promises of true Israel to the Church alone. And most definitely, modern Judaisms are not salvific. I firmly reject any notion that there are "two covenants" or "two ways of salvation". There is only one name under heaven by which anyone may be saved, and that is Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile, the Mosaic Law remains in force and those who claim to fulfill it apart from Christ its true goal are caught in the trap of trying to do the impossible. By denying Christ the deny the Law's true goal. Besides, it is impossible to keep the Law now since the Temple is gone, the genealogy of the Priesthood remains in doubt, there is no natural red heifer to cleanse any putative temple replacement, and the sacrifices required for fulfilling required mitzvot and exomologesis no longer exist. I should also point out that since the crucifixion, the various OT sacrifices no longer have any power because they had been pointing forward to the Cross and were rendered obsolete by it. One could argue that a revival of such sacrifices now could point BACK to Calvary, but even the Jews themselves recognize that in the time of the Messiah the only sacrifice that will remain will be the Thanksgiving Offering (Korban Todah) which just happens to coincide with the Christian Eucharist.

So we should be clear that modern Judaism is not BIBLICAL Judaism and is certainly not the religion that Jesus and his followers practiced. Furthermore in the light of Christ, even the Judaism that Jesus practiced is now passe. **BUT NOT REVOKED!**

TECHNICALLY, one could still try to fulfill the requirements of the Law but it is now **UTTERLY FUTILE AND IMPOSSIBLE** to do so. Anyone trying to save themselves by being an observant Jew is doomed to failure. This does not mean that a person who tries to do this is necessarily damned. It is still possible for God in His mercy to save anyone He chooses to save. But trying to fulfill the Mosaic Law cannot save anyone.

I did want to take issue with your characterization of the of Mosaic Law as not salvific. First of all it pointed to the coming of Christ and indeed that is the definitive event of human salvation. Secondly, the whole motif of the Exodus is one of salvation from bondage which even the Rabbis have recognized has the spiritual significance of freeing the Hebrews from bondage to idolatry and sin. The Passover Seder even in the OT itself was a celebration of salvation. It is also no accident that in the NT Jesus used the Passover celebration of freedom from bondage to explicate what his work on the cross would accomplish. St. Paul called Christ "Our Passover" with clearly soteriological intent. And St. John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." In Revelation this image of Jesus as The Lamb of God is also prominent.

I would argue that the covenant of Moses WAS salvific and that its promise of salvation was fulfilled in Christ. To keep that covenant now is futile and unnecessary.

In the early Church, Jews who followed Jesus continued to be observant of the Law. Part of this was cultural, But part of it was religious. Let's face it. if Jesus was the Jewish Messiah then practicing Jews who acknowledged him should be exemplary Jews. And it is clear in the story in Acts 19 that St. Paul DID NOT counsel Jewish Christians to become non-observant. He did practice his own INTERPRETATION of what it meant to be an observant Jew but I think he would have been offended if

anyone accused him of not being a Jew in good standing before the Law. He did see the coming crisis on this very point and anticipated that the Law would someday no longer divide Jews and Gentiles in Christ, but in his time, he remained an observant Jew (in his own fashion) to the end of his life as far as we can tell.

The destruction of the Temple was God' way of saying that Judaism apart from Christ was no longer possible. God gave the Jews 40 years of grace to convert to Christ and then ended it. I consider this a subtle Sicilian message. ;-)

Even the Talmud bears witness to this (Yoma 39b):

Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['For the Lord'] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Hekal would open by themselves, until R. Johanan b. Zakkai rebuked them, saying: Hekal, Hekal, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself?5 I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Ido has already prophesied concerning thee:6 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.7

(5) Predict thy own destruction.

(6) I.e., concerning this significant omen of the destruction of the Temple.

(7) Zech. XI, 1. Ido was his grandfather, but it occurs occasionally that a man is called 'the son after a distinguished ancestor.

So from 30 AD to 70 AD the usual miracles that occurred on Yom Kippur ceased. The most likely year of Jesus' crucifixion is 29-30 AD. These signs should have been interpreted properly to show that there was no longer any need for blood sacrifices after the sacrifice of Christ.

As to the question of the four cups at the Passover Seder, Scott Hahn has given extensive documentation and I defer to him. I would note that St. Paul tells us that the Eucharsit was instituted "when supper was ended" which is when the 3rd cup was taken and that 3rd cup was known as "the cup of blessing" just as St. Paul said.

I think we do not agree on the basics here. There are just some points that needed clarification.

Art

\*\*\*\*\*

October 26, 2009, 10:57am

Art,

Just a few questions:

1) Regarding Matthew 5:17-19, if a part of the "Law and Prophets" was "fulfilled" at Jesus' First Coming, does that part "pass away" at Jesus' death or not?

2) Since you seem to make no distinction between the legal and non-legal revocation of the Mosaic covenant, what do you do with the passages in Hebrews and elsewhere that speak of the Mosaic covenant being "set aside" and "replaced" by the New Covenant? (I gave the references in one of my last emails).

3) How do you regard the tradition's teaching that the Mosaic covenant has passed away and been replaced by the New Covenant? (I gave the papal, conciliar, patristic and catechetical references in one of my last emails to you).

4) If, as you claim, the Mosaic covenant was "salvific," then how do you interpret Galatians 3:19, and what purpose did the Abrahamic covenant of "promise" serve?

These questions are so that I can figure out your position, since I must admit I was a bit confused as to where you stand from your last email. I hope you don't mind my probing here.

Bob

\*\*\*\*\*

In a message dated 10/26/2009 2:45:11 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, ArtSippo writes:

1) Just because something has been fulfilled it does not "pass away." It's fulfillment stands forever. This is my problem with having the Mosaic covenant revoked. If you do that, all the fulfillments are meaningless. Everything in the Mosaic covenant remains in force even though some things are obsolete. Now that Jesus has come we do not throw away Isa 53 or Jer 31. In fact they will stand until the eschaton when faith itself becomes irrelevant and we can SEE the truth in the Beatific vision. In heaven, there will be no need for moral precepts anymore so the entire idea of law will be obsolete.

Jesus specifically says:

[Mat 5:18](#) For verily I say unto you, TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS AWAY, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

So according to Jesus the Law remains valid until the New Heaven and New Earth replace the current reality. But it is true that the Mosaic Law qua the Law of ISRAEL has become irrelevant. As the New Israel, we in the Church are not bound to obey the Mosaic Law AS A SYSTEM but we can still learn moral and religious precepts from it.

2) I think that I amply explained how I see the Mosaic Law. It is no longer binding on the true Israel (the Church) AS A SYSTEM, but all of its precepts and prophecies are still important for us ESPECIALLY the ones that are yet to be fulfilled or for which we are still held accountable.

3) Jesus said that the Mosaic Law would NOT pass away. But parts of it have become irrelevant. In any case no one is bound to obey the Mosaic Law AS A SYSTEM though parts of it remain central to Christianity (e.g., the Decalogue). This is exactly what the tradition teaches.

You want to totally jettison the Mosaic Law for reasons I do not understand. Modern Jews are 'doing their own thing' with the Law and are NOT fulfilling the Mosaic Covenant as God intended. We on the other hand ARE fulfilling the Law when "we LOVE God" and "LOVE our neighbors as ourselves." So saith Jesus (Matt 22:40) and St. Paul (Rom 13:10). In any case "keeping kosher" is not needed to be a Christian and technically cannot be done anymore anyway since the temple and the priesthood are gone.

My point is (and the point of JP11) is that the Mosaic Law cannot be seen as revoked as long as we in the Church are fulfilling it.

4) You are quoting one of the most convoluted and confusing portions of the Pauline corpus. IMHO St. Paul is making the point that the Mosaic Law apart from the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cannot IN AND OF ITSELF make you righteous nor gain for you eternal life. AMEN. as such the Mosaic Law cannot save anyone. But the God who stands behind it can. One of the main points of the New Perspective on St. Paul is that St. Paul needs to be understood WITHIN the theological matrix of Judaism. St. Paul teaches that the Mosaic Law points beyond itself and thus is not an end in itself. God will save his people FOR THE SAKE of the Patriarchs. And please remember that the notion of 'salvation' in the OT is much more mundane and pragmatic than it is in the NT. When we speak of salvation we are talking about freedom from sin and death. When an OT Jew speaks of it, he is emphasizing release from political, social, and even medical oppression. The Jews looked (look) forward to a post-resurrection life

similar to what they had in this life whereas Christians see it in more spiritual terms. So to be fair, we are comparing 'apples and oranges". But in any case, the Exodus story is the model that Jesus and St. Paul use for the work of Christ on the Cross. THAT is from the Mosaic Law and it certainly is salvific by our criteria.

art

\*\*\*\*\*

October 26, 5:37pm

Art,

Bear with me here. Again, I think we are saying the same thing, and I don't want to talk past each other and walk away from this thinking we disagree when we are actually agreeing. I think all we need to do is tighten up our terminology.

See my comments below.

RS: I have little contention with your view here, Art. My only problem with it is that you are using terms that I think need a little more precision. When you say "AS A SYSTEM" it is ambiguous. "Systems" can be formal or informal; legal or non-legal; binding or non-binding.

I believe we are saying the same thing, but using different words to describe it. When you say "as a system," I am saying "legal," and when you say "we can learn moral and religious precepts from it" I am saying "non-legal" or "principally." This is why I asked you previously if you can agree that the Mosaic covenant is revoked legally but not non-legally.

RS: Points well taken, Art, but as one logician to another, you need to answer the question I asked you, not put it on the shelf because you think the Pauline corpus is "convoluted and confusing." They ARE the word of God, and God is not the author of confusion. Read in their face value presentation, the passages are quite clear: the Old Covenant has been "set aside" and "replaced" by the New Covenant. I don't know how much plainer could it have been said.

The easy solution to this, Art, is to say that the Hebrew passages are saying that the Old Covenant, the Mosaic covenant, "as a system," or, better yet, "as a legal system," has been "set aside" and "replaced" by the New Covenant. Hebrews, of course, does not mean that the principles of morals and religious concepts have been set aside, or, as you said above, the Hebrew writer would agree with you that "we can still learn moral and religious precepts from the Mosaic law." So, in the non-legal sense, the moral principles of the Mosaic law will not pass away, but in the legal sense, the Mosaic law, as a system, has indeed passed away.

Some people, and I don't know if this includes you, don't quite understand the difference between legal and non-legal, but I don't know what better terms to use to preserve the crucial distinction that the Hebrew writer (and ultimately God) wants us to make here. This is why I cringe when people use the words "not revoked" when referring to the Old Covenant, since "revoked" is normally a legal term.

Let me use the illustration of the US Constitution and the Magna Carta again. The US Constitution is analogous to the New Covenant; the Magna Carta analogous to the Old Covenant. As the US Const. borrowed moral and political concepts from the Magna Carta, so the New Covenant borrowed moral and religious concepts from the Old Covenant. But as to which document we are legally bound to obey as Americans, it is the US Constitution only, not the Magna Carta. The Magna Carta, as a legal entity, has no legal force on us today. But as a practical guide to subsequent legal documents, it is very useful, even as the Ten Commandments are very useful to Paul (eg. Romans 13:8-10). Hence, we are legally bound to obey the Ten Commandments not because they are part of the Mosaic law, but because they have

been legally incorporated into the New Covenant, and it is the New Covenant only to which we are legally bound.

If you don't make these legal distinctions, then you will continue to see the Hebrew passages as "convoluted and confusing," because it is impossible to see the Mosaic covenant as both revoked and unrevoked.

Let me know what you think.

Bob

\*\*\*\*\*

In a message dated 10/27/2009 3:41:20 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, ArtSippo writes:

Bob:

I think you are correct that you and I have been using different terminology to say the same thing. I especially like this paragraph:

<<The easy solution to this, Art, is to say that the Hebrew passages are saying that the Old Covenant, the Mosaic covenant, "as a system," or, better yet, "as a legal system," has been "set aside" and "replaced" by the New Covenant. Hebrews, of course, does not mean that the principles of morals and religious concepts have been set aside, or, as you said above, the Hebrew writer would agree with you that "we can still learn moral and religious precepts from the Mosaic law." So, in the non-legal sense, the moral principles of the Mosaic law will not pass away, but in the legal sense, the Mosaic law, as a system, has indeed passed away.>>

I agree with this 100%.

The Church now is Israel. In times past the Jews were Israel but no more. Sadly, the Rabbis changed Judaism into a Pelagian parody of what it was originally when they rejected Christ. By doing that and ending the need for blood sacrifice for forgiveness of sin, they abandoned the idea of God as a gracious father and instead turned him into a task master. Outward signs became more important than inward realities. IMHO that is how they missed the Incarnation. They could see Jesus "the carpenters son" but they could not look through him to see God. Reality is more than what you can see, taste, touch, and hear. You can only see that through with the 'eyes' of faith.

Art

\*\*\*\*\*

October 27, 2009, 9:15am

What a glorious day, Art!

I'm going to have to come over there and give you a big Sicilian kiss, on both cheeks.

I'm serious.

Bob

.....

In a message dated 10/27/2009 6:50:36 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, ArtSippo writes:

We are still going to disagree on a few things, Bob, but I am also very pleased that we are in sync on this issue.

Padrone, I return your embrace.

Arturo