

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS AND A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

BACKGROUND OF GALATIANS

The orthodox Protestant theology that Christians are saved by faith alone is based on the book of Galatians, along with Col. 2:14, Eph. 2:8-9 and a few verses from Romans. Saved by faith alone has never been embraced by the largest sect of Christianity, Catholicism, which often points out the idea of salvation being by “faith alone” is countermanded by the book of James, which contains the only verse in the New Testament where anything like the phrase faith alone is extant. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17) Therefore the one verse in the bible that mentions “faith alone” states that it must be accompanied by works. So what is the origin of the theology that Christians are saved by “faith alone”?

Martin Luther, one of the founders of the Protestant reformation, taught that the book of James was a “*book of straw*” which should be removed from scripture, mostly because it disagreed with his theology, especially regarding the relationship between faith and works for Christians. The teachings in the book of James interfered with Luther’s view of God’s relationship with His creation. Personal bias in the interpretation of scripture is nothing new. However, it is not often that a Christian teacher is so influenced by his biases, which form his thoughts and theology, that he would advocate removing a canonized book from scripture. Peter wrote about such biases, “*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*” (2 Pet. 3:15-6) Unfortunately, far too many Christian theologians have not heeded Peter’s warning.

The idea of removing a book from the Holy Scriptures, even though it had been accepted as part of the canon for a millennia and a half, just because it disagrees with your theology may seem strange to Christians today. But the bible was just becoming readily available to a mass audience at the time of Luther because of the printing press. Before the printing press, the clergy class could simply ignore certain scriptures or certain books if they disagreed with their theological stances and beliefs. And this is what Christianity apparently did from even before the time of the anti-nicean fathers. (The anti-nicean fathers are major Christian teachers who wrote before the council of Nicea in 325 AD.) These biases and prejudices, sometimes extreme prejudices which went so far as desiring to remove canonized books from the bible, formed and continue to form the orthodox view of Paul's writings and the book of Galatians in particular.

However, in the last quarter century, there have been two theological movements in Protestantism that view Paul and his writings in a different light. One view pushes orthodox theology to its logical conclusion, although unsurprisingly, orthodox Christianity finds this theological school's stance to be extreme. This liberal school advocates that Paul was actually the founder Christianity rather than Jesus. This view is based on the belief that Paul's theology was and is drastically different from the rest of scripture and that the current Christian church's theology resembles Paul's theology rather the rest of scripture. This seemingly logical conclusion starts with the wrong set of assumptions, and thus ends with a faulty conclusion. The other view started with E.P. Sanders landmark work, [**PAUL AND PALESTINIAN JUDAISM: A COMPARISON OF PATTERNS OF RELIGION**](#), and it actually follows the premise that Paul's writings integrate into the rest of scripture rather than building a brand new theology. [**PAUL AND PALESTINIAN JUDAISM**](#) was published in 1977 (it was completed in 1975, but its views were so controversial that Dr. Sanders could not find a publisher until 1977) and this author had the privilege of reading it at Harvard's divinity school in the early 1980's. Paul and Palestinian Judaism helped form the basis of my theology, which should not be confused with my relationship with God. My relationship with God goes back decades before I began to form a coherent theology,

but theology has help me to better understand God, which has deepened and broadened that relationship.

Sander's Paul and Palestinian Judaism is often disparaged by both critics and sympathizers as being too friendly to laymen to be taken seriously, just as Stephen Hawkin's [A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME](#) has often been disparaged by physicists that I know at M.I.T. However, there should be no argument that Hawkin's work with singularities and even Hawkin radiation makes him a very serious physicist. [A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME](#) influenced my views of the universe and creation as much as Sanders work influenced my theology, even though Sanders is a very liberal scholar and I tend to be more conservative. Just as Hawkins is considered a serious physicist by all but the very elite, E.P. Sanders is also considered a very serious theologian, although N.T. Wright and James Dunn, credited with creating the phrase New Perspective on Paul (NPP), are often seen as more serious theologians. The new perspective on Paul (NPP) challenges the orthodox view of the book of Galatians. However, before we can examine how NPP affects our view of the book of Galatians, we need to look at how the old perspective of Paul and the theology of the anti-nicean fathers, from Justin Martyr to John Chrysostom, as well as protestant reformers like Luther and Calvin, affected modern Christian understanding and theology of what Paul was teaching in Galatians.

THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF GALATIANS

The orthodox view of the book of Galatians usually depicts Paul on one side of a theological chasm and James and Peter, along with the Judaizers, on other side of the issue of Christian freedom from the law, often referred to as Torah. Many Christians don't realize that the Judaizers in Galatians were not Jews as we view Judaism today, but were actually Jewish Christians whose theology differed from Paul's. ("Christianity" was made up exclusively of Jews until Acts 10). At the time of the writing of Galatians, Christians were usually seen as just another faction of Judaism. The issue for orthodox theologians studying the book of Galatians today is how the changes which occurred at the crucifixion, when the veil was rent and the New Covenant came into existence, were viewed by the followers of Jesus the Messiah. The book of Galatians portrays the Judaizers as apparently believing the only

change made was that the messiah had come while Paul believed additional changes had also been made. As we will see, the orthodox view in Protestantism is that these additional changes include the law being nailed to the cross, thus followers of Jesus no longer need to follow any of the ordinances listed in the law, the prophets or the writings. NPP agrees with the orthodox Protestant, as well as the Catholic, view that major changes had been made with the crucifixion of the messiah, but disagrees with what those changes actually were.

THE LAW, THE CROSS, AND COLOSSIANS 2:14

Torah had been nailed to the cross at the start of the New Covenant according to the orthodox view. Paul wrote to the Colossians, *“And you--being dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh--He made alive together with him, having forgiven you all the trespasses, having blotted out the handwriting in the ordinances that is against us, that was contrary to us, and he hath taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross; having stripped the principalities and the authorities, he made a shew of them openly--having triumphed over them in it.”* (Col. 2:13-5) Although an in-depth analysis of the second chapter of Colossians is beyond the scope of this paper, a fairly straight forward analysis of these verses shows how the extreme prejudices of early Christian theologians affected their understanding of scripture and why they erred in what was nailed to the cross.

Colossians 2:13 states that the Colossians, and by extension, us, used to be dead because they were not a part of God’s people, but because of the sacrifice of Jesus, they are made alive, just as Jesus was made alive at the resurrection. When we are made alive, we became a part of God’s people. How were we made alive? According to Colossians 2:14, we are made alive because the hand-written ordinances that led to our death were nailed to the cross. Orthodox Christianity has taught that those hand-written ordinances were the law. However, Paul himself explains in other writings not only what leads to death, but how the cross leads to the gift that makes us alive. *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Rom. 6:23) What is nailed to the cross is the wages of our sin. What is nailed to the cross is the death penalty that we should have paid.

But orthodox Christianity, starting less than 100 years after the crucifixion of Jesus up through the times of Luther and Calvin and beyond, has insisted that what Paul really meant in Col. 2:14 was that the law, that nasty old Jewish Torah, had been nailed the cross. The book of Galatians was the instrument they used to bludgeon their flock into believing that Torah, the law God gave on Mount Sinai and via his prophets for a millennia, was bad and needed to be nailed to the cross so that Christians could enjoy the liberty that He never granted to the nation of Israel.

ANTI-SEMITISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The Old Testament refers to the nation of Israel as the chosen people. But that is not how the vast majority of the important Christian theologians saw the Jews. Christians agree that God's church is built upon the prophets and apostles, with Jesus being the chief corner stone. (*"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Eph 2:20*). But theology is how we interpret what these teachers have taught.

Everyone has their biases and these biases affect how we view things, frame things, and understand things. How did the early church fathers view Israel? Far too many Christian theologians have discounted the words God gave to Moses, words that He formed in the hearts of the prophets and even the words spoken by Jesus the Messiah, because these teachings were not uttered under the New Covenant. The early Christian church has two important pillars upon which its theology is based, which are used to dismiss the message of the vast majority of written scripture.

The first of these two false pillars of theology is that the Jews killed Jesus and are now being punished by God because they rejected and killed God's only begotten son. To be totally accurate, the Jews did not even kill Jesus. They had the Romans do it for them, so the Romans were actually the instrument used to kill the Messiah. Side stepping the technicalities of whether the Jews incited the Romans to carry out their plans, which they most certainly did, we need to look at the opposite side of the coin. What if Jesus was never crucified? Then the plan of God would have been unfulfilled and the promises made to Eve by God would have been broken. (*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and*

between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15)). The promise made to Abraham would have been unfulfilled (*“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”(Gen. 12:2)*). The Servant Songs in Isaiah would have not been about the Messiah.

Not only do we have the promise of God sacrificing his son from the foundations of this current age, (*“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev. 13:8*)), we also have Jesus’ own words about his sacrifice on the cross.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” (John 3:14)

“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.” (John 8:28)

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” (John 10:17-8)

Did these early Christian thinkers, who forged orthodox Christian doctrine, never read to the end of the book of Matthew, where Jesus states, *“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matt. 26:52-4)* Jesus let himself be crucified, and most likely deliberately instigated it with his tirade of Matthew 23. Therefore the Jews did not “kill” Jesus.

It was God the father who sacrificed his only son, just as He foreshadowed He would when he told Abraham to sacrifice his son of promise on Mount Moriah. God revealed his feelings about sacrificing a

son when He told Abraham, *“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”* (Gen. 22:12) God later actually sacrificed His only son and did not withhold him from us. Scripture clearly states it was the Father’s will to sacrifice His son. *“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”* (Matt. 26:39) But as will be shown in the body of this paper, this is something many of the Christian theologians who formed the fundamentals of the Christian church’s theology either did not understand or would not understand. Because of this, many Christian theologians have also misunderstood the meaning of John 3:16. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) Although the correct meaning of this over-used phrase is beyond the scope of this paper, it is examined in detail in *THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD*, which can be found at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org> .

The second pillar upon which most of the great thinkers of Christianity base their doctrine, their teachings of God’s ways, is what is now referred to as replacement theology, which is often tied to dispensationalism. The Calvinist pre-destination view of dispensationalism is that God works in different dispensations or under different sets of rules over time, thus the Christians church’s dispensation follows after the Jewish and is based on far superior promises that exclude the Torah from their covenant (Hebrews 8:6 does say the new covenant is based on better promises. However, what those promises are is examined in detail in *THE COVENANT OF GOD*, which can be found at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org> .) Catholic libertarian scholar Thomas E. Woods Jr. gives the free will view of dispensational theology. *“According to the dispensationalist theology at the root of this, Christ came in order to bring a political kingdom to the Jewish people, to rule from the throne of David for one thousand years and to fulfill all the prophecies of the Old Testament. But Christ was rejected and crucified, thereby postponing the divine intervention.”*¹ Whatever view one has of dispensationalism, it leads to replacement

¹ <http://www.thedailybell.com/3337/Staff-Report-Thomas-Woods-Jr-on-Libertarianism-Versus-the-Catholic-Church-Ron-Pauls-Presidential-Chances-and-US-State-Secession>

theology which states the Christian church is the new Israel, replacing the former Israel, usually with the connotation that the first Israel was far inferior to its replacement. The treatment of Romans 11 and the hardening of Israel's heart are beyond the scope of this paper, but we can examine the very words of the great Christian thinkers to discover how these two pillars of Christian theology not only came about, but became inculcated into Christian thought and theology. This author is indebted to www.yashuanet.com for compiling the quotes listed below together in one place. This is obviously just a small, but representative, sample of how these Christian thinkers dealt with the Jews and with Christians who followed what were perceived to be Jewish practices. It should be noted that Adolf Hitler read, praised and quoted many of these great Christian thinkers, especially Martin Luther, when it came to dealing with "the Jewish problem."

IGNATIUS BISHOP OF ANTIOCH (C. 98-117 AD) – EPISTLE TO THE MAGNESIANS

For if we are still practicing Judaism, we admit that we have not received God's favor...it is wrong to talk about Jesus Christ and live like Jews. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity.

EPISTLE OF BARNABAS CHAPTER 4 V. 6-7 (C. 130-138 AD)

Take heed to yourselves and be not like some piling up you sins and saying that the covenant is theirs as well as ours. It is ours, but they lost it completely just after Moses received it.

JUSTIN MARTYR - DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO (C. 138-161 AD)

We too, would observe your circumcision of the flesh, your Sabbath days, and in a word, all you festivals, if we were not aware of the reason why they were imposed upon you, namely, because of your sins and the hardness of heart.

The custom of circumcising the flesh, handed down from Abraham, was given to you as a distinguishing mark, to set you off from other nations and from us Christians. The purpose of this was that you and only you might suffer the afflictions that are now justly yours; that only your land be desolated, and you cities ruined

by fire, that the fruits of you land be eaten by strangers before your very eyes; that not one of you be permitted to enter your city of Jerusalem. Your circumcision of the flesh is the only mark by which you can certainly be distinguished from other men...as I stated before it was by reason of your sins and the sins of your fathers that, among other precepts, God imposed upon you the observance of the sabbath as a mark.

ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA (185-254 AD) – ECCLESIASTICAL WRITER AND TEACHER WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE EARLY FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES.

We may thus assert in utter confidence that the Jews will not return to their earlier situation, for they have committed the most abominable of crimes, in forming this conspiracy against the Savior of the human race...hence the city where Jesus suffered was necessarily destroyed, the Jewish nation was driven from its country, and another people was called by God to the blessed election.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (344-407 AD) – ONE OF THE "GREATEST" OF CHURCH FATHERS; KNOWN AS "THE GOLDEN MOUTHED." A MISSIONARY PREACHER FAMOUS FOR HIS SERMONS AND ADDRESSES.

The synagogue is worse than a brothel...it is the den of scoundrels and the repair of wild beasts...the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults...the refuge of brigands and debauchees, and the cavern of devils. It is a criminal assembly of Jews...a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ... a house worse than a drinking shop...a den of thieves, a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, the refuge of devils, a gulf and a abyss of perdition....I would say the same things about their souls... As for me, I hate the synagogue...I hate the Jews for the same reason.

From "The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism" by Malcolm Hay

ST. AUGUSTINE (C. 354-430 A.D.), CONFESSIONS, 12.14

How hateful to me are the enemies of your Scripture! How I wish that you would slay them (the Jews) with your two-edged sword,

so that there should be none to oppose your word! Gladly would I have them die to themselves and live to you!

PETER THE VENERABLE – KNOWN AS "THE MEEKEST OF MEN, A MODEL OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY"

Yes, you Jews. I say, do I address you; you, who till this very day, deny the Son of God. How long, poor wretches, will ye not believe the truth? Truly I doubt whether a Jew can be really human... I lead out from its den a monstrous animal, and show it as a laughing stock in the amphitheater of the world, in the sight of all the people. I bring thee forward, thou Jew, thou brute beast, in the sight of all men.

From "The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism" by Malcolm Hay

**MARTIN LUTHER – 1543
ON THE JEWS AND THEIR LIES**

What then shall we Christians do with this damned, rejected race of Jews? Since they live among us and we know about their lying and blasphemy and cursing, we can not tolerate them if we do not wish to share in their lies, curses, and blasphemy. In this way we cannot quench the inextinguishable fire of divine rage nor convert the Jews. We must prayerfully and reverentially practice a merciful severity. Perhaps we may save a few from the fire and flames [of hell]. We must not seek vengeance. They are surely being punished a thousand times more than we might wish them. Let me give you my honest advice.

First, their synagogues should be set on fire, and whatever does not burn up should be covered or spread over with dirt so that no one may ever be able to see a cinder or stone of it. And this ought to be done for the honor of God and of Christianity in order that God may see that we are Christians, and that we have not wittingly tolerated or approved of such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of His Son and His Christians.

Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. For they perpetrate the same things there that they do in their synagogues. For this reason they ought to be put under

one roof or in a stable, like gypsies, in order that they may realize that they are not masters in our land, as they boast, but miserable captives, as they complain of incessantly before God with bitter wailing.

Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer-books and Talmuds in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught.

Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more...

Fifthly, passport and traveling privileges should be absolutely forbidden to the Jews. For they have no business in the rural districts since they are not nobles, nor officials, nor merchants, nor the like. Let them stay at home...If you princes and nobles do not close the road legally to such exploiters, then some troop ought to ride against them, for they will learn from this pamphlet what the Jews are and how to handle them and that they ought not to be protected. You ought not, you cannot protect them, unless in the eyes of God you want to share all their abomination...

To sum up, dear princes and nobles who have Jews in your domains, if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden - the Jews...

Let the government deal with them in this respect, as I have suggested. But whether the government acts or not, let everyone at least be guided by his own conscience and form for himself a definition or image of a Jew. When you lay eyes on or think of a Jew you must say to yourself: Alas, that mouth which I there behold has cursed and execrated and maligned every Saturday my dear Lord Jesus Christ, who has redeemed me with his precious blood; in addition, it prayed and pleaded before God that I, my wife and children, and all Christians might be stabbed to death and perish miserably. And he himself would gladly do this if he were able, in order to appropriate our goods...

Such a desperate, thoroughly evil, poisonous, and devilish lot are these Jews, who for these fourteen hundred years have been and still are our plague, our pestilence, and our misfortune.

I have read and heard many stories about the Jews which agree with this judgment of Christ, namely, how they have poisoned wells, made assassinations, kidnapped children, as related before. I have heard that one Jew sent another Jew, and this by means of a Christian, a pot of blood, together with a barrel of wine, in which when drunk empty, a dead Jew was found. There are many other similar stories. For their kidnapping of children they have often been burned at the stake or banished (as we already heard). I am well aware that they deny all of this. However, it all coincides with the judgment of Christ which declares that they are venomous, bitter, vindictive, tricky serpents, assassins, and children of the devil, who sting and work harm stealthily wherever they cannot do it openly. For this reason, I would like to see them where there are no Christians. The Turks and other heathen do not tolerate what we Christians endure from these venomous serpents and young devils...next to the devil, a Christian has no more bitter and galling foe than a Jew. There is no other to whom we accord as many benefactions and from whom we suffer as much as we do from these base children of the devil, this brood of vipers.

Translated by Martin H. Bertram, "On The Jews and Their Lies, Luther's Works, Volume 47"; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

MARTIN LUTHER - 1543 **OF THE UNKNOWABLE NAME AND THE GENERATIONS OF CHRIST**

But your [God's] judgment is right, justus es Dominie. Yes, so shall Jews, but no one else be punished, who held your word and miracles in contempt and ridiculed, insulted and damned it for such a long time without interruption, so that they will not fall, like other humans, heathens and all the others, into sin and death, not up in Hell, nor in the middle of Hell but in the pit of Hell, as one cannot fall deeper...

Even if they were punished in the most gruesome manner that the streets ran with their blood, that their dead would be counted, not in the hundred thousands, but in the millions, as happened under Vespasian in Jerusalem and for evil under Hadrian, still they must insist on being right even if after these 1,500 years they were in misery another 1,500 years, still God must be a liar and they must be correct. In sum, they are the devil's children, damned to Hell...

The Jews too got what they deserved. They had been called and elected to be God's mouth as Jeremiah says...Open your mouth wide and I will fill it; they however, kept tightly closed their muzzles, eyes, ears, nose, whole heart and all senses, so he polluted and squirted them so full that it oozes from them in all places and devil's filth comes from them.

Yes, that tastes good to them, into their hearts, they smack their lips like swine. That is how they want it. Call more: 'Crucify him, crucify him.' Scream more: 'His blood come upon us and our children.' (Matthew 27:25) I mean it came and found you...

Perhaps, one of the merciful Saints among us Christians may think I am behaving too crude and disdainfully against the poor, miserable Jews in that I deal with them so sarcastically and insulting. But, good God, I am much too mild in insulting such devils...

JOHN CALVIN
A RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS OF A CERTAIN JEW

Their [the Jews] rotten and unbending stiffneckedness deserves that they be oppressed unendingly and without measure or end and that they die in their misery without the pity of anyone.

Excerpt from "Ad Quaelstiones et Objecta Juaei Cuiusdam Responsio," by John Calvin; The Jew in Christian Theology, Gerhard Falk, McFarland and Company, Inc., Jefferson, NC and London, 1931.

Before examining how the blatant anti-Semitism of these writers and pillars of Christian theology affected the theology of the orthodox

Christian church, we will examine how this anti-Semitism affected the laws that were passed and maintained by the theocracy that was Europe for almost a millennia to further show how anti-Semitism clouded so many issues. The following compilation of laws can be found at <http://remember.org/History.root.classical.html>.

THE JUSTINIAN CODE

The Justinian Code was an edict of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527-564). A section of the code negated civil rights for Jews. Once the code was enforced, Jews in the Empire could not build synagogues, read the Bible in Hebrew, gather in public places, celebrate Passover before Easter, or give evidence in a judicial case in which a Christian was a party. Decrees by the early Catholic Church (partial list):

- **Synod of Elvira** (306 AD) prohibited intermarriage and sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews, and prohibited them from eating together.
- **Councils of Orleans** (533-541 AD) prohibited marriages between Christians and Jews and forbade the conversion to Judaism by Christians.
- **Trulanic Synod** (692 AD) prohibited Christians from being treated by Jewish doctors.
- **Synod of Narbonne** (1050 AD) prohibited Christians from living in Jewish homes.
- **Synod of Gerona** (1078 AD) required Jews to pay taxes to support the Church.
- **Third Lateran Council** (1179 AD) prohibited certain medical care to be provided by Christians to Jews.
- **Fourth Lateran Council** (1215 AD) required Jews to wear special clothing to distinguish them from Christians.
- **Council of Basel** (1431-1443 AD) forbade Jews to attend universities, from acting as agents in the conclusion of

contracts between Christians, and required that they attend church sermons.

I find it interesting that the Christian theocracy of Europe not only forced Jews to wear specially distinguishing clothing to mark them as Jews, as Hitler later would, but completely reversed the decree of Acts 15 even before the council of Nicea in 325 AD. Before Acts 15, Jews sought holiness by keeping themselves separate from gentiles, considering them to be unclean and unholy. The first great synod of the Christian church forbade such practices by Jewish Christians towards their gentile brethren, a decree that will be discussed in detail when we examine what Paul was teaching in the book of Galatians. However, the theology actively advocated by the Christian theocracy from the time of the council of Nicea through the Middle Ages re-instituted such segregation, but with Christians segregating themselves from the Jews, who they considered unclean. Why? As a small selection of quotes above shows, the Christian church taught the Jews were dogs who killed the lord Jesus Christ. It taught that the synagogue was nothing but a whore house. It taught that the nation of Israel never understood God's ways, even at the time of Moses when God gave them the law and guided their camp in the wilderness. It taught that the law given at Mount Sinai was a punishment for Israel because they were so evil and hard-hearted. It taught that Jews were un-human animals. It taught that the Jews should be put to death for the least of infractions.

Although most Christians today realize the foundation of their church's theology stems from the writings and understanding of men like Augustine, John Chrysostom and Luther, they rarely examine what kind of men these were and what their full teachings were. Is it any wonder that these men, these "pillars" of the orthodox Christian church, misinterpreted the wonderful act of love that God showed for us by the crucifixion of His only begotten son, depicted in Col. 2:13-4, as being about the doing away of "that Jewish law," which they taught was only meant to punish those inferior Jews rather than being about love and the forgiveness of sins by a loving Father?

PAUL, THE SUPPOSED FOUNDER OF CHRISTIANITY

As stated earlier, there are three fairly major views of Paul and his relationship with Christian theology among Protestant scholars, with the orthodox view being by far and away the most accepted. All of these views depend very heavily upon an interpretation of Galatians to frame their theology. The orthodox view states the bible is the word of God and Jesus is the most important teacher of God's ways. However, orthodox theology stresses that all of the prophets and even Jesus himself were under the inferior Old Covenant. Therefore their practices and their teachings must be viewed through the prism of the New Covenant, which is far superior and most clearly expounded by Paul, who wrote and taught only when he was under the New Covenant. They dismiss the writings of Peter and James just as Luther did, but far less violently by stating the other apostle's writings must be viewed through a prism that allows for these writers to be unduly influenced by Old Covenant ideas. Of course Paul's expoundings have been interpreted by the church fathers since before anti-nicean times through the lens of the Jews being evil-doers who killed the son of God and that the Torah was meant as a punishment. Therefore, the bias they place into Paul's writings spills over into their interpretation of the rest of scripture because of the prism they have created.

Current orthodox theology does not openly embrace the concept that Torah was a curse placed upon the nation of Israel by God. However there should be little doubt that current Protestant theology is based upon the writings of the anti-nicean fathers and men like Luther and Calvin, whose theology was based on the premise that the Jews were inhuman beasts being punished by God and supposedly the severest instrument of that punishment was the Torah. Thus current orthodox thought and theology has to have been influenced, and sometimes dramatically, by the anti-semitism of the anti-nicean fathers and the leaders of the reformation.

What orthodox Protestantism currently teaches is that they accept what David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), wrote about Torah. *"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients,*

because I keep thy precepts.” (Ps. 119:97-100) They state they accept what Jesus said about the law during the cornerstone sermon of the New Covenant delivered on the mount. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt. 5:17-8) At the time of the King James translation a jot would be the crossing of a t and a tittle would have been the dotting of an i. This was translated from the original Greek which had the words iota, which is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet and keraia, which would have been equivalent to an accent mark.

Jesus taught that he had come to fulfill the law, the Torah, and that even the smallest portions of Torah would not be done away with until the end of this age. Even the most rudimentary harmonization about Jesus fulfilling the law in Matthew 5:18 with Romans 10:4 should have Jesus’ words carrying more weight than Paul’s, that is if the teaching of the Messiah superseded not just Moses the lawgiver and the prophets of old, but also supersedes the teachings of his own disciples. However, the King James translators chose to translate the Greek word **TELOS** in Romans 10:4 as **END** rather than **GOAL**, thus placing their understanding of Paul’s supposed teachings about the law ahead of the Messiah’s. Paul wrote, *“For Christ is the end (TELOS) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Rom. 10:4)* The King James translation obviously makes it sound as if the sacrifice of Jesus ended the law. However, the ISV, a modern translation which incorporates the textural apparatus of the Dead Sea scrolls, translates Roman 10:4 as *“For the Messiah is the culmination (TELOS) of the Law as far as righteousness is concerned for everyone who believes.” (Rom. 10:4, ISV)*

The ISV translation depicts Jesus as being the goal or the fulfillment of the law in Romans 10:4, which is what Jesus had said about himself in Matthew 5:18. Yet orthodox Protestant theology uses their belief in Pauline theology being different and “clearer” than the rest of scripture to re-enforce their ideas about the “Torah of the Jews” being bad and needing to be done away with in Romans and in Matthew.

Protestant theology paints a mosaic of the law being so tarnished with Jewish legalistic teachings that it had to be nailed to the cross in Colossians and ended in Romans, thus allowing their reinterpretation of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:18. A fairly standard orthodox expose of Matthew 5:18 would go something like this. *"Since Jesus is God, He not only perfectly obeys the law, but also gives a fuller understanding to the law. As the promised Messiah, Jesus paid the full penalty of the Law as our substitute. So not a jot, not an iota, not a tittle, not a dot of the law would pass away until Jesus accomplished their divine plan."*

(<http://www.c-we.com/adelumc/061105.htm>) This convoluted, circular reasoning has Paul's writings and Jesus' statements in Matthew 5:18 supposedly proving that the law would be done away with rather than fulfilled with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

The law is nice in orthodox theology, but the spirit is far superior and supersedes the written law, just as papal decrees also supersede the written law in Catholicism. Rather than having the law of God and the spirit of God working in tandem to help us follow the path our Father sets before us, orthodox Protestant theology dismisses scripture in favor of how they believe the spirit has enlightened them. As a theology professor at S.M.U. said when he was teaching accelerated theology courses, Methodists only agree on four verses in the bible, and one of those is questionable. A very good joke, but one based in reality. Orthodox theology teaches that Paul pointed out how the law was terminated with the origination of the New Covenant and that his view of theology is clearer on this point because the other apostles were still "stuck" in their old patterns of religion and even Jesus' own words need to be examined in the prism of Pauline theology. Thus they interpret Paul's writings to match their views on dispensationalism and Torah, and then reinterpret the rest of scripture to match this view.

The New Perspective on Paul believes the majority of orthodox protestant scholars have apparently ignored what the sum of scripture depicts about the relationship between Paul and the other apostles while concentrating on the supposed strife between them in Galatians 2:11, which states, *"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."* Trying to create a theological chasm between the apostles of Jesus has been done for centuries to

justify a belief that Pauline theology is different and superior to the other disciples and even clarifies the teachings of Jesus the Messiah. We will come back to Paul's relationship with the other apostles when we examine NPP in more detail, but suffice it to say that Galatians 2:11 is referring to a specific incident and is not a summary of Paul's relationship with the other apostles as orthodoxy teaches.

The second major view of Paul's writings is by a group of generally liberal Protestant scholars who have taken the orthodox train of thought to its logical conclusion. They generally accept the idea of **the Q**, a supposed compilation of Jesus' oral teachings, with its implications that we can never really know what Jesus actually taught. Most of these scholars doubt that any of the four canonical gospels were actually written by the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, therefore we supposedly cannot discern what Jesus actually taught. Many of these scholars doubt the veracity of the gospel story, especially the miracles listed in the gospels, including the resurrection. These scholars, like most liberal scholars, even reject 6 of the 13 books attributed to Paul as actually being written by Paul. Martin Luther would have been so proud of this current school of scholars. Some of the less extreme of these scholars suggest that Paul should be seen as the co-creator of Christianity while others go so far as to state that Paul was the founder of Christianity as we know it today and that Jesus is not much more than a figure head. One of the foremost of these scholars is Gerd Lüdemann. He writes,

*The title of the present book, **PAUL, THE FOUNDER OF CHRISTIANITY**, contains my historical thesis. Should the assertion be correct, the truth claim of Christianity would depend on Paul and not Jesus; Paul's message and not Jesus' proclamation would be the primary basis on which the Christian faith was built. Given the importance of the subject, this is one more reason to present Paul as impartially as possible, and strictly on the basis of the sources critically tested. In addition, I want to present Paul with the utmost empathy.²*

² Lüdemann, Gerd, Paul: The Founder of Christianity, Prometheus Books, 59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst, NY, 14228, 2002, p. 11

Lüdemann goes on to write, *“Many Christians think of the apostle Paul as one the foremost disciples of Jesus. Moreover, the church has assigned his writings a major role in the canon of the New Testament, and in Christian theology Paul’s thought is the focal point of traditional formulations and further reflections. During the history of the church, the rediscovery of Paul has played a pivotal role for the church life, as we can see in the great Interpretations of the letter to the Romans by the church father Augustine (254-430), the reformer Luther (1483-1546) and the greatest theologian of the twentieth century, Carl Barth (1886-1968).”*³ Lüdemann is stating that the formulation of the Christian church’s theology is based upon its interpretation of Paul’s writings and that all of the other writings of the bible have been re-interpreted through a Pauline prism. Although orthodox Protestantism would be stung by such a charge, I believe their theology reflects this fact.

As a review of this books states, *“New Testament scholar Gerd Lüdemann continues his exploration of the life and teachings of Paul in this groundbreaking monograph, which synthesizes the research of his four previous books on Christianity’s leading apostle. As the subtitle of the present work makes clear, Lüdemann comes to the conclusion that Paul should be considered not only Christianity’s most influential proselytizer but in truth deserves the title of founder of the religion that ostensibly originated with Jesus of Nazareth. This brilliant exegesis, based on twenty-five years of research, by a leading New Testament scholar with an unwavering commitment to historical accuracy presents a message rarely heard from any pulpit but one that churches can no longer honestly ignore.”*⁴

There was even a documentary run on ABC in 2004, hosted by Peter Jennings, which supported the idea that Paul, not Jesus, was the founder of Christianity. Of course the vast majority of the scholars on this program were liberals⁵, but liberals dominate the seminaries these days. The documentary presented “the liberal scholar Marvin Meyer unequivocally stating, ‘Paul is the founder of Christianity.’ Even the evangelical scholar Paul Maier is quoted to say that Paul was ‘almost’ a

³ Lüdemann, Paul: *The Founder of Christianity*, p. 11.

⁴ Review from http://books.google.com/books/about/Paul_the_founder_of_Christianity.html?id=MIFwQgAACAAJ

⁵ http://www.answers.org/peter_jennings_and_jesus.html

co-founder of Christianity. It is asserted that Christianity would have been very different without Paul, and that Paul effectively, ‘founded a new religion.’”⁶. Again, although I reject the idea that Paul was the founder of Christianity, I agree that current, main stream Christianity and its theology were founded upon an erroneous interpretation of Paul’s writings.

I agree that Paul’s writings as seen through the eyes of Justin Martyr, Origen, Augustine, John Chrysostom, and of course Martin Luther were the genesis of mainstream Christianity, although the idea that Paul is the founder of the religion that Jesus of Nazareth taught in the gospels is totally rejected by scripture and also by the NPP school of thought, of which I consider myself a part. I believe these very liberal scholars are correct that mainstream Christianity would have been very different without the writings of Paul and that their religion is based upon their view of Pauline theology and not upon the message carried by Moses, the prophets and the gospels.

Although the idea that Paul actually founded Christianity might seem extreme to many Christians, the ABC documentary and Lüdemann’s point is that Pauline theology is not only different from the Old Testament law and prophets, as well as the other apostles and even from Jesus himself, but that Paul’s theology superseded all others in the Christian church. Lüdemann is stating that Pauline theology, as interpreted by Justin Martyr (*God imposed the law on the Jews to mark them as sinful*), John Chrysostom (*the Jews are evil beasts who consort with demons*), Augustine (*“How I wish you would slay them (the Jews)”*), and of course Martin Luther (*who taught all Jewish homes and places of worship should be destroyed and Rabbis killed not just because they supposedly killed Jesus, but because those Jewish brood of vipers supposedly continued to steal Christian children for blood sacrifices*), is actually the corner stone of Christian theology, not the Torah nor the prophets nor the teachings of Jesus the Messiah. The school of thought that Paul is actually the founder of Christianity has simply taken orthodox Pauline theology and expressed it as Luther would have.

⁶ ” <http://www.answers.org/paul.html>

THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

Before we can examine the writings of Paul, and in particular, the book of the Galatians, we should examine how Paul interacted with the other apostles of Jesus to dispel the idea that Paul had animus towards the other apostles because his theology was supposedly so drastically different than theirs. We need to remember that Paul was not just one of the leading disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, but was a Jew who studied at the feet of Gamaliel, the Pharisee who counseled restraint against the apostles in Acts 5:34-9. Paul writes about his relationship with the other apostles in the first book of Corinthians.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.” (1Cor. 15:1-11).

Paul lists Peter and James as apostles who saw the resurrected Jesus. Paul was still somewhat haunted by his persecution of the church before he was called to be a disciple of Jesus, but believed he was now teaching the truth of God. And he obviously believes that Peter and James and others of the five hundred who saw Jesus alive are also preaching the

truth of God. Although they all taught from a different perspective because they were different people, the message was the same.

Paul also writes that three years before the Acts 15 conference he secretly spent three Sabbaths in Jerusalem with only Peter and James to confirm that they were teaching the same thing (Gal. 1:18-9). And Paul, as well as Peter and James, was satisfied they were teaching the same gospel message. Paul's interactions with Peter and James at the conference of Acts 15 must be instrumental in fairly framing the interactions of the disciples. What was the Acts 15 conference, where there were great arguments and disagreements, about? *"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1)* There is the argument: Gentiles cannot be saved. They must join the nation of Israel by being circumcised, even though God, through Peter and Cornelius, made it clear you did not have to become an Israelite to join the people of God and be granted salvation. What was the result of what these Jewish Christians from Judea were teaching? *"When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." (Acts 15:2)*

So you have one set of Jewish Christians teaching the gentiles that they must be circumcised if they really wanted to follow God and another set of Jewish Christians, Paul and Barnabas as well Peter and others, teaching the gentiles that you did not have to be circumcised if you really wanted to follow God. After much yelling and arguing, they agreed that they should all go back to the mother church at Jerusalem. As most NPP proponents point out, Paul and Barnabas knew they were in the right because Paul had already met with Peter and James and that the Judaizing Christians who opposed Paul and Barnabas were in the wrong, and they went to Jerusalem to drive that point home.

Again, after much arguing during the Acts 15 conference, Peter stands up and says, *"Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare*

them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” (Acts 15:7-11)

Peter is teaching exactly the same thing that Paul is teaching. Peter is pointing out that things have indeed changed since the veil was rent at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the messiah. Brethren like Cornelius, Titus, Timothy, Paul and Barnabas should all be greeted as true Christians because God had revealed that to Peter in Acts 10.

In Acts 10, God sends a vision to Peter about clean and unclean animals. However, this dream has nothing to do with what Christians should and should not eat. Peter correctly interprets this vision when he states, *“Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” (Acts 10:28)* When Cornelius tells Peter about being visited by an angel, Peter again states how things have changed so the Jews should not consider the gentiles to be unclean. *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (Acts 10:34-5)* Under the Old Covenant, you had to circumcise your heart and your skin, but under the New Covenant all you had to do is circumcise your heart and work righteousness.

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” (Acts 10:44-7)

As Adam Clark writes, *“Because it was a maxim with them that the Shechinah or Divine influence could not be revealed to any person who dwelt beyond the precincts of the promised land. Nor did any of them*

*believe that the Divine Spirit could be communicated to any Gentile. It is no wonder, therefore, that they were amazed when they saw the Spirit of God so liberally given as it was on this occasion.”*⁷ So before circumcised Jewish Christians stand uncircumcised gentiles who are speaking in tongues just as Jesus’ apostles did on the day of Pentecost. And having the holy spirit poured out on them, just as it was on the apostles that first Pentecost of the Christian church. Peter, being somewhat snide, I believe, asks, “Since they already have more of the holy spirit, thus are likely closer to God than you are, can we get down to God’s business and baptize these people?” And this is the theology that Peter summarizes in Acts 15.

James then gave a summary of this first great enclave of Christian leaders. *“Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.”* (Acts 15:13-21) Then they wrote a letter with their conclusions and sent copies of it to all the churches. The letter said the matter was discussed and it was agreed that the churches of God needed to follow the teachings of Peter, James, Paul and Barnabas, who all agreed that the gentile Christians did not need to be circumcised to fellowship with Jewish Christians. There was no division in the teaching of the apostles.

Many have tried to stretch the Acts 15 agreement to mean that gentiles did not need to follow the law of God. That they only needed to follow the four so-called Noahide laws listed in Acts 15:29 (*“That ye abstain*

⁷ Clarke, Adam, *Commentary on the Bible*, from e-sword, Acts. 10:45.

from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”). Under this scenario, gentile Christians need to avoid eating meat offered to idols, but they could steal that meat? Gentile Christians could no longer drink blood, but they could be drunkards? They needed to avoid meat that had been killed by strangulation, but could lie and murder? They needed to avoid fornication, which comes from the Greek word *porneia*, which means harlotry, like adultery and incest. However, since there no restriction against worshiping false gods in the Noahide laws, would the apostles have minded if they visited the temple prostitutes when they visited their parents? Orthodox Christianity would suggest that I am exaggerating and perhaps they are right. But if the Noahide laws were all that the gentiles were required to observe and still be part of God’s called out people, why would these other parts of the law affect them?

It should be obvious that the Noahide laws all involved sitting and eating together, even *porneia*, which would have prohibited the gentiles from visiting the temples of false gods. Even today, pot lucks are a vital part of a Christian community. And the gentiles, even when they did not understand the very basics of God’s ways, had to follow common table manners. Think of how rude it would be to bring a pork roast into an orthodox synagogue today!

As Paul forcefully wrote over and over again when he was rebutting obviously ungodly or stupid ideas (the Greek phrase **GINOMAI MÈ** is often translated **GOD FORBID** in the King James), may God forbid such stupid extrapolations like the Jews had to follow Torah but the gentiles only had to follow the Noahide laws. Paul wrote over and over again that there were no divisions between Christians. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (Gal. 3:28) Yet current scholars would put a division between those Christians who only had to obey the Noahide laws and other Christians who needed to follow the ordinances listed in scripture. **MAY GOD FORBID!** The conference of Acts 15 does not deal with the law of God that was spoken from Mount Zion. It does not deal with the law of God that his prophets berated Israel for not following for a millennia. It dealt with *becoming* a follower of God, not

being a follower of God. The Acts 15 conference was about how Christians *begin* their walk with God, not how they continue that life long journey.

Neither Peter nor Paul was teaching that God's ordinances given to Abraham had changed. God said, *"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed."* (Gen. 17:10-2) God confirmed this was part of His covenant with Israel in Lev. 12:2-3. But the Acts 15 conference was not about what the Jews needed to do, but what the new gentile converts had to do to fellowship with and learn from and with their Jewish brethren. It was not even about what the Jewish brethren could learn from the gentiles, which Paul covers in the book of Galatians, because the Acts 15 conference was about the first step in a long journey.

The Acts 15 conference could not have been about circumcision for Jewish followers because shortly after the Acts 15 conference, Paul had Timothy, who was Jewish by ancestry, circumcised (Acts 16:3). It is likely that Timothy was circumcised so that Paul could use him as part of his evangelism with the Jews. Paul may have been the apostle to the gentiles, but he still preached to many Jews, something that would have been difficult to do in the presence of a non-circumcised Jewish Timothy. However, Paul absolutely refused to circumcise Titus, a gentile, for theological grounds (Gal. 2:3). Therefore what the Acts 15 council proclaimed was that you did not have to be a descendent of Abraham to be a part of God's people, but it did not do away with circumcision if you were a genetic descendant of Abraham. Circumcision of the heart was required for all, but circumcision of the skin was still required for the children of Abraham.

The conference of Acts 15 has much to do with the book of Galatians. Much is made of Paul's confrontation with Peter and men who came from James in Gal. 2:11-14. It is suggested that Peter and James disagreed with Paul about the role of circumcision, and by inference, the

role of law in a Christian's life. However, those who emphasize this disagreement choose to ignore the fact that Peter preached that Paul was correct in Acts 15. They seem to ignore that it was James who ordered a letter be sent to all Christian churches saying that what Paul was teaching was correct. They also do not put the disagreement between Peter and Paul in Galatians in the proper context, which Paul himself does.

Paul writes in Galatians, *"Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised."* (Gal. 2:1-3) Paul sets the ground work. Titus was a fellow Christian who worked with Paul and went to Jerusalem a decade after the Acts 15 conference and was never circumcised. And who agreed with this arrangement? *"And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."* (Gal. 2:9). Therefore there was no disagreement among the apostles. Gentiles did not need to get circumcised to serve God.

Peter should have known better than to behave as he did in Galatians 2 after his eloquent speech of Acts 15, where he preached that circumcision was not required to be a part of God's people. Yet because of social pressures, he does something he shouldn't have. *"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"* (Gal. 2:11-14)

The disagreement between Peter and Paul in Galatians 2 had nothing to do with Torah nor did it really have anything to do with circumcision. Scripture shows Paul and Peter agreed about the role of circumcision. Their disagreement was about political correctness. Peter has no issues eating and interacting with uncircumcised gentile Christians until someone who might be upset by this showed up. So Peter decided not to upset those who disagreed with Paul and himself. However, Paul saw this would upset and denigrate their gentile brethren. Therefore he corrected Peter in front of everyone. Paul's lesson to Peter in Galatians 2 is that you might need to take others' feelings into consideration, as Peter did with his Jewish Christian brethren from Jerusalem, but not when it violates a more important principle, and Peter had violated that principle. It is wrong to be politically correct and give deference to those who call themselves Christians when these Christians are acting ungodly.

PURPOSE OF GALATIANS

Why did Paul write his letter to the Galatians? Paul writes, *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."* (Gal. 1:6-7) So there was a problem in Galatia with false teachers perverting the gospel of Jesus by twisting or missing a very big point.

What was that teaching? When the book of Galatians is examined as a whole, there should be no doubt that the topic was the same as the topic of the Acts 15 council, circumcision. After bringing up the Acts 15 council, Paul writes:

"But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Gal. 2:3-5)

So the false teachers were trying to convince the Galatians that Paul was wrong to leave Titus uncircumcised, a contention that Paul teaches is

ludicrous because this was decided more than a decade before. Paul goes on to write,

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:26-9)

Again, Paul is teaching that to truly be a part of God's called out people, you can either be circumcised (Jew) or uncircumcised (Greek). Thus gentiles do not have to be circumcised. Paul goes on to write, *“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” (Gal 5:2)* Paul had just written that circumcision was nothing in Gal. 3, so why would he write if the Galatians got circumcised they would no longer be Christians? As we will see when we examine the book of Galatians in detail, this strong admonition is for the Galatians only. As with most of Paul's writings, the book of Galatians is dealing with a specific problem and Paul's theological gymnastics are performed to solve that one problem. Taking Paul's arguments out of context is exactly what Peter warned against in 2 Peter 3:16. The book of Galatians, taken in context, shows that Paul is exhorting the Galatians not to follow this false teaching about circumcision and he pulls out all the stops to get them to listen to him. So the reason the Galatians cannot be circumcised is because that would mean they were following these false teachers.

Paul continues to drive the point home when he writes, *“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” (Gal 5:6)*

Again Paul teaches that the issue in Galatians is about circumcision, trying to teach his beloved children in Galatia that there is no reason to get circumcised. He is not forbidding circumcision in general, but emphasizing that the Galatians not follow the teachings of false teachers in this regard.

Paul gets to the crux of the matter when he writes, *“And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the*

offence of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.” (Gal. 5:11-2) The ISV translation captures Paul’s real meaning in Gal. 5:12. “I wish that those who are upsetting you would castrate themselves!” (Gal. 5:12 ISV) It should be obvious that Paul goes back to the main subject of whether or not the Galatians should be circumcised from many angles. Paul insinuates that the false Jewish Christians teachers, who preached that if you really wanted to be fully committed to God, then you needed to be circumcised, actually taught that Paul agreed with them. And here is a paraphrase of Paul’s answer to these false teachers. “If you increase your righteousness by cutting off a little piece from there, why don’t they get real righteous and cut off the whole thing!” Paul was incensed and as we will see, he did everything in his power, using every persuasive argument he could to keep the Galatians from falling for the false teaching that they must get circumcised, even though they, as gentiles, were already part of God’s church. Paul ends his letter, sans the customary salutation by writing,

“As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Gal. 6:12-5)

Paul ends the letter of Galatians telling the Galatians not to get circumcised because they are already a new creature. Once you are a new creature in Jesus, circumcision of the skin means nothing because your heart is already circumcised. But these false teachers are teaching otherwise. Their motives? Perhaps bragging in the synagogues to their friends, some of whom may have rejected Jesus as the Messiah, that they had converted gentiles to Jews rather than having the true pleasure of knowing that some lost souls, some fellow children of God, had been turned from the path of destruction and towards a true relationship with God, which God promised to all mankind in Genesis 3:15 and Gen. 12:3. These false Jewish Christian teachers may have been more concerned

about bragging how they circumcised the flesh rather than circumcising the hearts of the gentiles. And Paul would have none of it. The book of Galatians has Paul pulling out every theological trick in the book to convince the gentile Galatians, who were already disciples of God, not to follow these false teachers.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GALATIANS

Over twenty pages of introduction just to put the book of Galatians in its proper context! However, the book of Galatians has been taken out of context for so long and for so many self-serving reasons that such background is almost a requirement to understand Galatians. This paper is by no means a summary of the NPP view of the book of Galatians because the New Perspective on Paul bridges both the liberal and conservative schools of Protestantism. This paper is also an original exegesis of the book of Galatians, but that exegesis is built upon the background of NPP. If you wish to understand the background of Galatians in more detail by looking at what first century Judaism actually taught, I recommend the works of liberal scholar E.P. Sanders or the more conservative James Dunn or N.T. Wright. However, there is still a little more background that must be covered because of how Galatians has been used to teach that the law given by God on Mount Sinai was somehow bad for Christians. A major point that liberal and conservative NPP scholars agree on is that the orthodox Protestant view of Judaism in the first century is incorrect not just because it has erroneously assumed that works rather than grace dominated Jewish theology, which it did not, but has also misunderstood how fragmented first century Judaism was.

Judaism of the first century had learned some dramatic lessons from the Babylonian exile. For almost a thousand years, from the time of the exodus from Egypt, with the incident of the golden calf, until the Babylonian captivity, the God of Israel berated His called out nation for profaning His Sabbaths and worshipping idols rather than Him. God condemns these violations over and over again with the prophets he sent to Israel, which are recorded throughout scripture⁸. The Northern

⁸ For example: "Thou hast despised My holy things, and hast profaned My sabbaths." (Ezek 22:8)

kingdom was taken into the Assyrian captivity because of their idolatry. A little over a hundred years later the southern kingdom was taken into captivity for 70 years for profaning the Sabbath (2 Chr. 36:21). Although God also condemns Israel's breaking of all the commandments that impacted their fellow man in the teachings of the prophets, according to scripture He sent Judah into captivity for the violations that directly affronted God rather than man. I speculate that God did not take the sins against Him more personally than the sins the Israelites committed against one another and the gentiles. The reason He likely exiled Israel revolved around the Israelites publicly worshipping idols and profaning His Sabbaths. If they were willing to thumb their noses at God in public, what heinous sins were they committing in private? The prophets tell us. All of Israel could see their fellow Israelites thumbing their noses at God by violating the His Sabbaths and publically worshipping idols. This disrespect of God and His ways could not be allow to continue because of the effect it would have on the Israelites who were trying to follow God.

Israel learned a lot while in captivity and to this day, idol worship has been removed from Judaism and they have not profaned the Sabbath with servile work (at least among most conservative and orthodox Jews). So Judea at the time of Jesus was not the Judea of the prophets. Instead the pendulum had swung the other way so that the majority of the Jews at the time of Jesus had substituted the law as an idol, as they had done with Nehushtan, the bronze serpent from Numbers 21⁹. They made the law an idol rather than using it as a tool. Rather than enjoying the Sabbath as a day of rest, the religious leaders of Jesus' time made it a burden by trying to build unreasonable walls around it to attempt to enforce their version of holiness via separation.

There were four main parties of Jews enforcing these rules in differing ways during the time of Jesus. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots. (The Herodians appear to have been a purely political party that may have even been dominated by Edomites rather than Jews, so they have been excluded from this analysis). These were not just theological movements inside of Judaism, which they were, but they

⁹ "He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan." (2Kings 18:4)

were also political parties. Although these parties had more things in common than they disagreed on, they often considered the other parties to not truly be Jews because of these differences.

The Sadducees were most likely perceived by the population the same way the Republicans are in the U.S. today. There were not just the supposed party of the elites, but they were the party of law and order. The vast majority of the priesthood belonged to the Sadducees. The Sadducees rejected the premise that God had given an additional oral law to the descendants of Aaron. Although the first portion of the Talmud, written by the descendants of the Pharisees, which would later be codified as the Mishnah, states the Pharisees were the real power among the Jews in Judea, NPP advocates that the Sadducees were the real power brokers because they not only ran the temple, but they interacted with the real rulers of Israel, the Romans. The Essenes, Zealots, and Pharisees eschewed interaction with the Romans. However, as the old saying goes, the victors write the history and the Sadducees ceased to exist as a party after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. The history written by the Pharisees in the Mishnah would be like the democrats writing a history of the United States if the Republicans no longer existed.

The Pharisees were the people's party, like the Democrats in the U.S. today. However, even they had two dramatically different schools of thought within their ranks. The school of Shammai would be like the southern Democrats of old, being hard-line on defense and law and order, while the school of Hillel would be more like the Nancy Pelosi wing of the current Democrat party. Although Jesus and John the Baptist castigated their religious practices and beliefs, the Pharisees were by far and away the largest party and ran the synagogues, where most Jews went to hear the readings of the Torah on Sabbath, as well as to hear commentary that would become the Mishnah. There were very few people who owned the scrolls with the Torah on them, so the Pharisees almost had a monopoly on the normal reading of the law. They were also the party that taught mercy more than punishment, just as today Democrats often lament even having the death penalty.

“The Pharisees emerged as a distinct group about 160 BCE (160 years before Christ). They sought to bring ritual practices on

analogies from the ritual of the Temple into the home. They held that God had given an oral tradition to Moses which was handed down along with the written law; this was denied by the Sadducees. When the rabbis came to write the history of Jewish law in accordance with the conception of Oral Law they put it thus: "Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets; the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue (in Ezra's time AFTER the return from Babylon) Simeon the Just was of the remnants of the Great Synagogue. Antigonus of Sokho received the Law from Simeon the Just. From there five "pairs" of authorities are said each to have "received the law" from their predecessors, thus linking the Great Synagogue (viewed as the Elders who came back from exile with Ezra).with the rabbinic schools whose disputes dominate tannaitic literature. [that is Jewish law after the destruction of the temple]. 'The five pairs are.[and it ends up with the fourth pair]: Shemaiah and Avtaylor (period of Herod the Great) and (5) Hillel and Shammai....

*We know that the great treatises of the Mishnah and Talmud were prepared in order to perpetuate the values of a tradition which had grown up over the centuries, and which ran the risk of disappearing if it was not written down. Israel's will to survive prevailed, on that occasion, despite the inhibition against writing anything other than that which had been given in writing on Sinai. By committing the 'Oral Law' to writing, the Rabbis sought to perpetuate traditions which had grown up over time with the consent of the community of Israel."*¹⁰

Although the Pharisees placed the oral law above Torah, we know that Jesus condemned the ideas imbedded in the oral law. Jesus expressed his opinion of the oral law when the Pharisees asked him why his disciples did not follow it.

"Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered

¹⁰ <http://www.galatians-paul-the-torah-law-legalism.info/first-century-jewish-torah-law.html>

and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” (Matt. 15:2-6)

And the castigation in Matthew 15 was nothing compared to Jesus’ outburst against the oral law and its teachers in Matthew 23. The Pharisees’ oral law concentrated on separation of the clean from the unclean to maintain holiness.

The Essenes were a party of purity and believed everything was so corrupt in temple and synagogue worship, it was beyond saving. They believed in total separation from the corruption of the other parties. Josephus wrote that they were noted for their friendliness and for helping the needy in society, but required new members to go through three years of rigorous training before joining the order, which was often communal. The closest equivalent in the U.S. political system is the libertarians because of the emphasis on purity of ideas and actions.

The Zealots concentrated on getting free from Rome and having Israel return to its glory by any means. They were noted for using violence to advance their goals. Although we think of them as militarist, they would have probably considered the Maccabees as role models for their religious beliefs. The closest equivalent today would be the green party.

Just like today, there are people who make the party the center of their life while others were simply affiliated with the party. Just as there are lots of independents in U.S. politics today, there were many independents then. There were also people who liked people and platforms from a certain party, but were actually associated with another party. For example, although blacks in the U.S. are often far more conservative when it comes to family values and attend church for more than the average American, beliefs more closely aligned with the Republican party, they usually vote about 90% Democratic. It was not always that case. Nixon and Reagan got about 40% of the black vote. In

like manner, many Jews belonged to a party because their parents did or because of some outrage of the past and not because of what it actually taught.

To think about the four main parties extant in Israel at the time of Jesus as theological schools would be a mistake. They were political parties, all within a blunted theocracy of Judaism. The Democrats or Republicans often accuse the other of being un-American because they have very different views of what America should be and how we should reach a goal. The four main parties of Israel at that time did the same thing. All of these parties would have considered themselves good Jews, but would question how good a Jew the members of the other party would be and likely considered members of another party un-Israeli. What is interesting is that it is entirely possible that among Jesus' twelve apostles, all four parties may have been represented.

There is little doubt that Simon was a zealot (Act 1:13). John's teaching had many things in common with the Essenes and there are many Catholic and Protestant scholars who believe John the Baptist was an Essene. If that is the case, then John's disciples Andrew and John would also have been Essene. Matthew and John the beloved apostle were most likely Sadducees. Matthew was a tax collector who interacted with Jews and Romans, something that only the Sadducees appeared to be comfortable doing. As for John the beloved, he interacted with the priesthood and Romans during the crucifixion of Jesus, which would strongly suggest he was a Sadducee as well. There are Sabbath keeping Christians and Messianics who would reject the idea that some of Jesus disciples could have been Sadducees based on what Jesus said about the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29 *"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."* (Matt. 22:29) They exalt the teachings of the Pharisees because of Matthew 23:2, yet they ignore that Jesus' most scathing words were reserved for the Pharisees. The NPP perspective is to take things at face value rather than relying on unsubstantiated traditions or taking one verse out of context. Jesus was teaching that the Sadducees did not understand what the bible had to say about the resurrection of the dead in Matthew 22:29, not that the Sadducees were far more ignorant about the bible than the Pharisees. Given that the

Pharisees were the most popular of the four parties, it is highly likely that some of the remaining apostles would be affiliated with the Pharisees.

Into this mix comes Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus' teaching from Torah not only assails some of the core beliefs of all four of these parties, but suggests that all of these parties are working against the will of God. The Pharisees must have been outraged that Jesus would agree with the Sadducees when he said, *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matt. 22:21) This teaching would have also upset the Zealots, who hated Caesar. And on the very same day, Jesus upset the Sadducees by assailing one of their core doctrines, that there was no resurrection by telling them, *"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."* (Matt. 22:29-32) In context, Jesus does not embrace the teachings of any of the parties, just as Paul would later reject the ideas of Pharisaism for the joy of understanding God's ways through the scriptures rather than through tradition. Jesus even assailed one for the core beliefs of the Essenes at the Last Supper when he said, *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."* (John 17:15) Jesus taught his disciples should not to separate themselves from the world, which they would have perceived to be from other Jews. John 7:15 though 30 shows Jesus openly rejecting all of the manmade teachings propagated by the four religious parties of the time for the freedom of Torah. That does not mean that he rejected the truth that one of the parties may have been teaching, just the false portions of their theology.

Far too many false teachers love to build false straw men to support their erroneous beliefs. But this kind of argument should be rejected out of hand by Christians. For example, as a non-Catholic, I personally reject the adoration of Mary in the Catholic Church and believe putting up idols of Mary is unbiblical. There have been numerous papers written on the tradition of Mary worship, but some of these papers reject Catholic theology in whole, apparently not grasping the idea they would also be

rejecting the idea that Jesus is the Messiah, which is a core tenant of the Catholic Church. That is why it is better to exam each doctrinal belief against scripture rather than saying, “These people are wrong on this point, so they must be wrong on that point as well.” That is the kind of argument five year- olds make. And far too many people trying to follow Jesus have been swayed by such infantile arguments.

Peter and James and John and the other original disciples of Jesus followed Jesus’ teachings that all Jews were the called out people of God who needed to covenant with God under a new covenant, no matter their party affiliation. This was hard enough for the Jews of occupied Judea to take, but then Peter informs them that God wants to extend the covenant to everyone, even the lowly gentiles, and even the Roman occupiers. Then along comes this hot shot ex-Pharisee named Saul, who persecuted them all before he became a disciple of Jesus, who pushes the point that Peter made in Acts 10 and recounted at the great synod of Acts 15. Is it any wonder that the Essenes or Pharisees who likely constituted Paul’s Judaizing Christian opponents in Galatia felt that it was just too much to accept the gentiles “just as they are.”

This is the backdrop of the book of Galatians. As we have pointed out, Paul’s emphasis is that the Galatians should not get circumcised. So how does he persuade the Galatians to accept the decree of Acts 15 and abandon these false teachers? That is the story of Galatians and the idea of using Galatians to push unsubstantiated traditions of the fathers about the Torah is anathema to the real message of Galatians.

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

CHAPTER ONE

After his salutation, Paul states the problem he is trying to solve. *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” (Gal 1:6-7)*

Paul asks the Galatians why they would even entertain these false teachings. *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* (Gal. 1:8-12)

Paul seems to suggest that these false teachers are trying to please men, something that Paul denies doing. He then reaffirms that the gospel he preached and taught to the Galatians is a revelation from Jesus the Messiah. *“For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.”* (Gal. 1:12-15) Paul points out in Galatians 1:12-15 he was a far superior Jewish Pharisee than these false Judaizing teachers ever were. Paul even suggests that God himself was instrumental in his birth. Why? *“To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”* (Gal. 1:16)

After pointing out that God Himself chose him to preach the message of the gospel of Jesus the messiah to the gentiles, not these false teachers, whoever they might be, Paul makes the point that he was so certain of his calling and his message that he taught for three years before going to talk to the recognized apostles at Jerusalem in Gal. 1:17-18. *“Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.”* (Gal. 1:17-18) Paul seems to insinuate that if he did not confer with the leaders in Jerusalem for three years, why would he confer with these false teachers?

However, after three years he did go to Jerusalem to spend three Sabbaths with Peter. He also saw James while he was there. *“But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.”* (Gal. 19-24) In Gal. 1:19-24 Paul is telling the Galatians that both James and Peter agreed with the message that he was preaching to the gentiles, which disagrees with the message of these false teachers. Paul is driving home the point it is his God given job to teach the gentiles, thus it is not the job of these false teachers. And not only was Paul's message welcomed by the gentiles, but even those who lived in Judea welcomed what Paul was doing and what he was teaching.

CHAPTER 2

Paul then brings up the Acts 15 conference at the start of the second chapter of Galatians. *“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.”* (Gal. 2:1) He makes the point in Galatians 2:1-3 that these false teachers have to be wrong because none of the leaders of god's church wanted the gentile Titus to be circumcised. *“But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.”* (Gal. 2:3) Paul then writes, *“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me.”* (Gal. 2:4-6)

This is a smack down by Paul. He is writing that the kind of false teachers who are currently bothering the Galatians were even around at the time of the Acts 15 conference. These false teachers may have had great reputations, but those reputations don't matter to God. And their reputations certainly did not matter to Paul because these supposedly great teachers added nothing to Paul's understandings of God's ways when he met them in Jerusalem. Paul writes in Gal. 2:7-8 that even these false teachers could not refute the fact that God had chosen him to be an evangelist to the gentiles just as Peter was an evangelist to Jews. *"But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.)"* (Gal 2:7-8) Paul then brings down the big hammer. *"And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."* (Gal. 2:9) Even Peter the rock, as he was named by Jesus and James, Jesus' own brother, and John, Jesus' beloved disciple said that the Paul and Barnabas were the main evangelists to the gentiles. God picked me out for this job, writes Paul. All of Jesus' most trusted followers said I was the one chosen for this job. So just who do these false teachers that you are listening to think they are?

After showing he had the god given authority and responsibility to teach the gentiles, Paul points out how he corrected Peter about not eating with gentiles, which has already been covered in detail in this paper. *"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles."* (Gal. 2:11-

15) Why does Paul bring up this point? Because Paul was the one picked out for the job of preaching the gospel to the gentiles by God and even when a lead apostle like Peter did something wrong, something that would interfere with Paul's God-given job, he was going to correct Peter. So if he was going to correct Peter, what do you think Paul is going to do to these false teachers who question if Paul is even teaching the right thing? James and John may have been the 'Sons of thunder', but Paul could do some serious damage when he got his quill going. And he does just that in the book of Galatians.

Paul's correction of Peter had nothing to do with theology. Peter, Paul, James and the other apostles agreed on these points. Paul's correction of Peter was not even directly about circumcision. It was about Paul's authority on bringing the message of Jesus the Messiah to the gentiles and when Peter's act of political correctness interfered with his God-given job, Paul was going to correct Peter. Nothing more and nothing less.

THE WORKS OF THE LAW

Paul writes in Galatians 2:16, *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* The terms works of the law has been treated unfairly by theologians until the last fifty years and the vast majority still do not understand what Paul meant by the term "WORKS OF THE LAW" because they have never placed Pauline theology in its proper perspective, which is subservient to the gospel message of Jesus. The term "WORKS OF THE LAW" has been used by orthodox theologians to supposedly prove that Paul is castigating anyone who feels compelled to follow any of the ordinances of the Old Testament Torah. Orthodox Christianity has taught for at least a millennia and a half that first century Judaism concentrated their religious practices around works to gain the favor of God and basically excluded grace from its theology, a premise not supported by the Mishnah. They have done this based almost solely on their interpretation of the writings of Paul and gospel of John viewed through a prism of anti-semitism. However, NPP has shown the assumption that Judaism placed works above grace is erroneous if the Talmud is to be

believed. Just as the Catholic Church teaches both works and grace, so did the Jewish sects of the first century and their core doctrine may have been more grace oriented than the Catholic Church's current dogma.

Sabbath keepers and many Messianic Jews have responded to orthodox Protestant theology about "WORKS OF THE LAW" by teaching that what Paul was referring to when he wrote derogatory things about the law in Galatians was the ceremonial law and not the Torah. They have generally been on the losing side of this argument for four reasons. The first was the abundant anti-Semitism that has been noted earlier in the paper. Therefore the idea of teaching that Torah was not a punishment from God was usually dismissed out of hand with orthodox teachers and their followers responding with something like, "You can be a Judizer if you like, but I will not give up the freedom Christ gave me according to Col. 2:14." The second and more important reason Sabbath keepers have failed to present a convincing argument for their beliefs is their errant attempts at picking and choosing what Paul means when he writes law. This picking and choosing may fit the orthodox theological model, which rejects large swatches of scripture that do not fit their theology, but is kind of senseless for those relying on Matt. 5:17 as an important part of their theology. As my friend Russell always said, "If you can't be right, at least be consistent." This idea of picking and choosing what the law means based upon its context is especially egregious when we consider it was God who also gave the ceremonial law which was still being practiced at the time Galatians was written and in which Paul willingly participated.¹¹

The third reason the term "WORKS OF THE LAW" has not been convincingly refuted as Paul actually condemning those who embrace a Torah centered life style is based on the confusion between Talmud and Torah. The vast majority of Messianics still embrace the Talmud, whose origins can be traced directly to the Pharisaic teachings that Jesus condemned. This involves things like not being able to push an elevator button on the Sabbath because that would kindle a spark. As the small branch of

¹¹ Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them." (Acts 21:26)

Judaism known as Karaites points out that this kind of talmud interferes with a correct understanding of Torah. Many Sabbath keeping Christians confuse the law with the talmud of their chosen prophet. These groups then try to present their talmud as Torah and suggest that Paul would embrace it, which he most certainly would not have. Paul's writings agree with Jesus' teachings that talmuds make God's will of no effect.

The fourth reason why the term "WORKS OF THE LAW" has been treated unfairly in theological studies is because it was never examined in context. Below are all the areas in scripture where the term "WORKS OF THE LAW" is used in scripture.

"Therefore by the DEEDS OF THE LAW there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom 3:20)

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the DEEDS OF THE LAW." (Rom 3:28)

*The Greek word translated as deeds in Romans 3: 20 and 3: 28 is **ergon**. This word is usually translated as **works** in the New Testament, as in the verses below.*

"Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the WORKS OF THE LAW. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone" (Rom 9:32)

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the WORKS OF THE LAW, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Gal 2:16)

"This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the WORKS OF THE LAW, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal 3:2)

"He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the WORKS OF THE LAW, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal 3:5)

"For as many as are of the WORKS OF THE LAW are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all

things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” (Gal 3:10)

The question that should have been asked by theologians throughout the ages was, “What is the WORKS OF THE LAW?” Did Paul mean something specific by this? It sounds as if Paul really, really did not like whatever the “WORKS OF THE LAW” were. The real breakthrough on what Paul was so upset about came with Martin Abegg’s land mark article in Biblical Archeological Review in 1994.

“MMT . . . stands for Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah, which Strugnell and Qimron translate ‘Some Precepts of the Torah.’ This translation unfortunately obscures MMT’s relationship to Paul’s letters.

In this case, miqsat does not mean simply ‘some.’ The same word is used in Genesis 47:2, where Joseph presents five of his brothers to Pharaoh. Here the word could be understood to mean the most important of the brothers or perhaps the choice or select. In other words, when the word is used in MMT, it does not refer just to some random laws; these laws are important to the writer. A similar understanding of the meaning of the word can be gleaned from its use in the Talmud. Thus we might translate the word more accurately as ‘some important’ or ‘pertinent.’

More significant for our purposes, however, are the other two words, ma'ase ha-torah. Strugnell and Qimron translate this phrase as ‘precepts of Torah,’ while Lawrence Schiffman offers ‘legal rulings of Torah.’ These translations are accurate enough, but they nonetheless cloud the Paul connection.

A few minutes with a concordance of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, leaves little doubt that the Greek equivalent of ma'ase ha-torah is likely ergon nomou. Ergon nomou is commonly translated in English versions of the New Testament as ‘works of the law.’ This well-known Pauline phrase is found in Romans 3:20, 28 and in Galatians 2:16; 3:2,5,10.

. . . Ma'ase ha-torah is equivalent to what we know in English from Paul's letters as 'works of the law.' This Dead Sea Scroll and Paul use the very same phrase. The connection is emphasized by the fact that this phrase appears nowhere in rabbinic literature of the first and second centuries A.D.—only in Paul and in MMT.” (pp. 52-53, "Paul, 'Works of the Law,' and MMT," Biblical Archaeological Review, November/December 1994)

So the “WORKS OF THE LAW” was a Talmud of sorts that most scholars believe was written by one set of Essene believers and sent to another set. What were these “WORKS OF THE LAW” that were so important? A translation of the 4MMT is listed below. Scholars have pieced together fragments to form the document that has been translated below, so there are gaps where portions of the papyrus are missing, but the general meaning is clear.

These are some of our pronouncements concerning the Torah of Elohim. Specifically, some of pronouncements concerning works of the Torah that we have determined . . . and all of them concern defiling mixtures and the purity of the sanctuary . . .

Concerning the offering of Gentile grain which they are . . . and allowing their . . . to touch it and defile it. No one should eat from Gentile grain nor bring it into the sanctuary . . .

Concerning the sacrifice of the sin offering 'which they are boiling in vessels of bronze and thus defiling the flesh of their sacrifices as well as boiling them in the Temple court and defiling it with the broth of their sacrifice.

Concerning the Gentile sacrifice, we have determined that they are sacrificing to the . . . which . . . to him.

Concerning the cereal offering of the sacrifice of well being, they are being put aside from one day for the next. Indeed it is written . . . that the cereal offering is to be eaten with the fat and the flesh on the day that they are sacrificed. For the priests are responsible to take care of this matter so as not to bring guilt upon the people. Concerning the purity of the heifer of the sin offering, the one who slaughters it, the one who burns it, the one who gathers its ashes,

and the one who sprinkles the water of purification—for all of these, the sun must set for them to be pure—so that the pure might sprinkle the water of purification on the unclean. For the sons of Aaron are responsible to care for this matter . . .

Concerning the hides of cattle and sheep which they are ... and fashioning from their hides vessels ... no one is allowed to bring them into the sanctuary . . .

Concerning the hides and bones of unclean animals, no one is allowed to make handles for vessels from the bones or hide . . .

Concerning the hide from the carcass of a clean animal, the one who carries this carcass must not touch the holy food . . .

Concerning the . . . which are . . . For it is the responsibility of the priests to care for all these matters so as not to bring guilt upon the people. (Lev. 22:10-16)

Concerning that which it is written: anyone who slaughters in the camp or outside the camp an ox, a lamb, or a goat, that ... to the north of the camp. We have determined that the sanctuary is the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, that Jerusalem is the camp, and that outside the camp is outside of Jerusalem, in other words the camp of their cities. Outside the camp ... the sin offering, and they take out the ashes of the altar and burn the sin offering there. For Jerusalem is the place which He chose from all the tribes of Israel to make His name to dwell. . . which they are not sacrificing in the sanctuary.

Concerning pregnant animals, we have determined that one must not sacrifice the mother and the fetus on the same day . . . (Lev. 22:27-28)

Concerning one who eats of the fetus, we have determined that a person might eat the fetus which is found in the womb of its mother after it has been sacrificed as well. You know that this is correct, for the matter is written concerning the pregnant animal. (Lev. 22:7-2)

Concerning the Ammonite, the Moabite, the bastard, the one whose testicles are crushed, or whose penis is cut off who enter the congregation . . . and take wives, that they might become one flesh and entering the sanctuary . . . unclean. We have also determined that there is not... one must not have intercourse with them . . . one must not unite with them so as to make them one bone . . . one must not bring them into the sanctuary. And you know that some of the people and ... are uniting. For all the sons of Israel are responsible to guard themselves against any defiling union and to show reverence for the sanctuary. (Deut. 23:1-4)

Concerning the blind, who since they cannot see, are not able to guard themselves from any defiling mixture. They cannot see the defilement of the guilt offering. (Lev. 21:17-23)

Concerning the deaf, who have not heard the statute, the judgment, and the purity ruling, who have not heard the commandments belonging to Israel. For the one who has not seen or has not heard does not know how to perform according to the Torah. They may, however, participate in the pure food of the sanctuary. (Lev. 21:17-23)

Concerning streams of liquid, we have determined that they are not intrinsically pure. Indeed, streams of liquid do not form a barrier between the impure and the pure. For the liquid of the stream and that in its receptacle become as one liquid.

Concerning dogs, one may not bring dogs into the holy camp because they may eat some of the bones from the sanctuary and the meat which is still on them. For Jerusalem is the holy camp. It is the place which He chose from all the tribes of Israel, for Jerusalem is the foremost of the camps of Israel.

Concerning the planting of fruit trees which are planted in the land of Israel, their produce is to be considered as first fruits belonging to the priests. Also the tithe of the cattle and sheep belong to the priest.

Concerning lepers, we have determined that they may not enter any place containing the sacred pure food, for they shall be kept apart, outside the camp (?). Indeed it is written that from the time that he shaves and washes he must dwell outside the camp for seven days. But now, while they are still unclean, lepers must not enter inside any place with sacred pure food. And you know that the one who unknowingly breaks a command because the matter escaped his notice, he must bring a sin offering. But as for the one who intentionally sins, it is written that he is a despiser and a blasphemer. Indeed, while they are yet leprous, they may not eat from the holy food until sunset on the eighth day. (Lev. 14:2-9; Num. 15:30)

Concerning the uncleanness of the dead, we have determined that every bone, whether a piece or whole, is considered according to the commandment of the dead or the slain. (Num. 19:16-19)

Concerning the fornication which has been done in the midst of the people, their children are holy. As it is written, Israel is holy. (Num. 36:6)

Concerning a clean animal of an Israelite, it is written that it is not Torah to breed it with another species. (Lev. 19:19)

Concerning the clothes of an Israelite, it is written that they must not be of mixed substances. Nor is it Torah for him to sow his field or his orchard with two species of plants. Because they are holy and the sons of Aaron are most holy. But you know that some of the priests and the people are intermarrying. They are uniting and defiling the holy seed as well as their own with forbidden marriage partners. For the sons of Aaron must . . . (Lev. 19:19; 21:7; Num. 36:6).

Concerning the women ... the violence and the unfaithfulness . . . (Deut. 17:17; 21:15-16)

For in these matters (?)... because of the violence and the fornication, some places have been destroyed. Indeed, it is written in the book of Moses that you shall not bring an abomination into your house. For an abomination is hated by Elohim. (Deut. 7:26)

Thus we have separated ourselves from the violators. But you know that we have separated from the majority of the people (or council of the congregation) and from all their uncleanness and from being party to or going along with them in these matters. And you know that no unfaithfulness, deception, or evil are found in our hands, for we have given some thought (?) to these issues.

Indeed, we have written to you so that you might understand the book of Moses, the books of the Prophets, and David all the generations. In the book of Moses it is written . . . not to you and days of old... It is also written that you will turn from the path and evil will befall you (Deut. 31:29). And it is written that when all these things happen to you in the Last Days, the blessing and the curse, that you call them to mind and return to Him with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut. 30:1-2) . . . at the end of the age, then you shall live . . . etc.

It is also written in the book of Moses and in the books of the prophets that the blessings and curses shall come upon you . . . some of the blessings came on ... and in the days of Solomon the son of David.

Indeed the curses which came in the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat until the exile of Jerusalem and Zedekiah the king of Judah when He sent them to Babylon . . . And so we see that some of the blessings and curses have already come that are written in the book of Moses.

Now this is the Last Days: when those of Israel shall return to the Torah of Moses with all their heart and will never turn away again. But the wicked will increase in wickedness and . . . And the . . .

Now remember the kings of Israel and consider their works carefully. For he who feared the Torah was delivered from his troubles. These were the seekers of the Torah, those whose sins were forgiven. Remember David, he was a pious man, and indeed he was delivered from many troubles and forgiven.

And here is the postscript:

Now, we have written to you some of the works of the Torah, those which we determined would be beneficial for you and your people, because we have seen that you possess insight and knowledge of the Torah. Understand all these things and beseech Him to set your counsel straight and so keep you away from evil thoughts and the counsel of Belial. Then you shall rejoice at the end time when you find the essence of our words to be true. And it will be reckoned to you as righteousness, in that you have done what is right and good before Him, to your own benefit and to that of Israel. (from

<http://www.jacksonsnnyder.com/arc/Translations/4qmmmt.htm>)

The works of the law, the 4MMT, starts and ends by stating it is being written about separating the clean from the unclean. One of its first ordinances is that any grain from any gentile is unclean for any Jew. Can grain even be unclean according to scripture? GOD FORBID, as Paul would write in 90 point serif on the scroll. Yet they deemed anything from any gentile was unclean. And all dogs were banned from the Israelites dwellings because they might gnaw on a bone from a sacrifice. Another ordinance that is not only outlandishly unscriptural, but inanelly advocating separation as holiness is that you must not sacrifice a mother and its offspring on the same day when Deut. 12:5-14 clearly states the Essenes were not allowed to make any sacrifices. Only the priests could make a sacrifice and then only in the temple (The one exception was once a year the Israelites were allowed to fulfill the role of priest by sacrificing the Passover, but that also had to be done in the temple, as explained in detail in my book Jesus the True Passover). The “WORKS OF THE LAW” is an inanelly self-righteous, unscriptural document passing itself off as a superior interpretation of scripture. It is a Talmud of an Essene sect of Judaism.

As a reminder, the Essenes required three years of apprenticeship before they were allowed to enter “the sacred order”. Abegg points out about the 4MMT or “*The Works of the Law*”, as it would be translated,

“In all of antiquity, only the Manifesto and Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans discuss the connection between works and righteousness. For that reason alone this writing is of immense

interest and importance. But the Manifesto has additional significance. While the sectarian documents found in the caves at Qumran fairly bristle with legal discussions on a variety of issues, only this work, commonly known as 4QMMT (an acronym from the Hebrew words meaning ‘some of the works of the Law’), directly challenges the position of another religious group. . . . The Manifesto presents a well-reasoned argument couched in a homily, complete with applications, illustrations, and exhortations. Following a thesis statement that identifies the central problem—the impure are being allowed to mix with the pure (the profane with the holy)—the author lists some two dozen examples to prove his point . . . The addressee (and secondarily, the reader) is then encouraged to follow the author: separate from those who practice such things...

. . . The final exhortation presses home the author's true point: to be accounted righteous, one must obey the Law as interpreted in the Manifesto.

*This final exhortation is of great importance for a fuller understanding of statements the apostle Paul makes about works and righteousness in his Letter to the Galatians. The author of the Manifesto, probably thinking of Psalm 106:30-31 (where the works of Phinehas were ‘reckoned to him as righteousness’), is engaged, as it were, in a rhetorical duel with the ideas of the apostle. Paul appeals to Genesis 15:6 to show that it was the faith of Abraham that was ‘reckoned to him as righteousness’ (Gal. 3:6) and goes on to state categorically that ‘by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified’ (Gal. 2:16). Probably the ‘false brethren’ (Gal. 2:4) that Paul opposed held a doctrine on justification much like that of the present writing (i.e., 4QMMT).” (Michael Owen Wise, Martin G. Abegg, Edward M. Cook, *The Dead Sea scrolls: a new translation*, Harper Collins, New York, NY, 2005p. 358-9)*

So the 4MMT or “Works of the Law” dealt with the separation of the holy from the profane as the Essenes perceived it. This is the type of separation doctrine that Paul had encountered 15 years before he wrote the book of Galatians, which he believes was resolved from the time of

the Acts 15 conference, but he is encountering it again in Galatia. Certain false teachers were trying to convince gentile Christians with the indwelling of the holy spirit that they were still unclean, no matter what their life style, no matter the condition of their heart because they had not been physically circumcised. We can now come back full circle and see how the New Perspective on Paul sheds the light of sanity on what Paul was teaching in the book of Galatians. James Dunn's book, *The New Perspective on Paul*, describes how "THE WORKS OF THE LAW" should be rightly interpreted in Galatians as well as in Romans.

"Taking up from my earlier 1984 article, the 'new perspective' had suggested to me that 'all who are from the works of the law' (Gal. 3:10) was best taken as reference to those who insisted on full-scale covenantal nomism (rather than on earning salvation by works righteousness), such as had provoked the crises in Jerusalem and Antioch, and now again in Galatia. In addition I began to see that the force of Lev. 18:5 (Lev 18:5 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.) (Gal. 3:12) (Gal 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.) had probably been misunderstood: it served to indicate how the covenant life should be lived ('He who does these things shall live by them'), life within the covenant, and not just life after death. Which also shed light on Gal. 3:21: the law was provided not to give life (only God or his Spirit could do that), but to order the life of the covenant people. And the earlier insight, that the boasting which Paul condemned had more to do with the pride in ethnic privilege than with pride in self-achievement, seemed to be further strengthened by Gal. 6:12-3: the Jewish missionaries would boast in the flesh of the Galatians, when they persuaded the Galatians to be circumcised in the flesh, to conform their uncircumcised identity to the circumcised identity of the covenant people.

A year later, in 1994, I was much heartened by the (at last) publication of the sectarian text from Qumran, 4QMMT. I had known of the text for sometime and was naturally intrigued by the report that it used the phrase 'the works of the law'. But when I first saw it at the SBL meeting that November, 1994, I was stunned

by the astonishing parallel which it provided with Galatians. Particularly striking were the three parallels. 910 "Works of the law" are used in reference to various halakhoth described earlier in the letter (cf. Gal. 2:16); clearly implicit is the claim that the law was only properly observed at the points when the Qumran interpretations of the law were followed. (ii) The conviction that the law had to be observed in just this way, that these works of the law had to be performed, was ground necessary and sufficient for the Qumran sect to 'separate' (that word again) from the rest of the people (cf. Gal. 2.12) (iii) The letters conclusion clearly implies that the righteousness will be reckoned (echoing Gen. 15:6) only to those who perform these works of the law (cf. Gal. 2.16). Here was an astonishing parallel with the situation which confronted Paul in Antioch and which lead to the first recorded formulation of the key slogan: justification by faith and not by works of the law.

It builds on Sanders's new perspective on Second Temple Judaism, and Sanders' reassertion of the basic graciousness expressed in Judaism's understand and practice of covenantal nomism.

It observes that a social function of the law was an integral aspect of Israel's covenantal nomism, where separateness to God (holiness) was understood to require separateness from the (other) nations as two sides of the one coin, and that the law was understood as the means to maintaining both.

It notes that Paul's own teaching on justification focuses on largely if not principally on the need to overcome the barrier which the law was seen to interpose between Jew and Gentile, so that the 'all' of 'to all who believe' (Rom. 1.17) signifies, in the first place, Gentile as well as Jew.

It suggest that the 'works of law' became a key slogan in Paul's exposition of his justification gospel because so many of Paul's fellow Jewish believers were insisting on certain works as indispensable in their own (and others?) standing within the covenant, and therefore as indispensable to salvation.

It protest that that failure to recognize this major dimension of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith may have ignored or excluded a vital factor in combating the nationalism and racialism which has so distorted and diminished Christianity past and present.

(The New Perspective on Paul, James D. G. Dunn, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005, p.14)

Exactly who were the Judaizers that Paul was fighting against in Galatia? Were they Essenes who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but still believed you had to follow their "WORKS OF THE LAW" if you were going to be a true follower of God? If this were the case, then Paul is using the Essene teachings against these Essene Christian Jews who were errantly teaching in Galatia. I personally doubt that, although it is a possibility. It is far more likely Paul's opponents were Pharisees who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Although the Pharisees were nowhere near as rigid in their beliefs of separation of what they perceived as the holy and unclean as the Essenes, they had the same type of agenda. And as teachers, they would have been familiar with the writings and works of the other Jewish sects, just as Paul was. It is likely that Paul even taught "his beloved children" how silly talmuds were by preaching against "THE WORKS OF THE LAW" after he had taught the gospel message of Christ.

I have wondered if some of the Judaizing Christian teachers in Galatia were actually Pharisees that Paul had known and surpassed as a Pharisee before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus? This speculation has some validity because of what Paul wrote. *"And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."* (Gal. 1:14) Paul depicts that former life as Pharisee among Pharisees in the third chapter of Philippians as being nothing more than dung. *("Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."* (Phil 3:8)). Paul sees teachers who could not keep up with him when he was an active Pharisee now not being able to keep up with him as a true follower of Jesus the messiah. These false teachers are errantly teaching that you must be circumcised or you were

still separated from God by uncleanness, even if you had tongues of the holy spirit dancing around you like Cornelius did in Acts 10. If that is the case, then Paul is presenting a ridiculous, but well known teaching of the Essenes that the “WORKS OF THE LAW” were required for true righteousness.

Paul’s use of the term “WORKS OF THE LAW” in a derogatory manner would be a little bit like Paul teaching, “Okay, so they say you have to be circumcised or you are still separated from God and thus not righteous. If you get circumcised, the next thing they are going to teach you is you are still not righteous enough. Now you have to follow this next silly teaching, which is you stand on one foot, balance a ball on your nose, and clap your hands like a trained seal when you pray to be truly righteous.” We can see how ridiculous the “WORKS OF THE LAW”, with their concentration on being separate, were as a measure of righteousness, which is likely why Paul chose to use that extreme example.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Leaving the topic of “WORKS OF THE LAW” for a time in the remaining Chapter 2 of Galatians, Paul goes back to a Christian’s relationship to the law, to Torah.

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (Gal. 2:17-21)

Paul’s major point is that there is no act of righteousness that we can do to justify ourselves before God. Paul is trying again to convince the Galatians not to perform the supposedly righteous act of circumcision on themselves. The book of Galatians is about not following false teachers who state the Galatians must be circumcised. But orthodox Pauline theology transforms these verses in Galatians into an anthem against works. Of course orthodoxy teaches we should not sin, but if Christians

actually believe it is important for Christians to follow the covenant by trying not to sin and perform the good works that God created them for, they are viewed as legalist in orthodoxy. The book of James makes clear the orthodox view of works, law and grace is not accurate, which is why Luther wanted it removed from the canon of scripture. And any examination of Luther's personal life shows why he stressed if Christians believed part of their duty to God was to perform works, and thus the fruit these works produced, these Christians should be viewed as legalists.

If we are brought to God by our faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus, does that mean that we can do whatever we want? Can we return to our old way of doing things, like visiting the temple prostitutes or putting that idol back in our yard so we don't offend our neighbor? Paul's answer in Galatians and elsewhere? NOT!! Then he goes on to talk about the law and its purpose in a Christian's life in Galatians. Remember the two major issues that Jesus was dealing with in the Jewish population were making the Sabbath and the rest of Torah into a burden by placing walls around it and making the law into an idol to be worshipped. Paul had been at the center of that system and saw the damage it did. He is now living a life where the law was not worshipped as an idol, but used as tool to get closer to God. The law was not designed to be mostly black and white with a little gray in between as the Talmud makes it, but the grace of God shows the law has a little black of what not to do and a little white of what we must do with a lot of gray in between so that we can learn the grace of God. It does not mean there is neither black nor white, thus making everything dependent upon the spirit. This was a gnostic teaching, something that Paul touches upon, and which John battles in his gospel and his epistles. Paul shows the Galatians if they turn to worship of law by accepting circumcision, then there was no need for Christ to die, which started the New Covenant and opened the door to God for the gentiles.

CHAPTER 3

Paul starts chapter 3 of Galatians by writing,

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently

set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:1-5)

Taken out of context, these verses might suggest all that matters for a Christian is hearing the name of Jesus or Yeshua or Joshua preached, but nothing could be further from Paul's meaning. Paul is giving the Galatians a stark choice: either what Paul taught them and what they had suffered while following a Christian life was valid without following something as foolish as the "WORKS OF THE LAW" or it was not. Either the miracles being performed in their midst were being done by God, and thus what these false teachers were saying about them not really being Christians because they were not circumcised was false, or what Paul taught them was false. Paul shows them how foolish it would be to reject the manifestation of God already in their presence if they chose to become circumcised because of the false teachers. He is telling the Galatians that they are rejecting the spirit that God has given them if they listen to these false teachers and perform the vain work of being circumcised in the flesh after already being a Christian, at least for the gentiles.

What is the role of faith verses the role of circumcision then? "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. (Gal 3:6-9)

Paul points out that Abraham became part of God's people by showing faith before he was circumcised, just like the people he was writing to in Galatia. Paul writes how God planned to have all of mankind, not just the sons of Abraham, be blessed by Abraham's faith. And then Paul brings out the big guns. He teaches that things have changed. That the blessing promised to Abraham was fulfilled with the crucifixion and resurrection

of Jesus the Messiah. The time of God's prophecy has arrived and the gentiles who have faith in God will receive God's blessings just as Abraham and his children did. And circumcision is not part of this blessing being given to the gentiles by God because this prophecy was given before the ordinance of circumcision was given.

Paul continues, *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* (Gal. 3:10) Okay, Paul writes, let's go past this inane "WORKS OF THE LAW" and actually look at Torah. The law, the Torah, is very clear that if you follow what it says you will be blessed and if you do not, you will be cursed. God is our designer and creator and He is simply stating a law like the law of gravity which states if you let go of something, it will fall to the ground.

But then Paul brings it right back to the act of circumcision being taught by these false teachers. *"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them."* (Gal. 3:11-12) The act of circumcision or any other act cannot justify a man's sins in the sight of God. Only God can forgive sins. He is not Zeus, requiring acts of penitence before He will forgive. What God requires is repentance of the heart. Then Paul refers back to Lev. 18. *"After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD."* (Lev. 18:3-5) Paul points out that a Christian will show his faith and his loyalty to the covenant of God by following in God's ways.

However, no matter how much we love God, we will sin and come under the curse of the law, which is the death penalty. Paul writes, *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."* (Gal. 3:13-14) Paul is

really clear that no matter how perfectly you follow the law, no matter how wonderfully the law expresses the directions and character of God, you cannot be justified by that law. Let's say the American system of justice was perfect, yet you were caught violating a law under that system. There are only three options for you in this case. You can either pay the penalty that the law dictates or be given mercy by the judge or some combination of the two. I can almost hear Paul reciting Romans 6:23 to the Galatians again. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 6:23) The law is designed to show you where you have messed up so you don't continue to lead a messed up life. The word of God is designed to lead you to God, who can help you grow past these mistakes with His love and forgiveness. God is the judge, jury and executioner, if required, but He is the one who forgives, redeems and justifies, not the law. Paul is not writing that the law or following the law is bad. He is writing that you must put the law into its proper perspective and that these false teachers have the wrong perspective of circumcision.

Paul tells the Galatians they are already God's called out people, Christians as we know them today. Paul tells the Galatians they are already following in God's righteousness and these jerks telling them that they are not Christians are wrong. He then challenges the Galatians to think of what act they could perform to make themselves righteous in front of God, to make up for other misdeeds, which are known as sins. He does this to drive home the point that they do not have to perform the act of circumcision to make themselves righteous in front of God. He is not saying Christians should not perform acts of righteousness, but that the Galatians should not perform this particular "act of righteousness," i.e. the act of circumcision, that these false teachers are pushing.

Paul now pulls out the legalese. *"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of*

none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” (Gal. 3:14-18)

Paul is teaching that if two men sign a contract, which is what a covenant is, then they cannot change the contract, even if the two of them sign another contract about a different topic later. Well, he writes, God made a contract with Abraham long before the law, the Torah, was spoken by Him to the nation of Israel at Mount Zion. This speaking of the law, the Torah, was the first official step in Israel’s ratification of their covenant with God. This led to Israel becoming God’s chosen nation. But 430 years before the ratification of that covenant, God had signed another covenant with Abraham that at some later point the gentiles would also become part of God’s people. And Paul writes that if the Galatians get circumcised, then they are no longer gentiles. Thus these false teachers want you to break God’s contract with Abraham. Paul writes not to let the false teachers take this promised gift of being part of God’s people without being circumcised away from them. If you do, Paul writes, then you are aiding and abetting them in breaking the promise that God made to Abraham.

Unlike the standard Christian thinker, whose opinion of God’s ordinances in scripture are listed in the section on anti-semitism above, the average Jew of Paul’s time would have known that the law was a blessing and not a curse from God. Anyone following Paul’s logic in Galatians would have to ask, then what was the purpose of God speaking the Torah to and giving it to Israel at Mount Sinai? *“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” (Gal. 3:19-20)*

These verses are a handful and commentators are all over the map on what they mean. Most agree that the mediator referred to by Paul was Moses and that he only mediated between two of the three parties involved in God’s plan and promise to Abraham. Moses mediated between God and Israel, the children of Abraham, but the gentiles were not part of that covenant on Mount Zion. However, the gentiles were still

part of the covenant made between God and Abraham 430 years before God spoke “the ten words” for all the nation of Israel to hear.

What is the transgression being talked about in Gal. 3:19? Many Sabbath keepers and Messianics have stated this was Israel’s transgressions, but they go on to say what Paul was really teaching in Galatians was that the ceremonial law with its sacrifices, as outlined in Jeremiah 7:21-22 and not Torah, is what was added. Jeremiah wrote, *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.”* (Jer. 7:21-22) It appears to this author that God is indeed telling Jeremiah that it was Israel’s transgressions that caused Him to add the sacrificial system to His ordinances.

But is the transgression referred to in Jeremiah 7 the same transgression that Paul is referring to in Gal. 3:19? What transgression could Israel have committed before the law was given on Mount Sinai, before they were in even in covenant with God, which would cause things to be added to the covenant? Some may point to Exodus 16, when the Israelites learned about the Sabbath by trying to keep the manna overnight or trying to harvest it on the seventh day. But this is like saying you needed to add rules and regulations in dealing with your children because they did not follow what you taught them when they two years old. Some may try to say it was the grumbling at the Red Sea, when the scared Israelites, who had seen the power of God, but had not had time to build a relationship with God, doubted Him. But both of these have to be incorrect because God was not in covenant with Israel during the time of those transgressions.

However, the earliest possible transgression that Israel could have committed would have been the incident of the golden calf, after the people had accepted God’s covenant. You must agree to a contract before you can be held accountable for breaking it and Israel did not agree to the covenant until they reached Mount Sinai and heard God speak to them. The incident of the golden calf caused God to change a number of things. The priesthood was changed from the firstborn to the Levites. *“And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children*

of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine.” (Numbers 3:12) Why did God choose the Levites to be His priests rather than the firstborn? Almost certainly because of the transgression of the golden calf in Numbers 32. *“Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.” (Num. 32:27-8)* The rest of the prophets and law show just how horrible the sin of the golden calf was in God’s eye. It is entirely likely that the incident of the golden calf was being referenced in Jeremiah 7. But the sin of the golden calf occurred weeks after the Torah was given to Israel from Mount Sinai. And the transgression that caused the Torah to be added had to of occurred before God spoke the Ten Commandments according to Galatians 3:19.

So if Paul was not referring to the transgression of the golden calf, what transgression could have caused God to add or give the Torah? What is the biggest transgression in scripture? *“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Gen. 3:6)* We know that the sacrifice of Jesus was destined to happen from the time of this sin, this transgression (*“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev. 13:8)*). Although God cut His direct presence off from mankind after this, He still feed, clothed and taught His children (Gen. 3:21-24). At times God’s presence has come to man, as when he revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 33:11 and Exodus 33:18-23. His presence filled the Temple in 1 Kings 8. However, the Torah became the primary method of teaching until Jesus came to teach and save all of mankind because in general God’s presence had been removed from mankind. The Old Testament is replete with those who followed Torah, but did so under the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit. Elijah was filled with the Holy Spirit, but Elisha has twice the Holy Spirit as Elijah (2 Kings 2:9). David begged God not to take away the Holy Spirit in

Ps. 51. God gave His spirit to the seventy elders of Israel in Number 11:25-6. The prophets had the Holy Spirit to guide them as well as Torah. That is how God has operated from the beginning of this age. There appears to be little doubt the God worked with Enoch and Noah the same way he worked with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who would also have followed God with the Torah as an outline, but with the Holy Spirit as a guide. The Spirit was always required for mankind to follow God, but God substituted Torah for His direct presence with man after the transgression in the garden of Eden. The Torah is nothing more and nothing less than a general outline of God's way of life, which God was teaching directly to Adam and Eve before they sinned, with the Holy Spirit giving guidance in areas not directly covered.

But the Torah, as written on Mount Sinai on two tablets of stone and on other instruments that were placed in the Ark of the Covenant, was given to Israel and not the gentiles. As Moses, known as the law giver wrote, *"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."* (Gen. 2:2-3) God wanted to let Israel and us know that He gave these written instructions because we had cut ourselves off from Him with our sin, but He was still going to teach us how to do things in a Godly manner. But this was just an outline that was given until Jesus the Messiah came and God would go back to teaching as He did in the Garden of Eden. This change would allow God to teach all of His children and not just the children of Israel. This does not mean that the Torah was done away with, but was now available to all of mankind and not just the descendants of Abraham.

Paul writes what the New Covenant would entail in Hebrews, which he quotes from Jeremiah.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I

will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:31-34)

God would teach by directly affecting hearts of those who He called and would circumcise their hearts. Circumcision of the heart was always part of those who God called. *“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.” (Deut. 10:16)* But the change Paul was pointing out was that God would go back to teaching as He did in Eden, walking and talking with each of those that He called, rather than relying on the elders of Israel to it. And as shocking as the children of Israel found it, God showed through Peter and Paul and the rest of the disciples that under the New Covenant, this teaching and circumcising of the heart would affect all of mankind, not just the chosen people.

Paul then writes about the role of the Torah for Christians in Galatians. *“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Gal. 3:21)* Is Torah bad, as Justin Martyr and Martin Luther taught? Paul wrote NO WAY, JOSE! The law did just what it was supposed to do. But if you worship the law rather than using it to help worship our creator, you lose the purpose of the law. The law was to help forge a relationship between God and man because it is God teaching His children how to do things the right way. Think of how you would feel if your kids thought a relationship with you was about keeping their rooms clean, doing their chores and studying for school without having a loving relationship with you? Think of how bad it would hurt if you asked your child for a hug, even if they were 22 or 42, never the less 12, and they said they did not want that kind of relationship with you. Oh sure, they will do what you tell them to do when you are around to get their allowance and avoid punishments, but they don't want to hang out with you because you are too demanding and they don't want that kind of relationship with you. That is what Israel did at Mount Zion to their

creator and Father when they asked Moses to speak to God for them. And now the Jewish people at the time of Paul had substituted the worship of God with the worship of His law. This does not mean that they substituted works for faith. Instead they substituted doing the will of God, the very actions he created mankind to fulfill and grow in, with trying to learn about God more perfectly. It became a continual stream of learning over doing. Of course you have to have a baseline of knowledge to do the job correctly, but God did not design us to be perpetual students who were afraid of doing anything because we might do something wrong, but doers who were willing to make mistakes and continue to learn and grow from those mistakes. *“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” (Rom. 2:13)*

Paul continues in Galatians, *“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” (Gal. 3:22)* Notice Paul’s emphasis on the all in verse 22. The coming of Jesus and his crucifixion had fulfilled the promise to Abraham, a promise that the Galatians were benefiting from.

“But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:23-29)

Things have changed and especially for the gentiles in general and the Galatians in particular. Things even changed in the time of Abraham according to Paul. Abraham followed God faithfully when he was still uncircumcised and then he followed God by teaching all of his progeny that for the rest of this age had to be circumcised. But now the gentiles and the Jews are being brought back together as one, Paul writes. The contract is now without the mediation of Moses and is instead being

mediated by one better than Moses (*“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”* (Heb. 9:14-15)). Under this new covenant, with Jesus as the mediator, the gentiles are children of Abraham without having to be circumcised in the flesh if they are circumcised in the heart. Again Paul gets back to his point that the Galatians do not have to be circumcised. Before he was shouting at the Galatians not to follow these false teachers and get circumcised and now he is using his best Pharisaic skills with the Torah to show the gentiles in Galatia they should not get circumcised.

Paul is not saying that the schoolmaster is useless or so simplistic to be ignored, as most Christians practice by ignoring the baseline teachings of scripture. He is saying that the schoolmaster teaches the basics that all students need to know. But far too many Christians don't know those basics because they never bother to learn, feeling that sitting in church a few times a year or perhaps even once a week is all they need to do to practice their Christianity. But Paul disagrees. He wrote this to the Hebrews, those who most probably listened to God's ways being preached at least once a week.

“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Heb. 5:11-14)

Not every Christian needs a PhD in theology to understand the bible, but they should have at least the equivalent of a high school degree in Christianity because God has given each and every Christian a job that they have to prepare themselves for. Of course God is the teacher, but a

Christian would do well to do their homework by reading the bible, the entire bible, at least once. How else do you place writings in context unless you have read them in context at least once? Christians need to know the basics of what the bible teaches so that false teachers cannot fool them into following ungodly traditions, even if they are the traditions of the fathers. Anyone who has taken any math knows that $2+2=4$, not 5, yet many people probably cannot solve the simple problem Algebra problem below because they are not grounded in the basics, just as many Christians cannot solve their problems because they are not grounded in Christian basics.

AN ALGEBRA PROBLEM SHOWING $2+2=5$

Using the transitive rules inherent in algebra:

$$A=4 \quad B=5 \quad C=1$$

$$C=B-A$$

Multiply B-A on both sides:

$$C(B-A)=(B-A)*(B-A)$$

$$CB-CA=B^2-2AB+A^2$$

Subtract A^2 from both sides:

$$CB-CA-A^2=B^2-2AB$$

Add AB to both sides:

$$AB+CB-CA-A^2=B^2-AB$$

Subtract CB from both sides:

$$AB-CA-A^2=B^2-CB-AB$$

You can then factor this equation:

$$A(B-C-A)=B(B-C-A)$$

You can then divide both sides by $(B-C-A)$:

$$A=B$$

$$A=4=2+2 \quad \text{and} \quad B=5$$

Therefore $2+2=5$

You can look at this problem for a while without knowing what is wrong, but you should know that the answer is wrong, even if you currently do Calculus and Differential Equations and have not worked with algebra for a while because the basics you learned a long time ago tells you it is wrong. The trick to this problem was that I did something illegal. I broke one of the fundamental laws of mathematics, but I threw up a lot of numbers to allow me to obfuscate that I was breaking that law. And once you break a law of mathematics, you cannot trust the answer, as the problem above demonstrates.

The same principle holds true in theology. Many Christian teachers like to talk a lot about human experiences and helping your fellow man, which is essential for all Christians, but as many of the mega-churches have come to realize over the last decade, if you don't teach from the bible, you do not make disciples of Jesus. If you don't teach about right and wrong, people don't learn about right and wrong. If you don't teach the word of God, people don't learn the word of God. Many Christian teachers continue to follow traditions of the fathers of their church, even though those traditions cloud the word of God and sometimes even break the rules of God. And as I show in the algebra equation above, once you have broken a fundamental rule, no matter how well you obfuscate that fact, the answer to a given problem cannot be trusted because it will almost certainly be wrong.

If you throw out the traditions of the fathers, which is what Jesus and Paul both advocated doing when you begin to follow God, you will be able to follow Him much more closely. This doesn't mean you need to throw out all traditions, just the ones that violate the rules God gives in scripture. This means comparing what you are doing to what scripture dictates and then pray to God to find out how to resolve any discrepancies using the Holy Spirit. The schoolmaster was never designed to teach a follower of God the equivalent of Christian Calculus, but it was surely designed to keep a Christian from following a teacher who states that $2+2=5$, but too many Christians don't know the word of God well enough to be able to refute such teachings, even if they can't find the trick that made it possible. Unfortunately, far too many Christians don't know the word of God well enough to even realize a teaching like $2+2=5$ is false. There is a reason why homework is given in school. But far too

many Christians avoid the homework that God has given them and it is no wonder they get failing marks when they are tested by God.

CHAPTER 4

Paul now takes a look at the sons of Abraham and where they fit into this new covenant. *“Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal. 4:1-5)*

The Jews were no better than servants of God because they were still like children until the promised messiah came to usher in the New Covenant. Yes, they had been groomed to take charge, but not until the time came. Paul writes that for all intents and purposes, the Jews were also under the same kind yoke as the gentiles, who were likened to servants by Paul’s analogy, because they were all sinners. The Jews were waiting for the time that God would redeem them and make them sons rather than the equivalent of servants.

Where do the gentiles fit into this picture? *“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (Gal. 4:6-7)* Paul writes there is now no difference between the Jew and the gentile because God Himself has called these gentiles in Galatia His children. God Himself has changed their hearts. Thus there is now no difference between the Jews and the gentiles if they were faithfully following God and His ways as Peter, Paul, James, John and the other apostles taught them. And the implication is since there is no difference anymore, why would the Galatians need to get circumcised?

Paul reminds the gentiles that they did not know God in the past and how they wasted time serving false Gods. Paul points out that it is not the gentiles who chose God, but God who chose these gentiles in Galatia to

be His sons and daughters. *“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.”* (Gal. 4:6-9) Paul is staggered that the Galatians, whose hearts had been circumcised by God, continue to pine to do something that Paul thought was wrong. What are these weak and beggarly elements that the Galatians wanted to serve?

Some have suggested that the weak and beggarly days the Galatians want to observe are the gentile holidays, like Saturnalia/Yule and Samhain, which they would have observed in times past. But this is highly unlikely. The Galatians that Paul is writing to are gentiles who are contemplating getting circumcised because they are supposedly not righteous enough. It is highly unlikely they have returned to observing holidays that God detests.

Others have suggested the weak and beggarly days are the feast days listed in scripture, such as the weekly Sabbath, the seven annual feast days and the new moons. This is also highly unlikely. Paul wrote about those days in Col. 2:16. He writes, *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”* (Col. 2:16) Below is a comparison of the seven words used to describe various types of observance in Col. 2:16 and Gal. 4:10.

COLOSSIANS 2:16

Holyday – heortē, Strong’s 1859.

New moon – noumēnia, Strong’s number 3561.

Sabbath – sabbaton, Strong’s number 4521.

Although Col. 2:16 is beyond the topic of this paper, it should be noted that Paul is telling the Colossians not to let anyone judge what they are doing.

GALATIANS 4:10

Paul gives a very different admonition about week and beggarly elements in Galatians 4:10, which Paul states the Galatians should not to follow

and on which he is judging them. The days the Galatians should not follow are listed below.

Days— hēmera, Strong's number 2250

Months – mēn, Strong's number 3376

Times – kairos, Strong's number 2540

Years – eniautos, Strong's number 1763

The week and beggarly days and times written about by Paul in Galatians 4:10 do not match the terms Paul uses for the feast days mentioned in scripture, specifically Col. 2:16. Therefore Paul was not calling the Passover or Yom Kipper or the weekly Sabbath weak and beggarly elements. He is also not complaining about the gentile Galatians returning to their pagan holidays. So what is Paul complaining about?

Barnes' is most certainly right in his analysis of what days Paul is referring to.

*"The days here referred to are doubtless the days of the Jewish festivals. They had numerous days of such observances, and in addition to those specified in the Old Testament, the Jews had added many others as days commemorative of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple, and of other important events in their history. It is not a fair interpretation of this to suppose that the apostle refers to the Sabbath, properly so called, for this was a part of the Decalogue; and was observed by the Saviour himself, and by the apostles also. It is a fair interpretation to apply it to all those days which are not commanded to be kept holy in the Scriptures."*¹²

So what days and times was Paul referring to in Galatians 4:10?

"In post-exilic times important historical events were made the basis for the institution of NEW FASTS AND FEASTS. When the first temple was destroyed and the people were carried into captivity, "the sacrifice of the body and one's own fat and blood" were substituted for that of animals (see Talmud, Berakhoth 17 a). With

¹² Barnes Notes on Galatians 4:10 from e-sword

such a view of their importance, fasts of all sorts were as a matter of course rapidly multiplied. (Note that the Day of Atonement was the only pre-exilic fast.) Of these post-exilic fasts and feasts:

The Feast of Dedication or Hanukka (1 Macc 4:52-59; John 10:22; Mishna, Ta`anith 2:10; Mo`edh QaTon 3:9; Josephus, Ant, XII, vii; Apion, II, xxxix)

The Feast of Purim (Esther 3:7; 9:24 ff; 2 Macc 15:36); and

The Fasts of the Fourth [Month] or Fast of Tammuz 17 (Zechariah 8:19; Jeremiah 39:1; 52; Mishna, Ta`anith 4:6),

The [Fast of the] Fifth [Month] or Tisha be-Av (Fast of Av 9)(Zechariah 7:3-4; 8:19; Ta`anith 4:6),

The [Fast of the] Seventh [Month] (Zechariah 7:5; 8:19; Jeremiah 41:1 ff; 2 Kings 25:25; Cedher 'Olam Rabba' 26; Meghillath Ta`anith c. 12),

The [Fast of the] Tenth Month (Zechariah 8:19; 2 Kings 25:1), and

The Fast of Esther (Esther 4:16 f; 9:31) have been preserved by Jewish tradition to this day.

Notice that whilst the Bible records these five fasts as historical events, nowhere does God command them.

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Other fasts and feasts no doubt were instituted on similar occasions and received a local or temporary observance, for example, the FEAST OF ACRA (1 Macc 13:50-52; compare 1:33), to celebrate the recapture of Acra ("the citadel") on the 23 rd of 'Iyar 141 BC, and THE FEAST OF NICANOR, in celebration of the victory over Nicanor on the 13 th day of 'Adhar 160 BC (1 Macc 7:49).

Several other festivals are mentioned in the Talmud and other post-Biblical writings which may have been of even greater antiquity. THE FEAST OF WOODCARRYING (Midsummer Day: Neh 10:34; Josephus, BJ, II, vii, 6; Meghillath Ta`anith c.v, p. 32, Mishna, Ta`anith 4:8 a), for example, is referred to as the greatest

day of rejoicing of the Hebrews, ranking with Atonement Day. It was principally a picnic day to which a religious touch was given by making it the woodgatherers' festival for the Temple.

A NEW YEAR FOR TREES is mentioned in the Talmud (Ro'sh ha-Shdnah 1:1). The pious, according both to the Jewish tradition and the New Testament, observed many private or semi-public fasts, such as the Mondays, Thursdays and following Monday after Nican and Tishri (the festival months: Luke 18:12; Matt 9:14; 6:16; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; Acts 10:30; Meghillah 31 a; Ta`anith 12 a; Bdbha' Qama' 8:2).

The day before Passover was a fast day for the firstborn (Copherim 21:3). In post-Biblical times the Jews outside of Palestine doubled each of the following days: the opening and closing day of Passover and Tabernacles and Pentecost, because of the capheq, or doubt as to the proper day to be observed. New Year's Day seems to have been doubled from time immemorial, the forty-eight hours counting as one "long day."

Many new modes of observance appear in post-exilic times in connection with the old established festivals, especially in the high festival season of Tishri. Thus the cimchath beth ha-sho'ebhah, "WATER DRAWING FESTIVAL," was celebrated during the week of Tabernacles with popular games and dances in which even the elders took part, and the streets were so brilliantly illuminated with torches that scarcely an eye was closed in Jerusalem during that week (Talmud, Chullin).

In summary then.

Extra Days

Regarding extra DAYS, there were many private or semi public fasts such as Mondays and Thursdays. The DAY before Passover was a fast for the Firstborn. There were added feasts, like the Feast of Woodcarrying, The Feast of Acra, the Feast of Nicanor, the Feast of Purim and Hannukah, the Water Drawing Festival.

Extra Months

Regarding extra Months, there were the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months

Times

In terms of times, we talked about how the Jews doubled the opening and closing day of Passover and Tabernacles and Pentecost, because of the capheq, or doubt as to the proper day to be observed. New Year's Day seems to have been doubled from time immemorial, the forty-eight hours counting as one "long day."

And Years

And finally with respect to Years we have the New YEAR for Trees"

13

Just as the traditions of the fathers actually required the rejection of the commands of God when it came to washings and oaths because of all of the ordinances these traditions required (Mark 7:7-13), the traditions of the fathers added so many days to be observed that the days actually set aside by God became of no consequence. There were so many fast days and so many days set apart to honor the traditions of the fathers that there was no real specialness to the days that God asked His people to set aside. The famous quote from the Pixar movie **THE INCREDIBLES** has the super hero mother consoling her super hero son, who is pining to use the talents that he has been given but is not allowed to use, saying about his powers, "Everyone is special, Dash." Dash responds, "Which is another way of saying no one is." When every day is special, no day is really special. Yet it appears these false teachers were trying to convince the gentiles in Galatia they had to observe the days that were special according to the traditions of the fathers. I believe the days these false teachers were trying to push down the throat of the Galatians offended Paul's sensibilities as much as if American Christian missionaries in England taught new converts that it was at least as important for all Christians to observe the Fourth of July as it was to observe Pentecost. There is nothing wrong with the Fourth of July for Americans, but it is not

¹³ <http://www.galatians-paul-the-torah-law-legalism.info/days-months-times-and-years.html>

a biblically sanctioned day nor should it be taught as such. Yet Paul's Judaizing Christian opponents apparently did just that with numerous, numerous celebrations like the 9th of Av, Hanukkah, and special fast days every Monday and Thursday.

What does Paul say about the Galatians' desire to follow these false teachings?

"I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you." (Gal. 4:11-20)

Notice how Paul now tries yet another tack in dealing with the issue of circumcision, which is about cutting off a small piece of flesh. This is an emotional appeal. Paul writes that he really wanted this message to be delivered face to face, but it could not wait. Paul points out that he had an infirmity of the flesh that everyone could see. The Galatians loved him so much that they if it were possible they would have torn off a very valuable piece of flesh and offered it to Paul if it would have healed him. And after all they had gone through together, the Galatians were now going to treat Paul as an enemy because he was trying to help them with the truth about not needing to cut off a small piece of flesh?

Paul agrees that it is good to be fired up about life. It is good to be fired up about living life in a godly manner. But that the Galatians zeal for God is being abused by these false teachers who would exclude them from communion with God, telling them that they are not really Christians unless they follow these false teachers.

In the book of Galatians, to get his point across, Paul approaches the problem from many angles – yelling and shouting, legalese, and in Gal. 4:20 he uses emotion. He portrays himself as a loving father who is being rejected. And to keep the Galatians from getting circumcised, he now goes for the unusual metaphor, not an uncommon practice for Jewish sages of the time. *“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.”* (Gal. 4:21-3) What promise had God made to Abraham? Paul had just written that all nations, including the gentiles and not just his children, would become God’s people at the appointed time in the future. And the future was now for the gentiles in Galatia.

Notice how Paul writes that he is going to give the Galatians an allegory, not to be taken literally, but to press home his point. *“Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”* (Gal. 4:24-26) There were two covenants that Paul had written to the Galatians about, the one ratified by Israel at Mount Sinai and the one promised to Abraham 430 years before. But the Jerusalem above, without doubt referring to God’s throne room, is what gave birth to everyone and to both of those covenants.

Paul writes about these two covenants, *“For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”* (Gal 4:27-31) Paul is quoting Isaiah 54:1, showing that God has promised to bring many more children

into to the fold of His chosen people than just those who were the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And that is just what He did when He rent the veil and began the New Covenant.

Every Christian should know the story of Hagar and Sarah. Hagar was the hand maiden, or slave, of Sarah, who had Ishmael with Abraham. And of course Sarah, the free women, had the son of promise, Isaac. Yet Paul turns things on their head when he says the Jews are actually in the role of Ishmael and the gentiles are the son of promise. How could the gentiles be the son of promise? Because this is an allegory about the promise made to Abraham 430 years before the ratification of the Old Covenant, a promise that was now coming to fulfillment in Galatia and other gentile areas of the world. Paul is telling the Galatians they are the sons and daughters of that promise.

How could the decedents of Abraham be the slaves in this story? Because the slave refers to Ishmael, who persecuted Isaac, the son of promise. Ishmael wanted the blessings for himself and did not want to allow God's promises to Isaac to be fulfilled. The gentiles are now the son of promise, receiving the promises God made to them and it was now the false Jewish Christian teachers who are the slave who did not want God's promise to be fulfilled. The Jews have been the chosen people for 1,500 years and had maintained that standing for half a millennia by separating themselves from the gentiles with what became the traditions of the fathers, which we now read as the Mishnah.

The Pharisees were caught up in the traditions of the fathers, traditions Paul knew far better than the false teachers who were bewitching the Galatians. But the gentiles were not yet bound in the dreck that would become the Mishnah, which was the first part of the Talmud (The second portion, sealed around 500 C.E. is called the Gemara). This is not to say that Jewish commentary on the bible is dreck, but it becomes dreck when it is perceived as being as important as scripture and often times more important. Many Jews treat the Talmud this way today. The Seventh Day Adventists treat the writings of Ellen White this way. The World Wide Church of God treats the writings of Herbert Armstrong that way. The Christians Scientists treat the writings of Mary Baker Eddy that way. The followers of Benny Hinn treat his writings that way. The followers of

Harold Camping treat his writing that way. It is common, but it is wrong to substitute the commentary of man for the word of God. I believe people do this so they do not have to think and decide what God's will is in a situation not specifically covered in scripture because we live in the chaotic world God put us into. And that is the way He wants it.¹⁴

Although God may continue to work with us in a limited way when we limit our relationship with Him, God demands a real relationship if we are going to live life abundantly. This means studying His word and really communicating with God in prayer. It means letting the Holy Spirit flow rather than bottling it up. And the Galatians wanted to give up the promise made to Abraham about them by substituting what the false teachers thought the Galatians' purpose should be. Paul was rejecting the Talmud of these false teachers because he rejected all talmuds, including what would become the Mishnah.

On the topic of talmuds, some have suggested that Jesus only reject the Talmud of the Shammai school of Pharsaism and actually embraced the Talmud of the Hillel school of Pharisees. These current day Christian Talmudists often show how many of Jesus' teachings agree with Hillel. Of course they gloss over the fact that Jesus' teaching about marriage and divorce matched Shammai's teachings and rejected Hillel's. They gloss over how Jesus assailed the practices of all the Pharisees in Matthew 23. And Paul seconds Jesus' generic rejection by constantly going back to the message of Jesus the Messiah because a talmud is nothing but another idol that man wants to put between him and God to keep a distant relationship with God rather than to forge an intimate relationship. And godly teachers know their role is to help you find a direct relationship with God rather than being the mediator of that relationship, even if their comments on scripture can be of great value in forging that relationship.

CHAPTER 5

How did the Galatians want to distance themselves from God? *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto*

¹⁴ You can find out more about how God uses chaos in Chaos is not Confusion at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>.

you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace. For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” (Gal. 5:1-6)

The issue is crystal clear. The Galatians should not get circumcised. As Paul writes in verse 6, circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. So why is it so important that the Galatians not get circumcised? Because it would show they did not have faith in God. Getting circumcised would mean they were turning away from the promised gift that God was bestowing upon them, a gift prophesied for 1,500 years. If they got circumcised, they would no longer be under God’s yoke and receiving His promise and His blessings, but would be slaves of these false teachers. The Galatians were being convinced that unless they became circumcised, they would not truly be part of God’s people. Paul is teaching them that they are already justified without being circumcised, and if the Galatians get circumcised to follow the false teachers’ version of Torah, then they would be falling away from the grace God gave them through His promise to Abraham two millennia before.

Paul again stresses that there is no act that the Galatians can perform that can justify themselves before God. If they go through with this absurd idea of being circumcised, they are cutting themselves off from God (notice how Paul again slyly brings in the idea of cutting off!) and would then have to be justified by the law, which is simply impossible for anyone. The law was not designed to be a method of justification. It was designed to guide us to God who justifies us.

After Paul stresses his main point not to follow these false teachers and get circumcised, he praised the Galatians. *“Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion came not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. I have confidence to you-ward in the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.”* (Gal. 5:7-10) I don’t think this is total praise nor do I think Paul is

being insincere. I believe this is Paul cheering the Galatians on the way you would cheer on a runner who is stumbling, trying to give them the power and confidence to finish the race and overcome the stumble.

It appears these false teachers were even saying that Paul actually agreed with them and taught if you really wanted to be righteous you had to be circumcised. It is likely that they were even bringing up the example of Timothy, which is why Paul almost certainly brought up the issue of Titus not being circumcised in Gal. 2:3. *“But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? then hath the stumbling-block of the cross been done away. I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision.”* (Gal. 5:11-12) Or as the ISV puts it, *“I wish that those who are upsetting you would castrate themselves!”* (Gal. 5:12 ISV) Paul is really clear. They are wrong when they say I agree with them and here is what I would tell them to do with their teaching on circumcision.

Paul writes, *“For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”* (Gal. 5:13-19) Again, Paul not-so-subtly brings up flesh in his argument about circumcision in the book of Galatians. Paul is most likely pointing out how since this “new teaching” has entered the church in Galatia, their attitudes of have changed. Think about how loving and friendly your church was before you allowed this putrid stink of false teaching masking itself as superior righteousness to enter your midst, writes Paul. And if you are actually letting God work with you, you won’t have to worry about what these false teachers have to say about circumcision of the flesh and its role in Torah. Don’t you realize, Paul is teaching the Galatians, that God Himself circumcised your heart so you are not under the penalty of the law anymore?

Paul then lists the fruit of people's character and spirit that are obvious to see, both good and bad and tells them if they will let God guide them, they will find the right path, not by attacking each other as not being righteous enough, but by cheering each other onto the finish. *"And manifest also are the works of the flesh, which are: Adultery, whoredom, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, strifes, emulations, wraths, rivalries, dissensions, sects, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revellings, and such like, of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that those doing such things the reign of God shall not inherit. And the fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law; and those who are Christ's, the flesh did crucify with the affections, and the desires; if we may live in the Spirit, in the Spirit also we may walk; let us not become vain-glorious--one another provoking, one another envying!" (Gal. 5:19-26)*

Notice all the actions that Paul lists as works of the flesh. Here are things that your flesh does that God detests. These are all things you do to and for yourself. If you concentrate on these acts of the flesh, you will not make it into the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is what you do for others.

CHAPTER 6

These false teachers apparently taught the Galatians they were not prepared to deal with issues because they were supposedly not righteous enough. How are Christians supposed to deal with problems among the church? *"Brethren, if a man also may be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself--lest thou also may be tempted; of one another the burdens bear ye, and so fill up the law of the Christ, for if any one doth think himself to be something--being nothing--himself he doth deceive; and his own work let each one prove, and then in regard to himself alone the glorying he shall have, and not in regard to the other, for each one his own burden shall bear." (Gal. 6:1-5)* How do you fulfill Torah? By helping your brethren to achieve life more abundantly by following God's ways better rather than beating them up for not being righteous enough. You are supposed to judge yourself and not be the

judge of your brother who is trying to follow God. Of course you have to judge people who are teaching false things that draw people away from God and His ways. That is what Paul is doing throughout the book of Galatians. God even tells us that there are tares in the church, planted by Satan to suck the life out of the church and it would be foolish to think there are no tares in your church. Therefore judgment is required by Christians, according to Paul in the book of Galatians, but being judgmental is not a Christian trait. Drawing that line can be difficult, but having no line is a recipe for disaster.

If you allow your children unsupervised association with “bad seeds,” even if they call themselves Christians, you are courting disaster. Paul lists a number of the works of the flesh that Satan uses to satiate his disciples and lure Christians. It does not matter which of these two schools a follower is in if they are practicing an unrepentant lifestyle of sex, drugs and rock and roll. Those who call themselves Christians but follow this lifestyle often dismiss their actions with the gnostic teaching that what you do in the flesh does not matter, but it is supposedly what you do in the spirit that matters. But the book of James makes it very clear this is an ungodly teaching. James makes it very clear that what you do in the flesh shows the condition of your heart. And Paul shows that we can and must look at an individual’s fruit when we are determining how to interact with them at the end of Galatians 5.

Do the right thing and take care of those who need to be taken care of, including your teachers, Paul writes. *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* (Gal. 6:6-10) Notice Paul’s none too subtle jab at the Judaizing Christian teachers again. They were trying to sow to the flesh and they would reap corruption for it. But those who teach true circumcision of the heart, which has always been performed by the spirit, would see God in His glory in the kingdom.

Paul finishes with a final appeal to do what is right on the issue of circumcision.

“Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Gal. 6:11-15)

Paul loves them and wants only what is best for the Galatians and he has paid the price for doing what is right. Paul believes the main reason these false Jewish Christian teachers are urging circumcision is so that they don't have to pay the price of saying to their non-believing Jewish friends that Jesus is the Messiah and that the gentiles are the children of God, just like the Jews. Paul points out that these guys are saying you Galatians are not righteous under the law because you are not circumcised, but they are not righteous even though they are circumcised. That is because there is none righteous. The reason they want you circumcised has nothing to do with righteousness, Paul writes. It has to do with them wanting to be big shots. Paul then writes, *“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” (Gal. 6:16-7)* Paul writes he is done with this issue. It was decided at the Acts 15 council years ago that entrance into the covenant with God was no longer dictated by circumcision of the flesh and then the heart, but is now dictated by circumcision of the heart only, just as was prophesied and promised to Abraham. God always required circumcision of the heart for anyone who was in covenant with Him.

“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.”

(Deut. 10:16) "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." (Deut. 30:6)

"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." (Jer. 4:4)

From the time of Mount Sinai Moses was the mediator of the covenant that required circumcision of the flesh first, on the eighth day, then circumcision of the heart over time. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus has ushered in the time that what mattered was what always mattered, circumcision of the heart.

CONCLUSION

The battle in Galatia was over five hundred years in the making. For the first thousand years of its existence, the God of Israel demanded that the Israelites be monotheistic and follow His Sabbaths. As the prophets of old record, on occasion Israel paid heed to God and **did** follow His commandments, but they usually ignored Him. So YHVH, the God of Israel, had enough and sent Israel and Judah into captivities. Judah returned from Babylon after 70 years and under Ezra and Nehemiah, they rebuilt the temple and began to pay heed to God's commandments, but they did this by separating themselves from the nations around them. The tenth chapter of Ezra has the sad story of the Israelites divorcing their non-Israelite wives so they could be set apart to God. This separation did allow Israel to become stubbornly monotheistic, to abandon idols in their worship service, and to begin to keep God's Sabbaths holy.

Half a millennia after Ezra and Nehemiah, Jesus the Messiah entered the scene where separation was the primary instrument used to maintain godliness and holiness. Talmudic rulings on how separate you had to be to actually follow God abounded and varied by the political party to which you associated. The story of the Good Samaritan shows how Jesus battled this idea of separation. Up to that point in the prophetic time line,

the only way to end this separation was for a gentile to become a son of Abraham via circumcision, even if their heart had become circumcised. There were many Torah observant gentiles, known as 'GOD FEARERS' (Acts 10:22; 13:16, 26, 43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:6-7), who were separated from Jews during worship at the synagogue simply because they were uncircumcised in the flesh even though they were circumcised of the heart.

God revealed to Peter in Acts 10 that the gentiles were no longer unclean, thus separation was no longer required. The conclave of Acts 15 mandated that this separation come to an end for Jewish Christians because the veil had been rent. However, 500 years of tradition is hard to give up. So there were still Jewish Christian teachers, apparently teachers of some renown before they accepted Jesus as Messiah, who had the idea that you may not have been required to be circumcised to join the community of those that fear and love God, but once you were a member you had to get rid of this "uncleanness" by being circumcised. This was an idea that Paul totally and completely rejected.

There are still Christian churches today that require you to pass a "test" before you can even attend services. A paid minister will come to your house and assess if you are "worthy" of attending with them, basically imputing some kind of unrighteousness and uncleanness to those who don't know enough. When the acolyte is finally given permission to attend, they are often scrutinized by the members rather than be embraced with a hand of friendship. If the acolyte progresses far enough in the bible course laid out before them, they will be offered a chance to be baptized. And these churches then have the gall to lament how the "first love" has left these Christians when they are finally indoctrinated into the church. Think back to Acts 10 and Peter's admonition of how to treat people who are earnestly seeking after God. The book of Galatians teaches against such practices, but considering the Christian church instituted the same rules of separation to supposedly maintain their holiness against the "unclean Jews" less than 300 years after the Acts 15 conference, it should not be surprising that such attitudes and actions continue to this day.

Of course there has to be some level of knowledge of God's word for people join together. It would be impossible for Buddhists and Christians to co-exist in religious services together for long because their core beliefs about God are so different. That does not mean that Christians and Buddhists cannot work together for the common good of mankind because their theologies are very similar on how to deal with your fellow man, but meeting together to praise and worship God and His son could not be harmonized with Buddhists and Christians. I know some may say that Unitarian Universalists do just that, but their services do not follow the doctrine or theology that the bible is the word of God, or that God is the father and Jesus is the son and only by their name can you be saved. Therefore their starting premise rejects basic Christian theology, and allows such diverse views of their gods to co-exist in their worship services.

Paul taught there were no longer three parties to the covenant of God. In times past, it may have been just God and the Israelites who were in covenant with the gentiles on the outside looking in. It was a requirement for Israel to circumcise themselves by both removing a small piece of flesh and affecting their hearts. But after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, the covenant was now between God and all of His children, whoever He should choose to call. Circumcision of the flesh and the heart were no longer the boundary requirement of the covenant. Now the only boundary requirement was circumcision of the heart. But as Dunn rightly points out, just because the boundary requirement has changed, it does not mean the way a follow of God lives their righteous life has changed.

Paul points out over and over again how living a righteous life, with God setting the conditions of what is righteous and unrighteous, is still essential for Christians. This lifestyle is listed in scripture with a little black of what not to do, a little white on what you must do, and a lot of gray that you, scripture, the spirit and prayer were supposed to traverse as you walked your path with and towards God. However, the boundaries, the actions for joining the Christian community had partially changed. Circumcision of the foreskin was still required to mark you as a genetic descendant of Abraham, but to be a spiritual descendant of Abraham only required circumcision of the heart, no matter what your genetic

stock may have been. The book of Galatians is both Paul's diatribe and exegesis of why circumcision of the heart is all that matters under the New Covenant. And those who try to define the ordinances of the New Covenant by what Paul wrote to the Galatians have totally missed the point of Galatians.

EPILOGUE-A QUICK LOOK AT TORAH

Paul's self-described ministry was to spread the gospel of Jesus the Messiah to all nations (1 Cor. 2:2, 2 Cor. 4:5, Col. 1:28). He emphasized over and over again that there were no longer differences between any of God's children, just as God had revealed to Peter in Acts 10 (Rom. 1:16, 10:12, Gal. 3:28, Col. 3:11). This was a return to how God worked in times past. God worked directly with Adam and Eve and Cain and Able. He worked with Enoch. He worked with Noah. He worked with any of His children who allowed their hearts to be circumcised. But starting with Abraham, all of this changed. And this change was codified on Mount Sinai. God was only in covenant with the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If you wanted to be in covenant with YHVH, the creator of the universe, you had to join the family of Abraham by circumcision.

The death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah changed how God worked with His children. The veil being rent showed that God had not opened up access to the holy of holies, but had re-opened access to Himself for all of mankind, just as He prophesied and promised to Abraham in Gen. 12:2. This titanic shift was not accepted by a number Jews at the time of the Messiah. They could accept Jesus as the Messiah, but could not accept that God was now working with all of mankind, which had always been His plan. Paul fought with all his might to show that God loved all of His children, not just the decedents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God required a physical nation to bring forth the Messiah as part of His great plan for mankind, but that chosen nation had served its prophesized purpose. This fulfillment of prophecy did not mean that God was no longer with the Jews, but that He was now working with everyone. Paul writings emphasize that God had changed how He was working with mankind yet again, no longer depending upon the elders of the clan of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to circumcise His children's hearts.

But Peter warned Christians that Paul's very important words would be twisted and they were. Unfortunately the anti-Semitism of the early church fathers did not allow them to see that Messiah's death and resurrection was designed to show God's love for all of His children, both the Jew and gentile. They not only perverted Paul's teachings by re-erecting the barrier between the Jews and the gentiles, something that Paul worked so hard to end with the book of Galatians, but they followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam.

God delivered the ten northern kingdoms to Jeroboam rather than to Solomon's son Rehoboam in the first book of the Kings. Jeroboam had been a good and faithful general. But he feared that allowing his kingdom's people to worship God in the true manner at the temple would entice his people to rejoin the two kingdoms of the South (1 Kings 12:26). So he placed idols at the edge of the kingdom for the people to worship. He changed the days of worship. He changed the priesthood. He took it upon himself to teach a different way to worship God than what was written in the book of the law. Jeroboam's false priests almost certainly taught the message of Lev. 19:18, *"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."* Almost all religions, and all of those that spring from the Torah, teach you to love your neighbor as yourself, although they often try to ignore the ramifications of this religious ordinance by asking the question, *"And who is my neighbour?"* (Luke 10:29) But loving your neighbor as yourself was not enough for God. What separates God's true religion from something like Buddhism or Islam or other religions is how you worship YHVH, the creator of the universe and beyond. As God taught through Moses in Deut. 6:5 and as He taught through his son, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* (Matt. 22:37) God shows us the very basics of how to love Him in His scripture just as the basics of a marriage start with love, honor and obey. Neither of these ordinances is enough for an intimate relationship, but a deep, meaningful covenant relationship cannot be built without the basics. Although the people of the northern kingdoms actually prospered materially for a while, they lost their way spiritually because they followed the way of Jeroboam. God chastises the kings of the northern tribes of Israel over

and over for following the way of Jeroboam throughout the book of Kings. For example, *“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.” (2 Kings 10:31)*

The kings of the north followed the ways of Jeroboam so their people would not mix with the nation of Judah and re-learn the ways of God. God condemned the northern tribes for abandoning His ways and His days of worship, even if they kept some of the truth of God. The ten northern tribes of Israel were sent into captivity for following in the ways of Jeroboam. God does not allow us to substitute our ways for His ways. Yes, we can and will come up short when we try to keep His ways and He is more than willing to forgive His children those sins. But we are not allowed to rewrite the covenant in our image any more than we can make an image of the true God as part of our worship.

Moses had been the mediator of the covenant between the true God and Israel. That changed when the Messiah became the mediator of the covenant to all of God’s children. God’s covenant always required a personal relationship with God, something the majority of the Israelites turned down at Mount Sinai, but it is a covenant that was embraced by Joshua’s generation. The unfaithful generation that left Egypt with Moses did not stop God from working miracles, but the true miracle came when Joshua’s generation, the greatest generation that Israel knew, became faithful followers of the God’s covenant. And that is what God has always desired and required.

As you will see below, there is a remarkable consistency that faith has always shown itself as works and that these works have to follow the will of God and not the will of man. Paul teaches this in Galatians as well as in Romans. James teaches this in his epistle. Jesus taught it on the mount. And it was an inherent part of Torah. God’s yoke is easy and His burden is light (*“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:29-30)*). But that burden will be different for each of us, just as how we serve our Father will be different. Thankfully God has given us scripture as a manual to make our life more abundant, but it was never meant to be a Talmud because each of us is

different. God laid out the black of what not to do on one side and the white of what to do on the other and left a chasm of gray in-between. But most people want to eliminate the gray that requires them to work and figure out what to do, forgetting that that is the reason we were created. Most people are uncomfortable asking God what to do in these gray areas, although that is the reason we were created as physical beings.

The word of God is a manual of life, just as there are manuals for taking care of a car. But just as a car manual does not teach you how to drive, God's manual does not teach how to live. A manual gives information on how to take care of something. It tells you if you want to get the most out of your vehicle, you will use the right gas, change the oil at the right time and do maintenance as it is required. If you don't follow the manual on how to care for your vehicle, you may still get good and valuable use out of your vehicle, but it will not last as long nor do as good a job for you as if you had followed the owner's manual.

Torah is the owner's manual for the human existence. It lists the basics on how to have life and have it more abundantly. God tells us in scripture the kind of life He wants for us. *"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers."* (Deut. 30:6-9) It does not list how to use life, outside of generically serving God and doing good works, because each person will use what they have differently, which is exactly how our loving Father designed it, as the verses below show. But it does show we must serve and love God on His terms and if God's spirit is working with us, we will be doing Godly works.

Gen. 22:12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

Deut 4:2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Deut. 6:1-2 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

Deut. 30:10-16,9 If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.... I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

Matt. 5:16-9 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think

not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 22:36-40 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matt. 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Acts 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

Romans 2:14 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Romans 7:12-4 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

1 Timothy 1:8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully

2 Timothy 3:16-7 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

James 2:17-8, 24 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works...Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

2 Peter 2:20-2 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

2 Peter 3:2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

1 John 2:3-5 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

1 John 3:11, 22-4 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

God's way is not grievous. His covenant is not a burden. But we don't get to re-write portions of the covenant listed in God's scriptures we don't like. That means we cannot remove portions of it, nor can we add talmuds. Paul wrote the book of Galatians to let the Galatians, and thus all Christians, know that each individual had to walk in covenant with God, but that that covenant revolved around an intimate relationship with God. Our walk with God is OUR walk (*"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Php. 2:12)*), but we are not supposed to walk it alone. The still quite voice of God has always been available to His people, not just through prayer, but through fellow Christians and His Torah, which actually requires do's and don'ts for His people, something the anti-nicean fathers rejected and something that is still rejected by orthodox Christianity today. God placed us here to learn and grow and to help one another. Hopefully this paper will help you.

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- *Jim Rudd*

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