

Catholic Apologetics International and its Teachings on the Jews

For the last five years or so, *Catholic Apologetics International* (CAI) has been in the throes of controversy due to its hard-line positions regarding the Jews. Although during that controversy CAI has been able to educate a lot of people who would normally be ignorant of these pertinent matters, at the same time, when we consider the highly sensitive nature today of issues concerning the Jewish people, the tone in which CAI communicated its ideas was often expressed in an ill-advised manner. That fault, coupled with the partiality many Catholics maintain for the Jews and their ideological causes, led to various animosities and accusations against CAI. It also caused confusion regarding what is and is not the authentic position of the Catholic Church towards the Jewish people. Some of this confusion, no doubt, is due to the difference in emphasis that the Catholic Church herself has taught regarding the Jews, since in more traditional times a more hard-line approach was prevalent whereas today a more conciliatory approach is in vogue. Unfortunately, people tend to fall on one side or the other of this divide, and the result is confusion that often boils over into controversy and animosity.

Since our apostolate, in both its name and its content, publicizes itself as a Catholic institution that teaches the Catholic faith, it is our responsibility to make sure we abide by the proper principles of faith and conduct to the best of our ability. Irrespective of whether CAI takes a more hard-line approach to the Jews, still, the Catholic Church is as much concerned about the manner in which the Gospel is communicated as it is about the content of that Gospel. As St. Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 13, a man may have the faith to move mountains, but if he does not have love, he is a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

The issue of how CAI has been communicating its concerns about the Jews was recently brought to our attention by the bishop of the diocese in which CAI is located, the Very Reverend, Kevin C. Rhoades of Harrisburg, PA. In a personal letter he wrote to me, and in a follow up meeting I recently had with his vicar general, the Very Reverend William J. King, JCD, along with the executive director for ecumenical and inter-

religious affairs of the USCCB, the Reverend James Massa, the shepherds God has placed as overseers of my life and work have asked me to reconsider the tone and content with which I write about the Jewish people for CAI. They provided me various examples in which I have crossed the line into inappropriate language and accusations, and I communicated to them my agreement with their overall assessment.

Since I am a faithful son of the Catholic Church, I take their wisdom and counsel with the utmost seriousness and consider their direction as if it was from God himself. I consider it an honor not only to be a member of the Catholic Church but also to be under the vigilance of such wise and caring pastors. In short, I consider it a privilege to obey them.

Accordingly, CAI is in the process of removing all the content on its website concerning the Jews in order to make the initial adjustments in complying with my bishop's directive. If and when CAI edits the material to make it conform to our bishop's guidelines, we will repost it, but since my time is very limited and I have many other projects that need my attention, I do not see a reposting of the material happening very quickly, if at all. If in the future we write any new material on the Jews, it will always be with the required due diligence, as if the bishop were present with us. Since he acts in God's stead, we will do our utmost to please him so as to preserve the peace and tranquility he so desires to maintain in the body of Christ.

Rest assured, CAI is committed to the truth, whether it regards the Jews or any other identifiable group or idea. Neither our obedience to our bishop nor our bishop's directives should in any way be interpreted as either of us compromising on the truth, but only that the truth be communicated with, as Canon Law prescribes, with a "human and Christian spirit" (c. 822, 2-3), both in its content and in its tone.

For the time being, although articles on the Jews will not appear on our site for the indefinite future, *Catholic Apologetics International* maintains certain theological positions about the Jews that we consider neither hard-line nor soft-line but merely what we believe is taught by Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium. Since we are a teaching institution, we feel obligated to reveal and confirm these beliefs to our patrons who follow and support us. Our bishop and his advisors are allowing us to express our views if they are stated in an inoffensive manner. These stipulations about the Jews will be a

permanent fixture on the website of CAI so that everyone will know where we stand from here on out.

As such, it is the qualified opinion of *Catholic Apologetics International* that:

- 1) The Old Covenant has been superseded and replaced by the New Covenant (cf. 2Cor 3:6-14; Heb 7:18; 8:7-13; 10:9-18; Councils of Florence, Trent, Catechism of Pius V). The New Covenant is the only covenant presently existing between God and man, and this covenant is expressed in its fullness by the one, holy, universal and apostolic Church, the Roman Catholic Church. This New Covenant will abide until the return of Christ, and no other covenant, either with the Jews or with anyone else, now exists or will be reintroduced. Accordingly, the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 121, and John Paul II's 1980 speech in Mainz, Germany, of which both contain a clause stating that the Old Covenant is not revoked, was not intended by either authority to apply to the Old Covenant legal system that God made with the nation of Israel, but merely as a synonym for the Old Testament Scriptures which, because they are God's continuing and inerrant revelation to man, will abide for all peoples until the end of time. The context of both the 1994 Catechism and John Paul II's speech make this meaning and intention clear if read correctly. Unfortunately, both the Catechism and John Paul II's speech have been greatly misunderstood, resulting in various clerics and laypeople making erroneous conclusions, e.g., that the Jews presently have a separate and eternal covenant with God and/or are not required to convert to Christianity for their salvation.

- 2) The New Covenant in Jesus Christ invites both Jews and Gentiles to become members of the Catholic Church for the purpose of receiving the salvation of their souls. Neither the Jews nor the Gentiles have a separate covenant or a different means by which they can become saved. All peoples, whether Jew or Gentile, are required to submit their hearts and wills to Jesus Christ as Savior, to acknowledge that He is the Son of God, and that His authority presently rests in the Pontiff of the Catholic Church. Those who refuse to do submit to these commands subject

themselves to the eternal wrath of God. Barring incidents of invincible ignorance that only God can ultimately judge as valid, no one has as an excuse for not submitting to them.

- 3) The Jews, as a race, are no longer the “chosen people” of God since that designation was true only in the Old Testament when the nation of Israel had a special relationship with God because of the legal standing afforded by the Old Covenant (Dt 10:15; Is 43:20; 2Cor 6:14). Since the Old Covenant has been legally abolished and superseded by the New Covenant, it is the Catholic Church and its members who are now the “chosen people” and who take over all the rights and privileges that were once given to the nation of Israel (cf. 1Pt 2:9-10; Rom 3:1-2; Ac 15:1-12, *Lumen Gentium* 2, 9; *Ad Gentes* 1, 5).
- 4) Judaism, like many other world religions, has positive elements that teach its people to love God and love their neighbor, and by these general principles the religions of the world, and the political societies that grow out of them, can have a common basis for living together peaceably on this earth (Rm 12:18 – 13:1-10). But insofar as attaining citizenship in the next world, the kingdom of heaven, no world religion, including Judaism, has the ability to provide it. Salvation comes only from the Catholic Church; and if, by God’s grace, someone outside formal membership in the Catholic Church becomes saved, it is not by their own religion that this might occur, but by the residual graces that stem from the Catholic Church and which are sometimes received by informal means.
- 5) The present occupation of the land of Palestine by Jews who migrated there from different parts of the world beginning in 1948 is not a fulfillment of positive divine prophecy from either the Old or the New Testaments. It is strictly a political movement engineered by the powers of the world. God, long ago, fulfilled his promises concerning the giving of Palestine to Israel, but that land was taken away from Israel, once and for all, because of their continued disobedience, and there exist no other promises of land for the Jews yet to be

fulfilled (Josh. 21:43-45; 1Kgs. 8:56; Neh. 9:7-8; Mt 23:37-38; 27:51; Lk 21:20-24). Consequently, any attempts by the citizens of Israel today to: (a) reclaim the land of Palestine as if they were following a divine directive, (b) resurrect Old Testament worship in Jerusalem based on the Mosaic covenant, or (c) claim that they are divinely destined to root out Gentile foreigners from Palestine, are likewise devoid of any basis in biblical prophecy; and, in fact, are totally antithetical to biblical teachings. As a corollary point, the nation of Israel today is not a God-favored or a God-protected nation above any other nation. It is only the Catholic Church and those who benefit from the graces that flow out of her who possess the only special protection guaranteed by God on this earth, both physical and spiritual (Mt 16:18-19; 28:20; Jn 17:9). All Old Testament prophecies alluding to a type of “restoration of Israel,” or any such similar language, were fulfilled in the Catholic Church of the New Testament (Mt 11:14; Ac 2:16-21; 15:16-18; Gal 3:28; 6:16; 1Pt 2:9-10). The only “land” that faithful Jews of the Old Testament and Christians of the New Testament look forward to inhabiting is the heavenly city made by God (Heb 11:10, 16, 39-40; 2Pt 3:10-13).

- 6) The major percentage of Jews in the world today, as well as those who existed for the 2000 years prior to Christ and those who lived for the 2000 after Christ, have been blinded to the Gospel of Jesus Christ by their own doing; and only a remnant of them have been saved at any given time (Rom. 9:1-6, 16-21; 11:5-14; 2Cor 3:3-14). By the same token, God has not forsaken the Jews, since he still allows each one of them who desire to become saved the privilege to do so, and which privilege will never be taken away because, in regards to salvation, God’s gifts and calling have not been, and will never be, revoked (Rom. 11:1-2, 14-29). Moreover, it is our considered opinion that we are not to expect a massive conversion of Jews in the future nor are we to base the timing of the return of Christ on such a conversion. In the same vein we conclude that various biblical enthusiasts from Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish quarters who have interpreted certain scriptural passages as predicting both a divine re-establishment of the land of Palestine for the Jews and/or a large conversion of Jews to Christianity prior to

the return of Christ, have categorically misunderstood the Scripture's teaching on these subjects. Moreover, attempts to place the Millennium of Apocalypse Chapter 20 either in the Old Testament or after the Second Coming of Christ are also incorrect. As the Catholic Church has always taught, the Millennium is a symbolic period of time between the First and Second Comings of Christ.

- 7) It is the hope of *Catholic Apologetics International* that Jews and Catholics can work together to live peaceably in this present world, and that we cooperate with one another whenever we have the opportunity to do so. All forms of hatred against the Jews are to be condemned. Christian love should be shown to Jews at all times, as well as imploring them to repent of their sins and be converted to the Christian faith (*Nostra Aetate* 4, *Lumen Gentium* 16). By the same token, we deplore and condemn any Catholic who attempts to attain the cooperation of the Jews by placating them with a dilution of the Catholic faith and her doctrine.

With the deepest appreciation to my bishop, the Very Reverend Kevin Rhoades, his vicar general, the Very Reverend William King, the Reverend James Massa and the USCCB, the Catholic community to which I am always in service, and especially the patrons of *Catholic Apologetics International* who have faithfully supported this apostolate through thick and thin, I bid you my fraternal love in Christ our Savior. May the truth of his Gospel penetrate our hearts and minds.

Sincerely in Him,

Robert A. Sungenis, Ph.D.

President of *Catholic Apologetics International, Inc.*

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