

The Old Covenant is Revoked

USCCB Removes Heretical Sentence From Its Catechism

By and large, *Culture Wars* is a voice crying in the wilderness in this day and age of decadence and faithlessness. Most of CW's articles point out the deficiencies in the church and society that few others are willing to mention, much less investigate. Because CW's message is so critical, you might wonder just what kind of impact it is having. Are people listening? Are lives changing? Is society becoming more aware of the evils surrounding it? I'm sure it is to some extent, but sometimes we receive direct evidence that our voice is being heard and things are changing.

As most of you know, about a decade ago *Culture Wars* decided to confront the anti-Christian Jewish influence in our society head on. Amongst the many issues it has covered, *CW* published an article in January 2008 titled: "The Old Covenant: Revoked or Not Revoked?" In it we took to task the Catholic prelatore for caving into Jewish ideologues and sympathizers who have been trying, for several decades, to push the Church into rejecting its traditional teaching regarding the revocation of the Mosaic covenant. As is usually the case, if and when resistance to the onslaught was mounted, claims of "anti-semitism" would soon follow, just as it recently did for Pope Benedict XVI when he kept the Latin Mass prayer that required the Jews to convert to Christianity for their salvation. As our article pointed out, the pressure from Jewish quarters came to bear in a most profound way when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) added a sentence on page 131 of its first ever catechism, *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, published in 2006. The USCCB catechism not only resurrected the Mosaic covenant but strongly implied that it was salvific for today's Jews. The three sentences in question on page 131 are:

When God called Abraham out of Ur, he promised to make him a 'great nation.' This began the history of God's revealing his divine plan of salvation to a chosen people with whom he made enduring covenants. Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them.

Essentially the USCCB catechism is teaching that among the various covenants the Jews received which contained the divine plan of salvation, one of those was the Mosaic covenant. By coupling the last sentence with the second by the word “thus,” the catechism implies that the Mosaic covenant not only remains valid for the Jews of today, but it has an eternal validity precisely because the Jews can always find the divine plan of salvation in it. Whatever alternative interpretations one might construe from these words, at the least, it is categorically false to say that the Mosaic covenant remains eternally valid for the Jewish people, for as we painstakingly showed in our January 2008 article, the Catholic Magisterium, Sacred Scripture, and our Apostolic Tradition all say the opposite, namely, that the Mosaic covenant was revoked; is no longer valid; and never had the ability to save anyone in the past or in the present.

Since *Culture Wars* was the only Catholic magazine in the world to publish a critique of page 131 of the USCCB catechism, I believe it is safe to say that whatever happened afterward can be attributed directly to CW’s influence. Accordingly, on August 5, 2008, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released the results of their national vote to correct page 131 of the catechism. Here are the astounding words of the report as issued by the *Catholic News Service*:

Bishops Vote to Revise U.S. Catechism on Jewish Covenant with God, by Nancy Frazier O'Brien, Catholic News Service: WASHINGTON: The U.S. bishops have voted to ask the Vatican to approve a small change in the U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults to clarify church teaching on God's covenant with the Jewish people. The proposed change – which would replace one sentence in the catechism – was discussed by the bishops in executive session at their June meeting in Orlando, Fla., but did not receive the needed two-thirds majority of all members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at that time. After mail balloting, the final vote of 231-14, with one abstention, was announced Aug. 5 in a letter to bishops from Msgr. David Malloy, USCCB general secretary. The change, which must be confirmed by the Vatican Congregation for Clergy, would remove from the catechism a sentence that reads: "Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them." (http://www.usccb.org/stories/bishops_vote_catec.shtml).

The removal of the erroneous words is an unprecedented act by a conference of Catholic bishops. Unless I'm making an unwarranted presumption, I don't think there has been a time in Catholic history in which an official catechism, by vote of its bishops, has ever excised a sentence that was suspected of heresy and subsequently issued a second edition because of it. I am truly grateful for the US bishops' courage and their openness to truth. By an act that I am sure was not easy for them, they have shown what can be done when we voice our objections to our pastors as Canon 212, 2-3 tells us is our "duty" to do.

"The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires. According to the knowledge, competence and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons."

No Apologies from the Catholic Community

Unfortunately, with all the applause we can muster for the bishops who apparently did their duty before God, there is also a darker side to this otherwise joyful event. First, one might expect that, for such a high profile about-face as a revision of a catechism totting a possible heresy, and a revision that more or less destroys the anti-supersessionist movement so prevalent today, we might expect a note of thanks, or even an apology, from the cadre of Catholic clerics and lay apologists who had been pushing the idea of anti-supersessionism so ardently, and at the same time, had severely castigated those like myself and *Culture Wars* for pointing out the problem. One might expect a letter of apology and some remorse, for instance, from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, who not only defended the USCCB's erroneous statement in public by claiming it should be given a "charitable" interpretation, but also denied an imprimatur to a book this author wrote, stating that I had not followed the Church's teaching on Jews and Judaism, specifically citing page 131 of the USCCB catechism as one of his reasons, yet not giving even one example from my book of any violations of Church teaching.

One might also expect an apology from Mark Shea, the perennial blogger who claims that he is “Catholic and Enjoying It,” for we would expect that he was indeed “enjoying” the fact that a falsehood had been summarily removed from an official catechism so that now Catholics everywhere would be free of such destructive theological error. But from August 5 when the USCCB’s vote was made public until now, Mr. Shea’s blog has been eerily silent about the whole issue. Similar to Bishop Rhoades, Mr. Shea publically endorsed the catechism’s erroneous statement, writing articles in several popular Catholic magazines stating that the Mosaic covenant was still in force, and appealing to the USCCB and its catechism as his highest authoritative source.

We might have expected an apology from Dr. Eugene Fisher who in his emails told me that the Old Covenant for the Jews was still in force, and who stated in another venue: “God already has the salvation of Jews figured out, and they accepted it on Sinai, so they are OK. Jews are already with the Father. We do not have a mission to the Jews, but only a mission with the Jews to the world. The Catholic Church will never again sanction an organization devoted to the conversion of the Jews. That is over, on doctrinal, biblical and pastoral grounds. Finito.”

We might have expected an apology from Roy Schoeman, who in his book, *Salvation is from the Jews*, gives the reader three completely different views of the Mosaic Old Covenant, one taking it away (p. 129), one keeping it in force (p. 352), and one saying it will fulfill prophecy (p. 353). In the view that keeps it in force, Schoeman boldly stated that “supersessionism” was an “error” which “dominated Christian theology for much of the past two thousand years,” thus putting himself in the same camp as the 2006 USCCB catechism.

We might have also expected an apology from *Catholics United for the Faith* (CUF), especially its president, Leon Suprenant who, after eliciting critical remarks from its patrons against us for exposing Bishop Rhoades’ endorsement of the USCCB error, in addition to disallowing my response to his charges to appear on the CUF blog, had this to say when a patron pointed out the CUF calumny: “...give me a break.”

We might have also expected an apology from Monsignor David Malloy, General Secretary of the USCCB, who in a letter to me on January 18, 2007, didn't find any problem with page 131 of the USCCB catechism, and passed the buck to the Vatican:

“Dear Dr. Sungenis: Your letter to me of December 12, 2006 concerning a passage in the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults has been received. Thank you for taking the time to send your observations. As you can well understand, the bishops of the United States are very committed to fulfilling their obligation to teach authentically the truths of the Catholic Faith in a manner that is both clear and consistent. To help insure that the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults assists the Bishops in that task, and in conformity with the prescriptions of the Code of Canon Law, after the text's completion and approval by the bishops in their General Meeting, it was submitted to the Holy See for review and recognition. I am pleased that the Holy See has granted that recognition, as noted in each edition of the Catechism. With the hope that this information is helpful to you, I am Sincerely yours in Christ, Monsignor David J. Malloy, General Secretary.”

Or, we might have expected an apology from Fr. James Massa, executive director of the USCCB Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs who, in his meeting with me and Tom Herron in July 2007, stated that “no one was a supersessionist any more” and that E. Michael Jones should stick to “writing about music,” from which he became party to Bishop Rhoades' heavy handed tactics to silence this apostolate from ever speaking on Jewish issues (a move, we find from an essay recently written by Fr. Brian Harrison, which was canonically unsound from start to finish).

But alas, no such apologies have been forthcoming from any of the above mentioned parties, much less have any come from the dozens of lesser-known but equally vociferous ideologues who spend a great portion of their day on Internet forums and blogs on a search and destroy mission for supersessionists. Sorry to say, from my experience with these people over the last six years, we can expect even more calumny and vilification for even daring to expect an apology or thanks. I predict they will do the same thing that they did when my January 2008 article was published in *Culture Wars*. Instead of celebrating the fact that *CW* showed conclusively from

Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium that the Old Covenant is revoked, and that John Paul II's 1980 Mainz speech was, when compared to his 1986 Sydney speech, not teaching that the Old Covenant, the Mosaic covenant, was never revoked, they instead vilified me for a footnote I included about the subversive work of the Anti-Defamation League.

Digging a Little Deeper

Although the erroneous statement is being removed from page 131 of the USCCB catechism, we must also consider what was said in the interview with the *Catholic New Service* to know the story behind the story, as it were. It may be the case that the clerical leaders of the anti-supersessionist movement have not exactly thrown in the towel. I speak in particular about Monsignor David Malloy and Fr. James Massa. Their comments in the interview about the bishops' vote reveal that the excision and replacement on page 131 may be a case of 'six of one, and half a dozen of the other.' If I'm right, then unfortunately the Catholic bishops were led into one gross error when they gave their approval to publish the USCCB catechism in 2006 with its erroneous statement on page 131, and are possibly being led into another potential quagmire in 2008 by the words chosen for its replacement. In brief, whoever the mysterious author of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* is, he (or they) appear to be very crafty.

First, let's look at the bishops' vote a little more closely. The *Catholic News Service* stated: "The proposed change – which would replace one sentence in the catechism – was discussed by the bishops in executive session at their June meeting in Orlando, Fla., but did not receive the needed two-thirds majority of all members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at that time. After mail balloting, the final vote of 231-14, with one abstention, was announced Aug. 5 in a letter to bishops from Msgr. David Malloy, USCCB general secretary." This tells us, of course, that the decision to excise the erroneous statement was not a slam dunk. If in June 2008 less than two-thirds of the USCCB's bishops were on board, it means that less than 162 bishops were in favor of excising the statement on page 131. What made the vote suddenly climb from less than 162 to 231 (or 93%) is anyone's guess. I find it extremely odd that there was such a disparity in the voting from one month to the next. Perhaps there were not enough of the bishops present during the executive session in Florida. Or, perhaps in the privacy of a mail-in ballot the bishops could not only think more clearly about the issue but could voice their opinion without

any peer-pressure from fellow bishops giving them a jaundice eye in a public meeting. I don't know, but in any case, I would certainly like to find out who the 14 "No" votes were.

The Use and Abuse of Scripture Texts

The *Catholic News Service* goes on to say: "The change, which must be confirmed by the Vatican Congregation for Clergy, would remove from the catechism a sentence that reads: 'Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them.' Replacing it would be this sentence: 'To the Jewish people, whom God first chose to hear his word, "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom 9:4-5; cf. CCC, No. 839).'"

Being a lover of Scripture, I usually don't have a problem replacing an erroneous theological statement with a sentence from Holy Writ. Who could object to that? Unfortunately, however, the matter is not so simple in this case. My suspicion is that the unidentified author of the USCCB catechism chose Romans 9:4-5 because, if an uneducated Catholic gives it a cursory reading from certain English translations, he may be unduly influenced to believe that the Jews still have possession of all the items listed in the verse, including the Mosaic covenant. It just so happens that at least three of the items in verse 4 (*i.e.*, "covenants," "law," and "worship") have their source in the Mosaic covenant. If it was the USCCB author's intention to imply a continuity and validity to the Mosaic covenant by citing this suggestive text of Scripture (Romans 9:4-5) so as to give the impression that there is now a divine stamp of approval to the idea that today's Jews still possess the Mosaic covenant, then the USCCB's overall actions are a deceptive piece of propaganda, and our praise for the removal of the previous erroneous sentence must be severally muted. I am not accusing the catechism's author or editor of this motive; rather, I am only saying that IF this is their motive, then they are being unethical and doing a great disservice to the Catholic community in an apparent attempt to save face for themselves and continue their agenda. I hope to God this is not their intention, but if it is, I am just as obligated, according to Canon Law 212, 2-3, to point out this subterfuge to the Christian faithful as I was obligated to point out the fallacious theological content of the original wording on page 131.

Let me elaborate. First, I find it rather suspicious that the authors chose not to use what has become the *ex officio* translation of the Catholic Church in America, the *New American Bible* (NAB). Perhaps the reason for bypassing the NAB is that it does not contain the word “belong” in Romans 9:4, the very word that implies the Jews still possess all the items listed in the verse, including the Mosaic covenant. The NAB reads:

(4) They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; (5) theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.

The NAB, at this point being a very accurate translation, does not have the word “belong” simply because it does not appear in the original Greek. Additionally, since there are no textual variants in the verse, we know precisely what St. Paul wrote and we can thus examine it without prejudice. The phrase in question is “theirs the adoption” since it is the introductory phrase that leads the remaining list of items (glory, covenants, law, *etc.*). The problem for English translators is that neither the phrase in question nor the rest of the relative clause contains a verb. In other words, the verse does not say “They are Israelites; of whom belong the adoption...the glory...the covenants” but literally “They are Israelites, of whom the adoption...the glory...the covenants.” The word “belong,” which is a present tense verb added by some English translators, could give the unwarranted impression that the “Israelites” (or Jews) presently possess these blessings because the blessings presently “belong” to them. In actuality, the only verb of the sentence appears in the main clause (“Who are Israelites”), the object of which the new edition of the USCCB will now refer to as “The Jewish people” instead of “Israelites,” which is perhaps an attempt to further distance the Jews from the past and make them closer to the present, for the “Israelites” under Moses were not called “Jews.” The word “Jew” does not appear until 2Kings 25:25 in the RSV, almost a thousand years after Moses.

As it stands, without a verb in the secondary clause the translator really has no grammatical basis for giving any suggestion that today’s Jews presently possess the Mosaic covenant or any of the other items in Paul’s list, a fact of which the NAB was apparently very sensitive. If one decides to add words to the passage, it could just as easily be translated in the past tense, *e.g.*, “of whom belonged the adoption...the glory...the covenants,” which, of course, indicates that the

Jews once possessed these blessings, but no longer do. Interestingly enough, a survey of various popular bibles reveals that the translators were quite divided on their renderings of Romans 9:4. A good portion of Catholic and Protestant bibles treated Romans 9:4 as referring to the past, yet a majority of Protestant bibles treated it as a present.

Catholic Bibles: Past Tense: New Jerusalem Bible: "They are Israelites; it was they who were adopted as children, the glory was theirs..."; Jerusalem Bible: "My brothers of Israel...they were adopted as sons, they were given the glory and the covenants..."; Neutral: New American Bible: "They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory,"; Present Tense: Douay Rheims: "Who are Israelites: to whom belongeth the adoption."

Protestant Bibles: Neutral: King James Version: "Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory"; Present Tense: American Standard: "who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory,"; New American Standard: "who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons"; New International Version: "the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory"; New Revised Standard: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory"; Revised Standard Version: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory"; Past and Present Tense: New English Bible: "They are Israelites: they were made God's sons; theirs is the splendor of the divine presence."

There are several points at issue regarding these translations. First is the fact that even though an English translation may render the verse as an implied present tense, in the Greek language, even if a present tense verb were employed, it does not necessarily mean that the action is occurring in the present time. A very common Greek present is the "historical present," in which case a Greek author would use a present tense verb but apply it to past time. The problem for the English reader, however, is that he doesn't always know when the Greek is using an "historical present," unless, perhaps, he figures it out by the context. The bottom line is this: even if the English translator supplies a present tense verb for a Greek sentence, the Greek, either because there really is no verb in the sentence, or because a Greek present tense verb does not always point to the present, there is no basis for interpreting Romans 9:4-5 as applying to the present (namely, that the Jews still possess the "covenants," "law" and "worship" of the Old Testament).

Second, since the English version of the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* uses the 1946 Protestant *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) in its quotes from Scripture, it translates Romans 9:4 as noted above: “To the Jews belong the sonship, the glory...” (CCC ¶839). It is the same RSV translation that is now being proposed for Romans 9:4-5 in the future corrected edition of the USCCB catechism on page 131. Of course, some astute scholar would point out that the 1994 Vatican Catechism and the next edition of the USCCB catechism are really using the *Catholic edition* of the Protestant RSV, since Catholic editors revised some of the Protestant translations. But the reality is, the Catholic editors of the 1946 RSV accepted all 433 verses from the Protestant translators for the book of Romans, except four verses (Romans 1:4; 5:5; 8:11; 9:5, the last of which was changed to: “Christ, who is God over all, be blessed forever” from the RSV’s “Christ. God who is over all be blessed forever”). Hence, the verse appearing in the 1994 Vatican Catechism for Romans 9:4 is the original translation from the 1946 Protestant Revised Standard Version. This has its own set of problems, for most of the Protestant translations around the turn of the twentieth century, including the Revised Standard Version of 1946, were heavily influenced by Dispensationalism, Millennialism, Zionism, and various other strains of thought that were promoting a political and spiritual revival for Israel and the Jews. The tendency among these bibles was to slant the translation to be more favorable to that ideology. (Of the many examples, the RSV’s translation of Romans 3:2 as: “...the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God” changes the Greek aorist (past) tense of *episteuthesan* to the present tense “are entrusted” in place of the correct translation “were entrusted”). Often when there was an ambiguity in the Greek or Hebrew, these Protestant translators would take full advantage of it for their ideological cause. Conversely, the fairest and most accurate way of translating these types of passages is to give them a literal, word-for-word reading from the Greek, but if it is necessary to add a word or two to make the text easier for English readers, the translator should provide a footnote to alert the reader to that addition (or as the King James does, the translator puts the added words in italic font). As it stands, with most translations that render Romans 9:4 as a present tense, few explain that they are either adding words (e.g., “belong”) or that the Greek can use an “historical present,” or any nuance of the Greek language. Hence, the English reader may naturally think that if the verse says: “They are Israelites. To them belong the adoption...glory...covenants” that the Jews presently possess the Mosaic covenant and all the other blessings listed in the verse.

Without a footnote in the USCCB catechism, this very impression can easily be implanted in the reader's mind, and I've seen this from personal experience.

In reality, there is a precise grammatical reason why St. Paul excluded a verb from the secondary clause of Romans 9:4. Paul's intention is not to emphasize time but identity or origination. If we examine the items closely, we see that they are identity markers, seven of them, each one demonstrating precisely what made one an "Israelite." Specific applications from the OT are as follows: "sonship" (Ex 4:22-23; 19:5; Hs 11:1); "glory" (Ex 40:34; Lv 16:2); "covenants" (Gn 17-31; Ex 6, *et al.*); "law" (Ex 20; Dt 5, 28); "worship" (Ex 23-34; Lv 1-27); "promises" (Gn 12-26; Is 53; Ez 36-37, *et al.*); "fathers" (Gn 12-28). Lastly, Christ is the eighth and the beginning of a new seven. The "Israelites" are thus identified as the Christ-bearers.

In light of the addition of Christ as the eighth item (or the beginning of a new and open-ended seven), we can easily see how the Greek grammar is intending to show that these eight items originated from the Jews. This meaning is proven by the fact that the last item in Romans 9:5, "Christ according to the flesh," is also missing a verb, thus following the same syntactical pattern Paul established in the beginning of verse 4. As such, we can use the last phrase to prove the intent of the previous phrases. Obviously, the Jews at large do not possess Christ presently, since the whole point of Romans 9-11 is to show how obstinate the Jews have been against Christ and that only a remnant have accepted Him at any given time in history (Romans 10:16-21; 11:1-8). The phrase "Christ according to the flesh" is New Testament terminology employed to demonstrate that Christ's actual flesh came from the flesh of Israelites, and therefore Christ was as genuine a savior after the seed of Abraham and David as there could be (*cf.* 2Sam 7:12; Matt. 1:1; Rm 1:3). But although Christ originated from the Jews, the Jews do not possess Christ, for they do not believe in him. All in all, the Greek grammar requires this simple logic: if the Jews do not possess Christ, then neither do they possess the seven other items, including the Mosaic covenant.

Hence, if one attempts to say that the Jews of today still possess the items listed in Romans 9:4-5, a serious theological problem is created, for it would require that the Mosaic covenant (which Paul refers to in Romans 9:4 as "the giving of the law") should have continued, in its totality, into our day and never ceased, including all the "eye for an eye" laws (Ex 21:24);

stoning for adultery (Dt 22:13f); rejection for castration (Dt 23:1), *etc.* Likewise, all the ceremonial laws (which Paul refers to in Romans 9:4 as “the worship”) should have continued unabated in our day, including mandatory circumcision, the temple cult, *etc.* Is this not what religious Jews do today, all the while that they reject Christ and Christianity? The most egregious crime, of course, would be that committed by the Catholic Church, since she apparently ignored, for the last 2000 years, the continuity of the Old Testament legal and cultic blessings listed in Romans 9:4-5 for today’s Jews. Moreover, St. Paul would have contradicted himself, for in other passages he clearly stated that the “giving of the law” and “the worship” were superseded by the New Covenant (*cf.* Heb 7:18; 10:9; 2Cor 3:6-14; Gal 3:10-12; 5:1-4; Col 2:15-16). In fact, the supersession of the Mosaic covenant is the very reason that all the civil and ceremonial laws of Israel have been replaced by the canons and sacraments of the Catholic Church.

So where does all this grammatical analysis leave us? On the one hand, if the author of the USCCB catechism is quoting Romans 9:4-5 for the purpose of secretly installing a “proof-text” for the catechism’s previous view that the “Mosaic covenant is eternally valid for the Jews,” then the author has been quite deceptive and he has only exacerbated the problem with which he began in the previous edition of the catechism published in 2006. On the other hand, if the catechism has innocently made a concerted effort to rectify its previous error and is not implying (by its quoting Romans 9:4-5) that today’s Jews still have possession of the Mosaic covenant and all its trappings, then I heartily applaud them for their efforts. However, a footnote stating that the quoting of Romans 9:4-5 is not for the purpose of saying that the Jews presently possess the Mosaic law should be added, especially in light of the fact that the USCCB, by its own admission, has already been caught putting a totally erroneous statement on page 131 of its previous edition. After all the negative press, readers certainly have the right to be suspicious of the USCCB’s intent and competence in this regard.

The “Talking Points”

For now, it remains to be seen which of these two motives was behind the recent change in the catechism. If the former motive is the reality, it may explain why a great majority of the bishops, who are for the most part very liberal in their theology and sympathetic to Jewish

causes, suddenly became so agreeable to make the change, for nothing doctrinal has really changed, except that, by quoting a passage of Scripture (Romans 9:4-5), an impression of divine approval has now been stamped onto the previous belief about the Mosaic covenant remaining valid for the Jews. That very impression is suggested by some of the comments made by Monsignor Malloy and Fr. Massa, as well as the “talking points” distributed to the bishops. The *Catholic News Service* reported: “Talking points, which were distributed to the bishops along with Msgr. Malloy's letter, state that the proposed revision of the USCCB catechism:

“...is not a change in the church's teaching. Catholics understand that all previous covenants that God made with the Jewish people have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ through the new covenant established through his sacrificial death on the cross...The prior version of the text might be understood to imply that one of the former covenants imparts salvation without the mediation of Christ, whom Christians believe to be the universal savior of all people.”

First, the “talking points” are admitting that our analysis was spot on, namely, the prior version of the USCCB catechism (“...God’s revealing his divine plan of salvation to a chosen people with whom he made enduring covenants. Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them”) implies that the Mosaic covenant “imparts salvation.” Secondly, and most important, the “talking points” may be trying to cover over the catechism’s error by suggesting that the only reason its previous version should be corrected is not because it implied that the Mosaic covenant could impart salvation to today’s Jews, but it said so without including “the mediation of Christ.” In other words, the Mosaic covenant can be salvific for the Jews as long as it is attached to Christ in some fashion. If that is the meaning and intent of the “talking points” it is highly erroneous. In fact, it is just as erroneous as the USCCB catechism’s previous attempt to say that the Jews have an eternally valid covenant with Moses. I speak from experience on this issue, for just a few months ago, Bishop Rhoades tried to use the same fall back position in his public interview on the subject. Instead of saying that the USCCB catechism was wrong on page 131, Rhoades suggested that it was only short of including the mediation of Christ. He stated:

I do not interpret anything on page 131 of the U.S. Catechism for Adults to mean that the Jewish people (or any group) have their own independent saving path to God, outside of Jesus Christ. I can see how the one statement that “the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them” might be misunderstood. I would interpret it to mean that the Jewish people retain a special relationship to God because of the Old Covenant, but I would not interpret it to mean that the Jewish people can be saved through the Old Covenant apart from Christ [emphasis mine].

My response to this was:

Once again, the question posed by the interviewer seems to be calculated, for it adds the phrase “outside of Jesus Christ.” As such, the question could be implying that, although “independent saving paths to God” are invalid by themselves, they are not invalid if they are not “outside of Jesus Christ,” whereby they inevitably become dependent on Christ rather than independent. Consequently, Bishop Rhoades may have inferred such an intent from the question, since he also used the two phrases “outside of Jesus Christ” and “apart from Christ” in his answer.

What Bishop Rhoades should have been asked is whether the Old Covenant has been revoked and superseded by the New Covenant, in addition to asking him what he understands by the word “revoked” and “superseded.” If the bishop answered “yes” to the revocation and supersession of the Old Covenant, then it would have been clearly understood that he does not believe in “dual covenant” theology. Unfortunately, and perhaps by design, none of those pointed questions were asked of Bishop Rhoades in this interview.

The *Catholic New Service* goes on to say, “Father James Massa, executive director of the USCCB Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, told *Catholic News Service* Aug. 11 that he did not ‘anticipate any tensions in the relationship’ between Catholics and Jews as long as the proposed change is properly understood as arising from a need to ‘remove ambiguity’ in the catechism. ‘The catechism is not the place where you work out difficult theological

problems,' he said. 'That's what scholars are charged to do.'" It goes without saying that a catechism is not where one "works out theological problems." By the same token, the catechism is not the place where scholars are permitted to create theological problems, as was the case on page 131 of the 2006 version. But now, although the USCCB has decided to quote Scripture as a replacement of its previous error, this results, unfortunately, in no guarantee that the right concept will be implanted in the reader's mind, for, as the Catholic Church knows very well when it has had to confront the myriad of non-Catholic denominations in the world, everyone has their own interpretation of what Scripture means, and some passages of Paul's, as Peter says, are "hard to understand and the unstable wrestle with them to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). Instead of adding an unexegeted and uncontextualized passage of Scripture (namely, Romans 9:4-5), the author of the catechism should have left well enough alone. The excision of the erroneous statement ("Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them") was sufficient without trying to cover it over with a difficult and ambiguous passage of Scripture. In fact, if the author of the catechism is so keen on quoting Scripture, why didn't he quote, much less teach, anywhere in his catechism the numerous passages in the New Testament that are crystal clear about the revocation of the Mosaic covenant, such as Hebrews 7:18; 8:7,13; 10:9; 2Corinthians 3:6-14; Colossians 2:14-15; Ephesians 2:15? One can search the Index of the 2006 USCCB catechism, but he will not find one reference to any of these crucial verses, or even a statement in the catechism that the Mosaic covenant has been revoked.

The Jews Have "A" Covenant With God

Later in the interview, the *Catholic New Service* writes: "Father Massa said the status of the Jewish covenant has been "a very fertile area for theological investigation" in recent years, although church teaching has been clear on two related points: (a) the Jewish people "are in a real relationship with God based on a covenant that has never been revoked"; (b) "All covenants with Israel find fulfillment in Christ, who is the savior of all." In this instance, Fr. Massa is trying to capitalize on ambiguity. Notice his words: "based on a covenant that has never been revoked," but he does not alert the reader to the precise identity of the covenant he has in view. This is the same shell game that he and many others have been playing with these covenants for the last few years. According to Fr. Massa, there is "a" covenant still possessed by today's Jews that their

fellow Jews possessed in the Old Testament, and this unrevoked covenant presently gives the Jews, *en masse*, a “real relationship with God.” All Jews today who practice Judaism are apparently active members of this covenant. But the only covenants that the Jews possessed in the Old Testament, *en masse*, were the covenant of circumcision beginning with Abraham and the legal covenant beginning with Moses. All Jews were included in these covenants, whether they wanted to be included or not (otherwise they would have been cut off from the Israelite community). So which of those two is Fr. Massa referring to? He doesn’t tell us, and I believe there is a good reason for his silence. The ploy, it seems to me, is to be deliberately ambiguous so that no one can pinpoint its identity and neutralize Fr. Massa’s appeal to “a” perpetual covenant for the Jews that supposedly gives them “a real relationship with God.” It seems that Fr. Massa wants to create a sort of quasi-covenant, a noosphere of covenant (to borrow a term from de Chardin) that just hovers over the Jews like some gigantic spiritual and ethereal cloud, but one that is undefined and unidentified.

And here is a bit of irony. In the 2006 edition of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, Fr. Massa and the catechism’s author had no problem telling us the precise covenant they wanted to see fit the category of creating a “real relationship with God that has never been revoked.” It was the Mosaic covenant, stated clearly and plainly on page 131 of their catechism: “Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them.” (Note that “eternally valid” is just another way of saying “never been revoked”). But since the USCCB discovered that this wording was erroneous, Fr. Massa switches back to promoting “a” covenant and purposely avoids telling us what covenant it is. This was the same problem I had with Dr. Eugene Fisher (another non-bishop of the USCCB) in our discussions last year about the nature of the covenant. Dr. Fisher kept insisting that the Jews have their own covenant. When I asked him for the identity of that covenant, Dr. Fisher abruptly closed the discussion.

Second, the Bible nowhere says that “The Jewish people are in a ‘real relationship with God based on a covenant that has never been revoked.’” The only thing the Bible says about a “revoking” in regards to the Jews is in Romans 11:29, but it says only that the “gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (or unrepentable),” not that the covenants God established exclusively with the Jews, *en masse*, are irrevocable. In other words, God has never revoked his gift and call

of salvation to the Jews, since that is the whole thrust of St. Paul's teaching in Romans 9-11 – that the Jews can still be saved, if they will repent and accept Christ (*e.g.*, Romans 11:14: “if somehow I might move to jealousy my kinsmen and save some of them” or Romans 11:23: “if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in”). But since there is only one legal covenant today, the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, what covenant could the Jews possibly possess, *en masse*, that will give them a “real relationship with God” other than the New Covenant? Instead of admitting this, Fr. Massa is purposely muddying the waters by suggesting that there is “a” covenant somewhere out there that the Jews continue to have apart from Christianity. What covenant is that, Fr. Massa? There are only two covenants left: (a) the Mosaic covenant and (b) the Abrahamic covenant. Fr. Massa has already admitted that it cannot be the Mosaic covenant since, as he admitted in a recent conversation with a CAI patron, he led the removal of the faulty sentence from page 131 of the catechism. So that leaves the Abrahamic covenant. But the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision was clearly abrogated, so says that Council of Florence (Denzinger ¶695). That means that any Jew who is practicing circumcision today as part of his religious obligation to God is condemned by the Catholic Church.

So what does that leave us? It leaves us with precisely what I stated in my *Culture Wars* article of January 2008 – the spiritual side of Abraham's covenant, the same truth the Catholic Church has taught continually in its dogmatic tradition, as did John Paul II in his November 1986 speech in Sydney when he said: “...the Catholic faith is rooted...in the irrevocable covenant made with Abraham...for it is the teaching of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that the Jews are beloved of God, who has called them with an irrevocable calling.” This is the covenant that saves Jews and Gentiles, but neither the Jews nor the Gentiles can be a part of it unless they believe as Abraham believed, and today, that means accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as Scripture says of Abraham and Moses (*cf.* John 8:56; Heb 11:26; Rom 4:1-4). This was the covenant that divided Jew from Jew, because only those Jews who had a genuine faith-relationship with God and confessed their sins could ever reap the benefits of that covenant (Romans 3:28-4:12). That is why Paul says in Romans 9:6: “For they are not all Israel who are from Israel.” When Christ came, the spiritual side of the Abrahamic covenant became the New Covenant, and Jews and Gentiles are presently being saved in that very covenant (*cf.* Romans 4:1-24; Gal 3:6-29; Hebrews 10:16-18; 2 Corinthians 3:6-18).

The difference between Abraham's physical covenant of circumcision and the spiritual covenant of salvation is that all the Jews were part of the former, but only those who believed as God required them to believe were part of the latter. In the same way, all Jews today who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are part of Abraham's spiritual covenant, and, of course, those who disbelieve are not members of that covenant, but of the synagogue of Satan, as it were. The crucial point is: the covenant that is "not revoked" does not apply to ALL Jews. It only applies to believing Jews, Jews who believe in Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham (Galatians 3:29: "And if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"). Practically speaking, most Jews (since they do not believe in Jesus Christ) are not members of Abraham's spiritual covenant, and they have no other covenant that can bring them to God, for there is only one name under heaven by which men can be saved, namely, Jesus Christ. So, it would behoove Fr. Massa to stop teaching that the Jews, *en masse* or *at large*, have "a" covenant with God, and that because of this unidentified covenant they possess some "real relationship with God" or that they possess some lofty spiritual status with God that Gentiles don't have. There is no such covenant, for in the only covenant that exists today there is no Jew or Gentile in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28).

"Not Flat Out Wrong"

We get a further impression in the interview that Fr. Massa is not ready to throw in the towel when the *Catholic News Service* states: "Father Massa added that the current wording in the catechism 'was not flat-out wrong' but 'was ambiguous and needed to be qualified.'" Here we see what Fr. Massa seems to be hankering for. Two-thirds of the bishops told him to excise the statement from page 131 of the catechism, apparently because they believed it was erroneous, but Fr. Massa still wants to save face for himself and his like-minded theologians by making the outlandish claim that the sentence in question "was not flat out wrong," implying that there was some truth, howbeit ever so small, to the idea that the Mosaic covenant is still valid for the Jews! It seems to be the case, then, that Fr. Massa still believes the Jews both possess the Mosaic covenant and by it have a "real relationship with God," and he only needed a clearer statement, this time supposedly from the Bible itself (namely, Romans 9:4-5), to validate that belief. But here is the stark truth: there is no truth to the statement on page 131 of the USCCB catechism, and it was not "ambiguous." The USCCB catechism plainly and clearly stated a categorical

falsehood – that the Mosaic covenant was valid for the Jews. Equally egregious was the previous sentence in the catechism, for it was followed by the word “Thus” in the second sentence, implying that it was through the Mosaic covenant that the Jews could still receive salvation! (“This began the history of God’s revealing his divine plan of salvation to a chosen people with whom he made enduring covenants. Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them”). If anything, this is a “flat out” heresy, since it contradicts the Magisterium, Tradition and Scripture, all of which we painstakingly documented in our January 2008 article. We can thank God that the Holy Spirit moved the bishops, whatever their personal motives, to throw that dubious sentence as far as east is from west.

Commenting further on Massa’s explanation, the *Catholic New Service* writes: “But because the catechism is an educational tool and not a theological textbook, the bishops decided not to expand that section to provide a fuller consideration of the issue, he said.” But what this amounts to saying is that an unexegeted and uncontextualized verse of Scripture, namely, Romans 9:4-5, was put in the place of a previous erroneous statement for the purpose of saying that, if the Jews still possess the Mosaic covenant, it is “not flat out wrong,” just “ambiguous.” To do the right thing, especially since they previously did the wrong thing, the bishops should have indeed “decided to expand that section to provide a fuller consideration” of the difficult and highly suggestive passage of Romans 9:4-5, for if it had been properly translated and exegeted, there would be no suggestion that the Jews still possess and are inevitably sanctified, *en masse*, with a “real relationship with God” by “a” covenant that originated in the Old Testament.

According to the *Catholic News Service*, Fr. Massa also said: “it is also the church’s understanding that the full incorporation of Israel into the saving covenant of Christ may be the fruit of the end times, may not happen until the end of history.” Finally Fr. Massa speaks about the “saving covenant of Christ.” But this reference necessarily means that the “a” covenant Fr. Massa referred to earlier as the covenant which provides a “real relationship with God based on a covenant that has never been revoked,” is not the saving covenant of Christ. For if all Jews are under the “covenant that has never been revoked,” yet only some are incorporated into the “saving covenant of Christ,” then obviously we are talking about two different covenants that have two different results, yet both are said to have the same duration (*i.e.*, never revoked). Hence, it appears the Fr. Massa is still teaching dual covenant theology.

As for the claim that it is the “church’s understanding that the full incorporation of Israel into the saving covenant may be the fruit of the end times,” the operative word here is “may,” since the “church” certainly doesn’t hold as dogma, or even official teaching, that the Jews will have a “full incorporation” into Christ. The 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ¶674, which stands as the only official statement addressing of this particular issue, is certainly not definitive about such an outcome, since it merely strings together various quotes from Chapter 11 of Paul’s letter to the Romans without exegeting them. The 1994 Catechism could just as well be teaching that the “full incorporation of Israel” is occurring presently as the Gospel goes forth to all the Jews and Gentiles of the world, and those Jews, from Abraham to Christ’s Second Coming, who accept the Gospel will represent the “full incorporation” of the Jews into the “saving covenant.”

More importantly, since Fr. Massa holds to the idea of a future “full incorporation” of the Jews into the “saving covenant,” he not only admits here that the Mosaic covenant is non-salvific, but his thesis also leads him to the twisted logic that, if only in the distant future are the Jews going to accept the Gospel, then they will not accept it in our day, and therefore we are not required to preach the Gospel to them today. This is the very thesis behind Cardinal Keeler’s *Reflections on Covenant and Missions* document that he forged with Jewish rabbis in 2002. This unproven prediction about the future leads them to believe that since the Jews will not receive Christ in our present day, then they should not be “targeted” with the Gospel. (Keeler’s exact words were: “...campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church”). This same mentality leads Fr. Massa to believe that, in the interim period before the end of time, the Jews, *en masse*, can enjoy some kind of quasi-relationship with God based on their former covenants in the Old Testament, as if these covenants create some kind of spiritual holding-pattern for the Jews while God prepares them for the full-blown covenant in Jesus Christ, even if most of them are long dead before the so-called mass conversion takes place. This is the same idea that Jewish convert Roy Schoeman tries to establish in his book *Salvation is from the Jews*. The entire idea is false and destructive. The Jews are no more privileged than anyone else in the world who has not accepted Christ as the savior. Their anti-Christian religions are not going to benefit them in the least. If they become saved, they will be saved in spite of their religions, not because of them. In fact, the idea that the Jews are in some kind of holding pattern until the end of time is precisely what the devil would

want for them, because without “targeting” them for salvation by preaching the Gospel, it consigns all the Jews of today to a life without salvation in Jesus Christ, leading ultimately to the damnation of their souls. This is precisely why having the correct doctrine is so important, since false doctrine ultimately leads to damnation.

No Real Urgency

Finally, the Catholic New Service states: “In his letter to bishops, Msgr. Malloy said that if the Congregation for Clergy grants ‘*recognitio*,’ or approval, to the revised passage it will be incorporated into the next printing of the U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults. ‘The next printing will not occur until the remaining volumes from the latest printing are exhausted,’ he added. Adopted by the U.S. bishops in November 2004 and later approved by the Vatican, the 664-page adult catechism is the first official catechism produced by the nation's bishops since the creation of the Baltimore Catechism, first published in 1885 and revised in 1941. In the first two weeks after its July 31, 2006, publication, it sold more than 25,000 copies, according to USCCB Publishing. Therese Brown, associate director for marketing, sales and service at USCCB Publishing, said about 190,000 copies of the adult catechism had been sold to date. Another printing of 50,000 copies took place in May and those copies are expected to run out around the middle of next year, she said.”

Barring a systematic retrieval of all the erroneous catechisms the USCCB sold, at the least the USCCB is obligated to issue an official retraction and apology on its website and make every effort to let the public know that the reason the statement from page 131 was summarily excised out of its catechism was that it was clearly erroneous, or, readjusting Fr. Massa’s words, the statement on page 131 was “flat out wrong.” As it stands, although the USCCB’s removal of the erroneous statement is much appreciated, considering the comments made by both Msgr. Malloy and Fr. Massa, I am quite leery that the same dual covenant mentality persists in the thinking of these men, and that the addition of Romans 9:4-5 into page 131 was for the purpose of making it appear as if the Jews still possess the Mosaic covenant, but this time the catechism has stamped it with divine approval from the pen of St. Paul. Nothing could be further from the truth for St. Paul. The USCCB has an obligation to teach, clearly and distinctly, that the Jews do not possess any individual covenant with God, whether it be with Moses, Abraham or David, for all those

covenants have either been abrogated or have transitioned into the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, respectively. In brief, if the Jew does not accept Christ, then he possesses no covenant that gives him a “real relationship with God.”

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