Robert,

Mr. Shea made these comments on his blog today. Care to comment?

Timlin

Monday, August 30, 2010:

In a move sure to arouse Dark Suspicions from Kooks

Roy Schoeman writes me:

Just a short note to let you know that the Association of Hebrew Catholics will be sponsoring a conference titled “Hebrew Catholics and the Mission of the Church” in St. Louis over the first weekend of October (Oct. 1 –3, 2010). I will be giving two talks during the conference. Other speakers include Sr. Rosalind Moss, and there will also be a taped interview with Archbishop Raymond Burke on the topic of Jews in the Church. For full information see the Association of Hebrew Catholics website.

It would be great if you could make it, but even if not, prayers for the success of the conference, and for more Jews to know the joy and truth of entering into the Church!! are very welcome. After all, the 2nd Coming cannot happen until they do -- as paragraph 674 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel"…

Thank you again for your prayers and your friendship.

Sadly, I can't make it since plane trips are beyond my pay grade. But blessings on your work in the Vineyard, Roy and all the gang at AHC! Shalom!

R. Sungenis: I wish Mr. Schoeman all the success in the world in his newfound Catholic faith, but I think he would better serve us and himself if he would correct some of the false notions he has about the Catholic Church, Old Testament prophecy, and the Catholic Catechism.

As I have pointed out many times in previous articles and in my new book: *The Catholic/Jewish*

Dialogue: Controversies and Corrections
, although Mr. Shoeman correctly believes that the Mosaic covenant was revoked (see page 129 of his book
Salvation is from the Jews
), he maintains that it was wrong for the Catholic Church for "
two-thousand years
" to teach that the "
Old Covenant
" was "
entirely replaced (or superseded, hence 'supersessionism') made null and void, by the New
" (page 352 of
Salvation is from the Jews
).

The key word for Mr. Shoeman's view is "entirely." That is, although he believes the Old Covenant was partially replaced by the New, he believes it was not "entirely" replaced. He believes the Mosaic covenant was replaced but that Old Testament prophecy about the restoration of national Israel was not replaced.

If you read the rest of Mr. Schoeman's book, he does not make the mistake of saying the Mosaic covenant is still active for the Jews [unlike Mark Shea who still believes the Mosaic covenant condemns unbaptized Jews; and the authors of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* which erroneously stated on page 131 (until it was recently revised) that the "Mosaic covenant is eternally valid for the Jews"].

Rather, Schoeman claims there are many prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Israel that for "the past two thousand years" were "erroneously" interpreted as being fulfilled only in the Catholic Church. The Church's big mistake, says Schoeman, was that the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled by the Jews and national Israel, and when they are, then Christ will come back for his Second Coming.

In essence, Schoeman insists that, after two thousand years of erroneous teaching from Catholic popes, councils and theologians, he has been blessed of God in these last days to see the truth, and it appears that he is seeking to confirm his new discoveries by appealing to a visit he had a few years ago from the Blessed Virgin Mary whom he claims "answered all my questions."

Now, a few words about Schoeman's view that the Old Covenant has not been "entirely" replaced:

First, Schoeman, like everyone else today, must suffer with the confusing terminology with which we have been left ever since John Paul II said the phrase "the Old Covenant, never revoked by God" in his speech at Mainz, Germany in 1981. Never before has such confusion been caused by one single statement, simply because John Paul II didn't tell us what he meant by the phrase "Old Covenant."

Normally, "Old Covenant" refers to the Mosaic covenant, as even St. Paul uses the term in 2 Corinthians 3:14-15.[1] But sometimes "Old Covenant" can refer to the whole Old Testament, as seems to be the case when the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says in paragraph 121: "The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture…for the Old Covenant has never been revoked." This is not surprising, since in the original Greek and the Vulgate the words "testament" and "covenant" are often interchangeable. But the confusion is compounded further when we find that "Old Covenant" can also refer to the Abrahamic covenant, as is apparently the case when John Paul II gave his speech in Sydney, Australia in 1986. When we add to this Schoeman's new interpretation of the Old Covenant that refers it to Old Testament prophecy about Israel, we now have a fourth view that confuses the picture even more.

So it behooves anyone who uses the phrase "Old Covenant" today to first indicate what of the three (or four) options above they have in view. Unfortunately, many people either refuse to clarify what they mean (with the express intent of misleading people) or they are ignorant of the various meanings of the phrase and thus perpetuate the confusion.

Since Schoeman has told us what option he is using, let's investigate whether he is correct. Again, in Schoeman's view, the portion of the "Old Covenant" that has not been superseded by the New Covenant is the portion dealing with the prophecies concerning the restoration of the Jews and the nation of Israel.

Paragraph 674 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Before I get to the details of Schoeman's view that the Old Covenant is fulfilled in Israel as opposed to the Church, I want to address the issue that Schoeman himself emphasizes in his email to Mark Shea. Schoeman writes:

"It would be great if you could make it, but even if not, prayers for the success of the conference, and for more Jews to know the joy and truth of entering into the Church!! are very welcome. After all, the 2nd Coming cannot happen until they do -- as paragraph 674 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: 'The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by 'all Israel'"

Although it is not explicitly stated in the above remark to Mr. Shea, based on what Schoeman writes in his book, *Salvation is from the Jews*, what he means by the above remark is that in order for everything to be in place for Christ to return, the Jews must experience a mass conversion to the Christian faith. It is also assumed that, since Christ will immediately return when this mass conversion occurs, obviously, the mass conversion must happen at the last generation of Jews.

Without getting into the history of this view in the Catholic Church, I want to zero in on Mr. Schoeman's claim that the 1994 Catholic Catechism teaches such a mass conversion. Does it? Let's look at the exact wording in paragraph 674 and take it apart, line by line, to see if it is saying what Schoeman claims it is saying:

The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by “all Israel,” for “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” in their “unbelief” toward Jesus.

The first thing to notice here is that the Catechism is not giving an explanation or exegesis of Scripture here; rather, it has made a logical introductory statement (“The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition”) and then adds a few phrases from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 11.

But it is only logical that Christ’s coming is suspended until all is fulfilled. The real question that needs an answer (which the Catechism doesn’t answer for us) is what is meant by “all Israel”?

We can certainly affirm with the Catechism that Christ will not return until “all Israel” is saved, but whether this “all Israel” refers (as Schoeman believes it does) to a *mass conversion* of the earth’s last generation of Jews is another question altogether. For example, if St. Paul meant that “all Israel” refers to all the Jews from the time when Israel first came into existence with Abraham until the last Jew who is saved on earth at Christ’s coming, then this “all” would easily fit into the eschatological frame St. Paul describes.

In fact, it would fit in much better than Schoeman’s scenario, since St. Paul earlier spoke about the “fullness of the Gentiles” in Romans 11:25 as being accomplished at the same time that “all Israel” is saved. Logically, before Christ can return, He must wait for every Gentile and every Jew to be saved that He intends on saving before the world can come to an end (*cf*. 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9-10; Romans 9:24-33).

Or perhaps in using the phrase “all Israel” St. Paul is simply saying that all the saved Gentiles and all the saved Jews constitute the “Israel of God,” as St. Paul coined that phrase in Galatians

6:16.[2]

Whatever St. Paul's precise meaning for "all Israel," no one can make a dogmatic claim (as Schoeman does) that it refers only to a *mass conversion* of the last generation of the world's Jews. Speculating on such meanings in St. Paul's words inevitably leads to making presumptuous conclusions, such as the idea that Christ cannot return unless there is a mass conversion of the Jews. Not only is that view unsupported by St. Paul's writings, it is not fair to every other Jew who has lived in the past 4000 years. Why would the last generation of Jews hold such a privileged position in God's salvation program while God virtually ignored the millions upon millions of Jews who have been in abject disbelief for four millennia? It makes much more sense that, as St. Paul says in Romans 11:5, God has been saving a remnant of believing Jews from the Old Testament and the New Testament, which total group of believers comprises St. Paul's "all Israel," and that those Jews who refuse to believe will be damned by their own free will, not because God didn't chose them for an inevitable salvation. In effect, because Schoeman's view virtually damns the majority of Jews in history and relies only on a so-called "mass conversion" of the last generation of Jews, it ends up hurting the Jews more than help them. The Catechism continues:

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

Here the Catechism quotes from Acts 3:19-21, but again without explanation or exegesis. If we look closely at Acts 3:19-21, it doesn't say anything about a mass conversion of Jews near the end of time. It only says what we would expect it to say: that not until everyone in the world is saved whom God intends to save will Jesus then return from heaven and restore all things.

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

Once again, the Catechism merely quotes from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (11:15) but without explanation or exegesis. If the proper interpretation of this passage was that it referred only to a mass conversion of the Jews near the end of time, this was the perfect opportunity to teach this important fact to Catholic parishioners, but the Catechism is silent. In fact, the Catechism never speaks of a mass conversion, either in this paragraph (674) or any of its other 2865 paragraphs.

So what could St. Paul mean by the “acceptance” of the Jews as “life from the dead”? One thing is for sure: Paul is not suggesting some type of corporate or wholesale acceptance of national Israel, for he pointed out earlier from Old Testament prophecy that no such resurrection will ever occur (cf. Rm 9:25-33; 10:16-21). Logically, as the “reconciling of the world” in Rm 11:14 does not mean that all Gentiles will be saved, so “the acceptance [of Jews]” does not mean that all Jews will be saved, rather, it refers to the “remnant” which was introduced in 11:5 and reiterated under the term “some” in 11:14. [3] Similarly, “life from the dead” does not refer to either a corporate restoration of national Israel or a massive spiritual conversion of Jews at some future time. Scripture makes no case that the end of the world is contingent upon Jewish conversions, whether small or large. Rather, since Paul has made it clear that God has rejected the “hardened” and “dead” nation of Israel, every Jew who converts out of that national unbelief is in the category of “life from the dead.” The portion of Israel that believes is the true Israel (Rm 9:6) and their belief is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel 37:1-10. The Catechism continues:

The “full inclusion” of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of “the full number of the Gentiles,” will enable the People of God to achieve “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” in which “God may be all in all.”

Once again, the Catechism does not explain or exegete, but continues stringing together quotes from Romans 11. There is no indication that “full inclusion” of the Jews is realized at some mass conversion in the future. The Catechism simply states that the full number of Jews saved will meet the full number of Gentiles saved, and all will be one without distinction. This follows the same biblical pattern St. Paul has mentioned elsewhere (*cf*. Col 2:11-16; Eph 2:11-16; Ac 10:34-35; Gal 3:28; 5:1-4; 6:12-16; Rm 2:9-10; 2Co 3:6-14).

Roy Schoeman opposes this view and teaches that the “fullness of the Gentiles” (Rm 11:25) occurred in 1967, and the sign of its fulfillment was what he deems as the God-blessed six-day surge of the Israeli army against its Arab neighbors in which “Jerusalem…was recaptured by the modern state of Israel in the 1967 war” (*Salvation is from the Jews* p. 306).

In the end, those who attempt to read into the Catechism a mass conversion of Jews (*e.g*., Roy Schoeman) perpetuate the same class and ethnic distinctions that the New Testament repudiates, making it appear that God will save the Jews simply because they are Jews. But the elevation of the Jews above the Gentiles is part-and-parcel with Mr. Schoeman’s views on the issue. Schoeman claims, for example, that the Jews are “blessed by nature” and adds that faith itself is not a criterion for this divine blessing: “…a blessing by nature promised to…the Jewish race, despite their lack of faith in Christ.” (
Salvation is from the Jews
, p. 42). Schoeman claims that Jewish converts have been endowed with a special “Jewish charism” from God such that they are analogous to “yeast” that makes bread rise (
Salvation is from the Jews
, p. 71).

Schoeman on Old Testament Prophecy

Now I would like to comment on Schoeman's interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, which is outlined in his book *Salvation is from the Jews*. As noted previously, Schoeman believes the Church for "the past two thousand years" wrongly interpreted these prophecies as applying to the Catholic Church instead of national Israel. The crux of Schoeman's book begins at chapter eight, titled: "The Jews and the Second Coming." Almost identical to what is contained in the Protestant *Scofield Reference Bible*, Schoeman slants Old Testament passages that have been traditionally interpreted as referring either to ancient Israel or the Church as now being in the exclusive category of prophecies concerning the present political state of modern-day Israel just prior to the Second Coming of Christ. For example, Schoeman writes:

"Jerusalem will return again to Jewish hands shortly before the Second Coming (Luke 21:24): 'Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.' (A description of the Second Coming then follows in verses 25-28). Jerusalem was in the hands of the Gentiles continuously from the fall of the Jewish nation in A.D. 70 until it was recaptured by the modern State of Israel in the 1967 war." (p. 306).

Making no distinction between biblical prophecy and the political/military victories of modern-day agnostic Israeli leaders, Schoeman advances the Zionist argument that the Jewish occupation of Israel is guaranteed by divine right. We know this is his intent since on the next page he uses Isaiah 66:5-8 as the singular prophecy predicting a meteoric rise of modern Israel: "The Jewish nation will be reborn in a single day," and he adds the following commentary:

"This [Is 66:5-8] was quite literally fulfilled when on May 14, 1948, the modern State of Israel was born in a single day following the passage of UN Resolution 181 partitioning "Palestine" into the Arab State of Jordan and the Jewish State of Israel." (p. 307).

Isaiah, however, gives not the slightest indication he had in mind a single day in the distant future in which godless political forces (*i.e.*, the United Nations) bring about a geographical restoration to an anti-Christian people (the Jews) which, as the historical records show, was led by the brutal incursions under David Ben Gurion and Menachem Begin using bloody campaigns of human slaughter against native Palestinians. Schoeman's political imposition on Scripture shows that his Catholicism is defined by Zionism and its successes, not by traditional Catholic teaching and sound exegesis of Scripture. Nowhere has the Church taught Schoeman's type of newspaper/political exegesis of the Old Testament. In fact, the Church has traditionally understood the whole of Isaiah 66 as being a prophecy of the first coming of Christ.

For example, Isaiah 66:7 ("Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she was delivered of a son") is understood as an allusion to Christ's birth and the establishment of the New Testament Church, and it is very similar to the language of Apocalypse 12:2, 5 ("...she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery...she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron").

Isaiah 66:8 ("Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her sons"), using the same imagery of the travailing woman in labor, refers to the Apostles and the early Christians coming from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to preach the Christian Gospel (Acts 1:8). In "one day," 3,000 souls were baptized and saved at Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:37-42). Appropriately, Isaiah 66:10-13 says:

"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you

who mourn over her; [11] that you may suck and be satisfied with her consoling breasts; that you may drink deeply with delight from the abundance of her glory." [12]For thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall suck, you shall be carried upon her hip, and dandled upon her knees.
[13]
As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
[14]
You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the Lord is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

The above description was precisely what happened at Pentecost, as Jews and Gentiles from 15 different nations gathered in Jerusalem to hear the Christian Gospel (Acts 2:1-15). Collaboration from other Old Testament prophecies are noted as Peter quotes from the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16-21). The enemies of the Gospel were set aside, even as Zechariah prophesied of Christ's birth in Luke 1:71: "Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us." The same is prophesied in Isaiah 66:20-21:

[20]And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. [21]And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.

Again, it was in Jerusalem that the Christian Church had its beginning, and nations from all around gathered to her, and from them God chose a new priesthood, ordained under the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Unfortunately, Schoeman sees only a Zionist political movement in Isaiah 66:9-14, stating: “The new Jewish state shall be extremely prosperous (Isaiah 66:9-14).” Essentially, Schoeman is commandeering passages of Scripture that have heretofore been applied to the Church and is now applying them to Zionist Jews, and all without the slightest concern that he is trespassing on ground that even angels would fear to tread.

Another special pleading in Schoeman’s interpretation of Scripture is noted in his commentary on Zechariah 13:8-9, in which the prophet states...

“...two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire and refine them...They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”

Schoeman interprets this as follows: “In fact, during the Holocaust almost exactly two-thirds of Europe’s Jews perished (estimates vary between 60% and 72%)” (p. 307). Not only does Schoeman miss the contextual and historical meaning of the Zechariah passage, he doesn’t even satisfy the desires of modern day Jews. If one examines the context, Zechariah is speaking of God’s judgment against the false prophets of Israel. Hence, if “two thirds” of Jews are cut off and perish, it means that God has judged them as sinners who will perish under His wrath. Is this the picture Schoeman wishes to create – a Holocaust planned by God Himself? If so, then Schoeman is required to follow it to its logical conclusion and say that the Holocaust was a righteous judgment from God upon the Jews for their sins, for the context of Zechariah’s passage would demand such a consequence. Schoeman’s idiosyncratic exegesis inadvertently makes Hitler to be an instrument doing God’s bidding against the Jewish people. For his own sake, Schoeman should take another look at this passage, otherwise Jews of today should be casting their aspersions on him.

Schoeman could have saved himself by simply recognizing that Zechariah is not talking about

the Jewish Holocaust of World War II. Zechariah 13, like Isaiah 66, is speaking about the first coming of Christ. In fact, the verse immediately prior to the passage that Schoeman quoted (Zechariah 13:7) prophecies the capture of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, and is quoted by both Matthew (26:31) and Mark (14:27) – ("for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered'"). Schoeman skipped right over these references since he was so intent on making the passage a prophecy of Zionism. It is only Christians who will answer: "The Lord is my God," something the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust haven't done for the last 60 years, and show no signs of rectifying. Instead, as the evidence plainly shows, they have designs on restoring Judaism through Temple worship in Jerusalem.

The same critique applies to Schoeman's interpretation of Ezekiel 36:22-28; Jeremiah 16:14-15; Zechariah 12:1-3; Joel 3:2 and Apocalypse 16:16 cited on pages 307-309 of his book. Schoeman's commentary contains the same twisted exegesis and special pleadings for the modern state of Israel and amount to a self-aggrandizing attempt to proof-text his way through Scripture, all the while oblivious to the context, the New Testament quotations of Old Testament prophecies, and the traditional interpretation given by the Catholic Church's historical exegetes. It is the Church who is the "new Israel," not modern day Jews. As Vatican II states:

Israel according to the flesh, which wandered as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God. So likewise the New Israel which while living in this present age goes in search of a future and abiding city is called the Church of Christ. (*Lumen Gentium*: On the People of God, II, 9).

Or as *Ad Gentes* puts it: "Thus the Apostles were the seeds of the New Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy" (1, 5). As Isaiah 66:20-21 indicates, the new Israel has its own priests chosen by God for His service, and John Paul II reiterated this truth:

...an unceasing echo of the words concerning Israel, whom the Lord "has chosen as his own possession." 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. (*Redemptionis Donum,* III, 8).

St. Athanasius adds:

“So the Jews are trifling, and the time in question, which they refer to the future, is actually come. For when did prophet and vision cease from Israel, save when Christ came, the Holy of Holies? For it is a sign, and an important proof, of the coming of the Word of God, that Jerusalem no longer stands, nor is any prophet raised up nor vision revealed to them, and that very naturally. For when He that was signified was come, what need was there any longer of any to signify Him? When the truth was there, what need any more of the shadow? For this was the reason of their prophesying at all, namely, till the true Righteousness should come, and He that was to ransom the sins of all. And this was why Jerusalem stood till then, namely, that there they might be exercised in the types as a preparation for the reality” (*Treatise on the Incarnation* , 40).

Schoeman is so entrenched in his Zionist interpretations of Scripture that he feels compelled to issue the same kind of ‘anti-semitic’ warning against those who don’t adopt his preferred view as we find in the Protestant Dispensationalist *New Scofield Reference Bible*, 1967 edition. On Genesis 12:3 the *N SRB* states:

“And curse him that curseth thee…It has invariably fared ill with the people who have persecuted the Jew – well with those who have protected him. For a nation to commit the sin of anti-Semitism brings inevitable judgment. The future will still more remarkably prove this principle” (pp. 19-20).

Schoeman, in reference to Zechariah 12:3, writes:

“Most would agree that Jerusalem, as the focal point of tensions in the Middle East, has become a ‘heavy stone for all the peoples,’ and certainly all who have ‘come together against it’ since 1948 have ‘grievously hurt themselves.’”(p. 311).

With these kinds of interpretations, Schoeman will certainly find a home in the Neo-con/Evangelical/Zionist alliance, for they are all preaching the same fare. Although there is virtually no sign that the Israeli people are coming to their spiritual senses even long enough to stop the incursions into occupied territory, still, the drumbeat that this is all by divine prophecy continues. Those who oppose it are simply labeled “anti-semites” and a well coordinated effort is engineered to keep them silent.

Schoeman then adds: “But Israel will be miraculously militarily strong and able to successfully defend itself (Zechariah 12:6-9)” (p. 310). Here again, however, Schoeman is caught ignoring the time-clues embedded into the text. While he is singing the praises of the Israeli military, Zechariah is pleading the case for the first coming of Christ, for in the very next verse, Zech. 12:10, Zechariah speaks about those who “will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him.” This passage is quoted verbatim in John 19:37 for the express purpose of

fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy of Jesus hanging upon the cross. How could Schoeman miss this? Perhaps it is due to the blindness that envelopes one promoting the Zionist agenda, for Scripture then becomes the wax nose that can be molded to one's preferred political designs. Even the passage from Augustine that Schoeman later attempts to bring to his defense on another topic, says: "'They shall look upon me whom they pierced.' And by this word the crucifixion of Christ is certainly more plainly indicated" (*City of God*, Bk 20, Ch 30). Incredulously, on the very next page (p. 311) Schoeman quotes from Zechariah 12:10 apparently oblivious to the fact that the Gospel of John applies it to the first coming of Christ (Jn 19:37). Schoeman applies it to Jews during the "Second Coming" as he states: "Zechariah, too, foretold the conversion of the Jews when he said that they would weep bitterly over one 'they have pierced' (Zechariah 12:10)."

Schoeman's next claim is that Hosea 3:5 is a prophecy concerning a distinctive conversion of Jews near the Second Coming of Christ. The passage reads:

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

The obvious question is: what in the passage compels Schoeman to view this as applicable only to the Second Coming of Christ? If it is the phrase "latter days," this is nothing but the common Hebrew words 'acharith yom'[4] that generically refers to the end of a period of days (e.g., "last days"), but it is not a specific reference to the end of time or the Second Coming. In fact, Hosea 3:5 is one of the passages Church tradition has understood as fulfilled in the first coming of Christ, but Schoeman is obviously trying to steer it toward Zionism. The Church had every reason to see it as applying to Christ's first coming, since the salient sign of its fulfillment is recorded almost verbatim in Acts 2:17 at Pentecost ("And in the
last days
it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh").

Similarly, Acts 15:17-18 says that the New Covenant Church is to be understood as the

"rebuilding of the tabernacle of David," not national Israel (cf. Amos 9:11-12; Ezekiel 34:23-24). In addition, Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 are quoted in Romans 9:25-26 as a fulfillment in the Church age of the "restoration of Israel," only now it is an "Israel" with Gentiles as well as Jews. Suffice it to say, there is nothing in the context of Hosea 3:5 which even remotely points to the Second Coming of Christ or an exclusive conversion of Jews.

Schoeman then cites Mt 23:37-39 as more proof of "the conversion of the Jews prior to the Second Coming":

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

Schoeman comments as follows: "Here Jesus is saying that he will not be seen again (i.e., the Second Coming will not occur) until 'you' (the Jews) say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' (*i.e*., acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah)."

In this instance Schoeman has placed the cart before the horse. The verse is not saying that Jesus cannot return until the Jews acknowledge him. The phrase "until you say" is a Greek aorist subjunctive, which is merely putting a condition on whether the "forsaken and desolate" state of Jerusalem can be stopped. The singular event that can stop the desolation is when Jerusalem says the required words ("blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"). But because the Greek grammar is constructed as a conditional sentence, this means there is no guarantee that Jerusalem will, indeed, respond with the appropriate words. In other words, by using the subjunctive mood, the verse is not saying that the Jews *will*, without question, say the required words, but only that they won't see Christ unless they do. This is the same kind of conditional sentence St. Paul utilized in Romans 11:23 when speaking of potential Jewish conversions: "And they also,
if they do not persist in their unbelief
, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again." Belief is never guaranteed. It

is an act of the free will of man, and according to St. Paul, no one can promise that the Jews will make the right decision.

Schoeman then enters into a most crucial phase of his Zionistic interpretations – those dealing with the actual events leading up to the Second Coming. He writes:

“Related to the prophecies about the Antichrist and the final war is the belief that prior to the Second Coming, the Temple in Jerusalem will be built. This is based on an interpretation of Daniel 9-12, in which Daniel 9 refers to the Second Coming of Christ.”

He then begins his application:

“Although the prophecies of Daniel are at times associated with other events, too, since Jesus explicitly applies them to the Second Coming, that must be at least one of their intended fulfillments. The prophecies mention the sacrifice ceasing and the temple being profaned; the Church Fathers [interpret] this in a spiritual sense, to refer to a cessation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But, it is conceivable that it might also have a literal fulfillment, if the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt. And this is now within the realm of possibility. In 1967, for the first time in almost two thousand years, Jews regained possession of the Temple Mount, and there are now organizations in Israel attempting to rebuild the Temple. Should it be rebuilt on the Temple Mount, also claimed by Islam as a holy site, it is not hard to envision how that in itself could precipitate the global war known as ‘Armageddon.’”

“As stated earlier, the purpose of this discussion is not to ‘prove’ that the Second Coming is near. Many of the proposed interpretations of the prophecies are speculative. Yet cumulatively they suggest that the Second Coming takes place at a time when the Jewish people have returned to Israel and formed a Jewish nation. If this is, in fact, a precondition for the return of Christ, the concerted efforts of the past century to eliminate the Jews and, failing that, to destroy the nascent State of Israel, well might be part of a diabolical attempt to prevent the Second Coming.”

Suffice it to say, these are some of the most troubling paragraphs in Schoeman’s book. It is certainly true that Jesus speaks about the abomination of desolation, and it is certainly within the realm of prophetic fulfillment that the abomination telescopes into the events near the end of time. What is not in the realm of possibility, however, is that a future Temple built in Jerusalem by modern day Jews would be a fulfillment that comes about due to a divine blessing on the Jews. Conversely, Schoeman believes that this new Temple will not only be a fulfillment of divine favor, but his statement that Daniel’s “prophecies mention the sacrifice ceasing and the temple being profaned,” coupled with Schoeman’s rejection of the interpretation of the Church Fathers that the sacrifice which ceases refers to a termination of the Catholic Mass, seems to show that Schoeman anticipates a return of Old Covenant cultic sacrifices as a primary sign of divine blessing upon the Jews. Then, by a strange twist on predictive prophecy, Schoeman posits that the “abomination” spoken of by Daniel occurs when these cultic sacrifices are interrupted by the Antichrist. In other words, because the re-institution of Temple worship, as it was practiced in the Old Testament, is, according to Schoeman, from divine favor upon the Jews, anyone who would attempt to stop it is of the Antichrist. Suffice it to say, this is the ultimate Judaizing of the Catholic Church – Temple worship under the auspices of Catholicism.

In the process, Schoeman, by his own admission, has eliminated the Church as the fulcrum of prophetic prophecy, for it is the national restoration of Israel and its Temple worship that are now the principle focus of the divine plan. That these Temple sacrifices necessitate the formal return of Judaism (or perhaps some type of Judaistic-Catholic hybrid) as the pinnacle of divine favor doesn’t seem to bother Schoeman in the least. In reality, Schoeman’s attempt to resurrect Old Covenant sacrifices and theocratic worship is one of the most audacious pieces of private interpretation I have ever seen.

The error started, of course, when Schoeman decided to reject the Church’s teaching on

supersessionism and replace it with his “third alternative,” which is the assertion that the New Covenant will be fulfilled by a reintroduction of Old Covenant prophecies about national Israel. We now know what Schoeman envisions as the drawing card for the reintroduction of the Old Covenant – the return of Judaistic cultic sacrifices in a newly built Temple in Jerusalem. So enamored is Schoeman with his new interpretation he suggests that any attempt to thwart the existence of the “nascent State of Israel” is nothing less than a “diabolical attempt to prevent the Second Coming.” This, of course, is the logical conclusion of an interpretation of Scripture that is based on pure Zionism from start to finish.

Unfortunately for Schoeman, the reality is quite different. It can safely be said that, based on the teachings of Catholic dogma, any attempt of the Jews to rebuild the Temple and return the Judaistic religion and its cadre of Old Covenant sacrifices to Jerusalem as a divinely favored fulfillment of predictive prophecy, can be understood, in itself, as an “abomination of desolation.” Yes, it will certainly be a fulfillment of prophecy, but not one of divine favor but of divine judgment; and a possible fulfillment predicted by St. Paul in which demonic forces create an abode for “the man of sin...who takes his seat in the Temple of God, showing himself to be God...the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan...” (2 Thess 2:3,4,9). Ironically, as *per* Schoeman, the rebuilding of the Temple will certainly usher in the return of Christ, but a return in absolute judgment upon those who built it, for, ever since God tore the Temple curtain (Mt 27:51), the Temple is nothing more than a symbol of the Jews’ perennial rejection of Christ and Christianity.

These things are no surprise to Catholics who know their Scripture and Tradition. As the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia spoke of the Antichrist coming from the Jews, so the 1936 Catholic Encyclopedia spoke of a Temple being built for him:

“Many of the Fathers believe that Antichrist will be of Jewish extraction, of the tribe of Dan, will be circumcised, will rebuild Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple, in which he will set himself up as God. Likewise, he is to begin his work of seduction among the Jews who will accept him as the Messiah. Thus St. Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses*, v. 30, PG VII, 1206) says of Antichrist: ‘Jeremias does not merely point out his sudden coming, but he even indicates the tribe from which he shall come, where he says: We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from Dan; he shall come and devour the earth’ [Jr 8:16].

Not only do the Fathers have much to say on these eventualities, the medievals were just as informed. Just two examples will suffice. St. Anselm in his *Details Concerning the Antichrist*, writes:

“Towards the end of the world Antichrist will draw the hearts of the Jews to him by his great generosity and sympathetic attitude so much so that they will praise him as a demi-god;”....“For, the Temple which Solomon built having been destroyed, in its place he [Antichrist] shall restore it, he shall circumcise himself, and he shall give forth the lie that he is the son of the omnipotent God.”

Schoeman’s View of the Return of the Jews

In Chapter Nine of *Salvation is from the Jews*, titled “The Return of the Jews,” Schoeman gives us his treatment of Romans 11. He begins his analysis with a puzzling comparison. He writes:

“It might seem odd to refer to the entry of Jews into the Catholic Church as ‘the return of the Jews.’ It is, however, the natural image for one who see the Catholic Church as simply the continuation (and fulfillment) of Judaism after the first coming of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. In such a case, it is the Jews who accepted Him and became the first Christians who stayed within the core of Judaism, while those who rejected Him left the mainstream, the fullness of the truth

of the religion." (p. 317).

Schoeman's reference to "the Catholic Church as simply the continuation...of Judaism" and the assertion that "the first Christians...stayed within the core of Judaism" is an attempt to create a symbiotic relationship between Christianity and Judaism that is sanctioned neither by Scripture nor Tradition. Scripture mentions "Judaism" (Greek: "Ioudaism") in several places, but none of them are supportive or flattering (*e.g.*, Gal 1:13-14; 2:14; Acts 13:43). In no instance does the New Testament speak of Judaism as something that Jewish converts were to consider as the "core" of their newfound Christian faith and certainly nothing concerning the Church being the "continuation of Judaism." If anything, the New Testament is consistently promoting a formidable break with Judaism. It was the "Judaizers" (*i.e.*, those Jews who insisted on mixing Christianity with the cultic observances of Judaism) who were St. Paul's most exasperating opponents. The whole book of Galatians speaks to the problem, and it spills over into St. Paul's other epistles as well (*e.g* ., Philippians, Colossians, Titus, Timothy, Hebrews, et al).

If Schoeman were to say that the Old Covenant was *fulfilled* in the New Covenant, there would be no conflict with Scripture or Tradition. The New Covenant both fulfills the prophecies in the Old Covenant and continually extracts the moral, civil and religious principles embedded in the Old Covenant. It was the Church who decided what, if any, principles of the Old were to be incorporated into the New (*cf.*, Romans 13:8-13; 1Cor 9:9-11; NB: the conspicuous absence of the seventh-day Sabbath from the Ten Commandments). But this is not "Judaism." Judaism is the term normally assigned to Jews who still do not see the Old Covenant as being fulfilled by the New, and who insist that the Old Covenant still has an independent validity, which is precisely why Scripture always refers to Judaism in a negative light. Schoeman's resurrection of the term "Judaism" is thus highly inappropriate. Moreover, considering Schoeman's desire to see Temple worship re-instituted in the "nascent State of Israel," my suspicion is that his utilizing of the word "Judaism" is an attempt to legitimize the modern practice of the ancient religion as something permissible within the bounds of Christianity.

After quoting Romans 11:2-9, Schoeman then implies that the present blindness of the Jewish people is caused exclusively by God. He writes:

“Here St. Paul states that God Himself ‘darkened’ the eyes of the Jews, that they might not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, even down to the present time...It was God who ‘hardened’ them, ‘darkened’ their eyes. There is a mystery here, part of the ‘mystery of iniquity,’ just as there is a mystery to God ‘hardening’ Pharaoh’s heart during the Exodus (Exodus 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8), yet Paul clearly states that in some mysterious way, it was part of God’s Providence that some Jews should remain unable to recognize Jesus as the Messiah.”

Schoeman’s attempt here, I believe, is to put the onus on God for the present disbelief of the Jews, for he makes no mention concerning the part the Jews themselves have contributed to their state of unbelief. In fact, throughout this section Schoeman puts absolutely no blame against the Jews for their present condition. It almost seems as if Schoeman is trying to make the Jews victims of a divine plot bent on using them as spiritual pawns. Perhaps uncomfortable with this conclusion, Schoeman then resorts to an alternate theodicy, one that deflects from putting the blame directly on God and instead attributes the cause of Jewish blindness to the “mysteries” about God that we will never understand. The dependence on “mystery” will later work well with Schoeman’s desire to see a conversion of Jews, since what God arbitrarily or “mysteriously” casts upon them can just as well be removed on the same basis.

Schoeman’s theodicy, however, is quite off the mark. If one reads Scripture honestly, it is no “mystery” why the Jews were almost always in total unbelief. It is quite clear that the Jews chose their state of unbelief because, as St. Stephen testified in Acts 7:51: “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.” Stephen, of course, is merely echoing what we find in page after page of Jewish unbelief recorded in the Old Testament.

Moreover, if Schoeman had looked a little more closely at the very passages he cited to support his theodicy of “mystery” he would have seen that God’s hardening of man only comes after man has already hardened his own heart. God merely enforces the hardening as a punishment for man’s decision to harden his own heart. This is noted in the verses just prior to the one Schoeman mentioned. Exodus 9:34 states: “But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail

and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again, and hardened his heart, he and his servants." This explains that Pharaoh initiated the hardening of his own heart and the text calls his decision a "sin." God, of course, cannot sin, and therefore He cannot be implicated in causing Pharaoh's initial hardening. God can only act upon the sin that Pharaoh commits.

Schoeman keeps on the same track a few pages later. He writes:

"But since the original branches 'were broken off so that [the Gentiles] might be grafted in,' the implication is that they were intentionally broken off by God. These branches are of course the Jews who reject Jesus, and who are now outside the Church. So again in this verse Paul suggests that the failure of some, or most, of the Jews to accept Jesus was part of God's plan."

Here again, with no indication he is thinking otherwise, Schoeman implies that Jewish unbelief was not due to the obstinacy of the Jews, but that it was somehow "God's plan" that they remain in unbelief because God needed to save the Gentiles. We can, of course, grant anyone the prerogative to say that "all that transpires is God's plan," since nothing escapes His divine purview before it actually happens. But Schoeman appears to be using the phrase "God's plan" only in the *a-priori* sense, not *a-posteriori*. That is, Schoeman intimates that God "mysteriously" put the Jews in unbelief by His own accord, not because He was reacting to the unbelief the Jews had already demonstrated to Him initially. Acts 13:46 says quite the opposite: "And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.'"

Continuing his thesis that the New Covenant finds its fulfillment in a revival of Old Covenant Jews near the end of time, Schoeman writes:

"Again, the statement that the unbelief of the Jews was an integral part of God's plan to enable the Gentiles to be saved, but that when the 'full number' of the Gentiles has come in – presumably at the end of this age of salvation history, at the 'end of time' – the 'hardening' resulting in the Jews' unbelief will be removed and 'all Israel will be saved.'" (p. 322).

Again we see Schoeman's dependence on a kind of 'push-button' salvation – God alone caused the hardness and, when the time is right in His "plan," God will turn the lever and the hardness will automatically be removed, with no mention of the responsibility of the Jews themselves to come to a personal belief in God by their own free will. Not only is this theology erroneous, it attempts to by-pass the clear conditional language of Romans 11:23: "the others, *if they do not persist in their unbelief*
, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again." In other words, Paul's teaching is: (a) God will graft them back in
IF
the Jews turn from their unbelief; not (b) God will inevitably remove the hardness from the Jews and they will believe and be grafted back in. There is nothing inevitable or automatic about Jews coming to Christ, otherwise, St. Paul is contradicting what he said in Romans 11:23 and every other statement he makes about salvation in the New Testament.

Robert Sungenis, Ph.D. August 31, 2010 (Send any comments to cairomeo@aol.com)

[1] "…for to this present day the same veil remains unlifted when they read the old covenant, because through Christ it is taken away. To this day, in fact, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts…"

[2] "Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God."

[3] "So also at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace…. in order to make my race jealous and thus save some of them."

[4] בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים