Focus on the Kingdom

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Notable Quotes on Trinity and Christology (Who Is the Real Jesus?)

The **begetting**, fathering of the Messiah means the **coming into existence** of the Messiah, Son of God. This is the crucially important event which demonstrates that the Messiah Jesus, Son of God, is not an originally **non-human** being who leaves a heavenly home, descends literally and **enters into the womb of his mother from outside**. Such a personage cannot by definition be a true human man. Jesus in the Bible, the Son of God, is constantly defined as a real man, the only authentic man, a man who shows us how to be a real man! **If you do not begin your existence in the womb of your mother, you are not a real man or woman.** You are dressed up as a man if you come from outside the womb. You are just pretending to be man!

Unfortunately in the vast jumble and confusion which followed NT times the "church fathers" pieced together a "Jesus" who cannot by definition really be human. He is non-human because his origin is in the spiritual realm outside the earth — not in the womb of his mother. When this happens the son of David is eliminated and replaced by a Messiah who is not truly the descendant of David, not really from the tribe of Judah, as the Messiah must be. (**NB Isa. 7:14; II Sam. 7:14; Heb. 7:14.**) A Messiah, Son of God who does not **originate** in Mary is not really human, cannot be the true Jesus and cannot die! (Holy angels cannot die, and nor can God.) How fearfully complex is the Jesus of "orthodox" creeds. He is in fact according to the official definitions not "a man," but "man" in a generic and philosophical sense.

But who even bothers to find out what his own church actually believes about Jesus?

At Qumran, the Jewish sect of Essenes knew about the prophecy of **the begetting** of the Son. The Messiah was to be a direct product of the one God who would become the Father of the Messiah (Ps. 2:7; II Sam. 7:14)

In the following articles in scholarly journals we have this: "God's begetting the Messiah" in IQSa. (Dead Sea Scrolls), Morton Smith (NTS 5, p. 218-224). See also "the begotten Messiah" by Gordis in *Vetum Testamentum* 2, 1957.

Smith says: "But the most generally accepted opinion is summed up by Black's statement that it [this portion of DSS] is an order for the plenary session of the council of the assembly as it will be in the end time when a meal of bread and wine is celebrated **when God begets the messiah** [cp. Luke 1:35; Ps. 2:7], or anointed one of Israel." There are rules for assembly to study Torah, **in the event of God's begetting the Messiah.**

Jews indeed knew as did Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:18, 20 that the Messiah was to be begotten by God, that is, brought into existence as every human must be. The sign of course of Jesus being the Messiah was that he was to have no human father.

I ask this: How can Jesus *be* God if he speaks of "my God"! Is he his own God?

Here is how standard expert commentary admits that John and **later** "orthodoxy" do not match.

"Since most readers of the Gospel of John approach the gospel with **a firm belief in the Nicene dogma of the Holy Trinity [a crippling presupposition!]**, a plea for caution is here imperative. Those who listened to Jesus during his lifetime [and the warning should apply to those who desire to listen to him today] did not come already endowed with faith in a Trinitarian Godhead, nor did those who heard the preaching of the Apostles; it was not a matter of teaching people who already believed in a Holy Trinity that one of those divine persons had become a human being**. Neither in Judaism not elsewhere is there any trace of such a belief**" (*International Critical Commentary,* John 1-4, 2009, p. 51).

Nor is there a trace of such teaching in Jesus, who stood foursquare on the unitarian creed of Israel (Mark 12:28ff).

"We must suppose that the Markan form goes back to oral tradition passed on by **a Church that did not any longer recite the Shema** [had they given up on Jesus' definition of God?!]. But here at least in his statement of the first commandment **Jesus stands foursquare within the orbit of Jewish piety**. [Why do we not follow him?]…**Jesus' statement consists entirely of an almost word for word citation of two Old Testament texts, Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 18, the former at the heart of Jewish piety and both much canvassed by the rabbis**" (Hugh Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on Mark*, p. 280).

And Jesus, but apparently not his followers today, insisted on the unitary creed of Deuteronomy 6:4 as the most important of all propositions (Mark 12:29).

The word *logos* in John 1:1

"The primary sense of logos [word, Jn. 1:1] is equivalent to Memra (word, utterance), the very embodiment of God's everlasting protective Presence

(*sein ewiges Dasein*, "his eternal being") as disclosed in Exod. 3:15" (p. 30).

Observe carefully that "word" is not another Person from the Father, but rather the expression of the heart, mind and will of the One God. There is no SON yet, at this stage of the prologue. The Son appears only when Jesus is fathered and born.

"Jesus Christ is the incarnate [human] form of the Logos…Grace and truth are the nature of the logos [Paul speaks of grace and truth and logos]. They are the content of the revelation [**IT**, the logos, word] given in Jesus Christ (v. 17b) **which** replaces the Mosaic **nomos**, the Torah [David calls the Torah logos also]…The terms logos (word) and nomos (law) are interchangeable in Ps. 119. These are statements **concerning the pre-existence and majesty of the Torah** but they are now intentionally heaped upon **the logos**. **IT** was in the beginning with God. **IT** was with God and was God, or divine. All things were made by [through] **IT**. In **IT** was life. **IT** was the light of man. In the rabbis these are sayings about the Torah. But they are now statements about Christ. In him the eternal word of God and the word of creation, the word of the Law is not just passed on ('given') but enacted (*egeneto*)" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 133-134).

"Christ is not just a teacher and transmitter of the Torah. He is himself the Torah, the new Torah [for the new creation]. Mosaism, which is provisional and intermediary, has passed. In Jesus Christ the word of God has taken place in truth. What they behold is the content of this true, final and only Torah: grace and truth [so Paul when speaking of grace and truth is speaking of the new Torah of Messiah]. 'Through the firstborn God created the heaven and earth and the firstborn is none other than the Torah' (rabbis). The divine nature of the Torah. The Torah is life, **life** for the world. The Torah is **light.** The world lies in darkness and its inhabitants are without light. The Torah is truth."

Here is what Jews believed: "'Seven things were created before the world was created, namely the Torah, repentance, Garden of Eden, Gehenna, throne of glory [Matt. 19:28], sanctuary, and the name of the Messiah' [not the Messiah himself]. The eternal being of the Torah was with God. **IT** lay on God's bosom while God sat on the throne of glory."

John never wrote, "In the beginning was the SON of God, second member of a triune God!" He wrote about the eternal wisdom, plan and purpose of God, God's design for the world.

Dr. John A.T. Robinson at Cambridge on John 17:3:

"In the first place it should be noted that John is as undeviating a witness as any in the New Testament to the fundamental tenet of Judaism, of **unitary monotheism** (Rom. 3:30; James 2:19). There is one true and only God (John 5:44; 17:3). Everything else is idols (I John 5:21). In fact nowhere is the Jewishness of John [and of Jesus], which has emerged in all recent study, more clear. The only possible exception is in I John 5:20, where 'this is the true God' could grammatically relate not to the Father, but to the immediately preceding words 'His Son Jesus Christ,' though the 'his' in 'His Son' must refer to 'the one who is true,' that is God the Father, as everywhere else [including Mal. 2:10: 'Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?']

"The ambiguities of phrasing in the Johannine epistles are notorious, but I find it very difficult to be persuaded by such as Schnackenburg, Bultmann and Brown that it is Christ who is being designated as 'the true God' [contradicting Jn. 17:3 and the rest of the Bible!]. I am convinced with Westcott, Brooke and Dodd that the remaining Johannine usage, particularly 'This is the true God, this is eternal life,' I John 5:20 and 'This is eternal life, to know thee who alone art true God' (John 17:3), which I believe the former deliberately echoes**, requires the reference to be to the Father**. There is also the parallel in II John 7 where 'this is the deceiver and the Antichrist' must refer to the secessionists and not to the immediately preceding words 'Jesus Christ coming in the flesh.'"

He then says that "despite the clear evidence of the Gospel that Jesus refuses the claim to *be* God (10:33) or in any way to usurp the position of the Father, this is clearly for John not the whole picture." He goes on to point out that the logos is God. But he has said above that John's Jesus is a unitarian. The logos is therefore the wisdom/word of God and **not a second Person in a triune Godhead**. Jesus is thus what the word (not Word) *became*. God, the Father, is still "the only one who is true God," which excludes the Son from the Godhead, although Jesus is the human expression of God. Jesus and John were unitarians, as were all Jews.

Leonard Goppelt explains precisely what is meant by John's word (John 1:1): "The logos of the prologue [John 1:1] becomes Jesus. Jesus is the incarnate [human] logos, **not the logos as such**" (*Theology, II***,** p. 634).

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ:*

"The truth is that Jesus was a bit mysterious about his identity, wasn't he? He tended to shy away from forthrightly proclaiming himself to be Messiah or Son of God… [Witherington] It is not because he did not think of himself in those terms…If he had simply announced 'Hi, folks, **I'm God**,' that would have been heard as 'I'm Yahweh' because the Jews of his day did not have any concept of the Trinity [nor did Jesus!]. They only knew of God the Father, whom they called Yahweh and not God the Son or God the Holy Spirit."

If he said "I am Yahweh," that would be a clear announcement of two Yahwehs and Jesus carefully never uttered such nonsense!

A.T Hanson, Professor of Theology at the University of Hull, UK:

"No responsible NT scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus, or preached by the earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer of the NT. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God" (*The Image of the Invisible God*).

Dr. W. R Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, writer for years in London's *Daily Telegraph:*

"It must be admitted by everyone who has the rudiments of a historical sense that the doctrine of the Trinity formed no part of the original message. St. Paul did not know it, and would have been unable to understand the meaning of the terms used in the theological formula on which the Church ultimately agreed" (*God in Christian Experience*, p. 180).

Augustine on John 17:3. He violates the Scripture, tampering with it to force it to yield a Trinity:

"The proper order of the words is, '**That they may know Thee and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent, as the only true God.**' Consequently, therefore, the Holy Spirit is also understood, because He is the Spirit of the Father and Son, as the substantial and consubstantial love of both. For the Father and Son are not two Gods, nor are the Father and Son and Holy Spirit three Gods; but the Trinity itself is the one only true God. And yet the Father is not the same as the Son, nor the Son the same as the Father, nor the Holy Spirit the same as the Father and the Son; for the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are three [Persons], yet the Trinity itself is one God" (*Homilies on John*).

Karl Barth on the Trinity:

"The Bible lacks the express declaration that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of equal essence and therefore in an equal sense God himself. And the other express declaration is also lacking, that God is God thus and only thus, i.e. as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These two express declarations, which **go beyond the witness of the Bible**, are the twofold content of the Church doctrine of the Trinity" (*Church Dogmatics*, I.1.437, emphasis added).

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament on the Trinity:

"The NT does not actually speak of triunity. We seek this in vain in the triadic formulae of the NT...Early Christianity itself...does not yet have the problem of triunity in view" (Kittel, Vol. 3, p. 108-9).

Donald Guthrie's evangelically-oriented *New Testament Theology*, while arguing that there are "adumbrations" of Trinitarianism in the New Testament, is similarly obliged to admit that:

"It cannot be said that the doctrine (Trinitarianism) is expounded. Indeed, it is significant that none of the NT writers sees the need to speculate about such a doctrine. They are content to present data which imply the divine nature of both Christ and the Spirit and which naturally gave rise to reflections about the unity of God."

Dr. R. M. Grant likewise agrees in his discussion of the Trinitarian controversy that there is no recorded mention of the Godhead's "oneness of substance" before the Apology ("A Plea for the Christians") of Athenagoras (ca. AD 177), *when for the first time anywhere* we read that "the Son of God is the Mind and the Word of the Father," the latter being "the One uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, uncontainable God" (*The Early Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 91).

Thomas Jefferson, U.S. President, 1801-1809 (there were 5 unitarian presidents of the USA):

"When we shall have done away with the **incomprehensible jargon** of the Trinitarian arithmetic, that three are one and one is three; when we will have knocked down the artificial scaffolding, reared to mask from view the simple structure of Jesus; when, in short, we shall have unlearned everything which has been taught since his day, and got back to the pure and simple doctrines he inculcated, we shall then be truly and worthily his disciples; and my opinion is that if nothing had ever been added to what flowed purely from his lips, the whole world would at this day be Christian."

F.F. Bruce in personal correspondence to me:

"On the preexistence question, one can at least accept the preexistence of the eternal Word or **Wisdom** of God **which** (who?) became incarnate in Jesus. But whether any New Testament writer believed in his separate conscious existence as a 'second Divine Person' [i.e. of the Trinity] before his incarnation is not so clear. On balance I think John did. I am not nearly so sure about Paul" (June 13th, 1981).

"Paul identifies Christ with the creative word or **wisdom** of God ***which*** certainly existed as long as God did" (July 29th, 1981).

Dr. James Dunn, who has written massively on Christology, on preexistence:

"To avoid confusion, therefore, it would be better to speak of the Johannine Christ as the incarnation of God, as God making Himself known to human flesh, **not as the incarnation of the Son of God.** To speak of Christ as himself preexistent, coming down from heaven, and so forth, has to be seen as metaphorical; otherwise it leads inevitably to some kind of **polytheism**" (Intro. to *Christology in the Making*, xxvii).

Yes, polytheism, a dreaded poison.

"That the Messiah himself existed before creation is nowhere stated in the Tannaitic [Jewish] literature…The name of the Messiah is the *idea* of the Messiah, or more exactly the idea of redemption through the Messiah. This idea did precede creation"[1] (Dunn, *Christology in the Making,* p. 294).

"The point then is that Jesus is remembered in earliest Christian tradition not simply for putting the love commandment ('love your neighbor as yourself') at the heart of his teaching. The influence of that teaching on the first Christians is clear enough from first century Christian writings, and there are no grounds for denying that the inspiration of that focus in early Christian teaching is to be attributed to Jesus. For such a consistent singling out of just this commandment (Lev. 19:18) can hardly be coincidental. More to the point, Jesus is remembered as also putting the love commandment second to the primary command to love God with all one's being (Mark 12:29). **For Jesus the *Shema* was fundamental and fundamentally determinative of the whole orientation of life [is this preached in church?]**. It is not the case that Jesus' ethic can be boiled down to love your neighbor. On the contrary, the implication is that the two go together and perhaps the second is only possible in long-term reality as the corollary to the first.

"**The conclusion is strong then that the *Shema* continued to be of central importance for Jesus during his mission and the teaching he both gave and lived out**, which also means that the conviction that God was one **continued to be a basic axiom for Jesus, a core principle from which he drew his inspiration and instruction.** To that extent, at least, in other words, we have to answer the question 'Was Jesus a monotheist?' of our title with a clear affirmative.

"The clear implication of Mark's account is that Jesus declined the epithet 'good' because properly speaking only God is good…Its theological rationale is obvious: God alone is worthy of such devotion because God alone is the source and definition of all goodness…the God-foundation of his whole mission" (**Dunn**, *Early Christian and Jewish Monotheism*, p. 109).

Leading expert and author Dr. James Dunn provokes serious thinking about the paganism in popular Christianity. He wrote, "There is always the possibility that popular pagan superstition became popular *Christian superstition* by a gradual assimilation and spread of belief at the level of popular piety. We must beware of assuming that all developments in Christian thought stem from the Pauls and the Johns of Christianity" (*Christology in the Making*, p. 251).

[1] Klausner, *Messianic Idea,* p. 460; Strack Billerbeck II, 334ff; Vermes, *Jesus*, 138; Mowinkel, *He That Cometh*, 334.

Dr. Gary Boyd in *Trinity and Oneness Pentecostals*

Trinitarians are quite clear that God is one: "There can be no question that the Bible does uniformly and unequivocally teach that there is one God. Certainly it was the proclamation 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,' that formed **the cornerstone for everything** that was distinctive about the faith of God's people in the OT. The message of God's uniqueness and **singularity** is driven home literally **hundreds of times throughout** the pages of the OT (Isa 42:8; 43:10; 44:6). This **strict monotheism** is by no means forgotten when we enter the NT era. Rather **it forms the presupposition of the Christ-centered faith** articulated in the NT (Mark 12:29ff; I Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:4; I Tim. 2:5). It is therefore an incontestable fact that the Bible is monotheistic through and through. No biblical author would have entertained the idea that there could be more than one supreme being. This is the cornerstone to ancient and to contemporary Judaism" — and powerfully confirmed and commanded by Jesus! (Mk 12:29). But the monotheism of Jesus is not Trinitarian! It is unitarian. There is only one GOD, one YHVH.

Dr. W.N. Clarke, Professor, Colgate University, 1909:

"[In the NT] there is no mystery about their oneness **and no attempt to show that there are three in one.** The word Trinity is never used and there is no indication that the idea of Trinity had taken form. It has long been a common practice to read the NT as if the ideas of a later age upon this subject were in it, but they are not. In the days of the Apostles the doctrine of the Trinity was yet to be created. But the materials for it were already there, and the occasion for the growth of the doctrine was sure to arise."

Elohim is not a proof of plurality in God:

"With regard to Elohim, it has been held by many that in the plural form of the word there was shadowed forth the plurality of persons in the Godhead and the mystery of the Trinity was inferred therefrom. Such, according to Peter of Lombard, was the true significance of Elohim. But Calvin, Mercer, Drusius, Bellarmine have given the weight of their authority against an explanation so fanciful and arbitrary" (Dr. Sir William Smith, "Jehovah," *Dictionary of the Bible*).✧

Sabbath Observance: Colossians 2:16-17 Is Decisive

"We may observe that if the ordinance of the Sabbath had been, *in any form,* of **lasting obligation** on the Christian Church it would have been quite impossible for the Apostle to have spoken thus [in Col. 2:16-17]. The fact of **an obligatory rest of one day, whether the seventh or the first,** would have been directly in the teeth of his assertion here: the holding of such would have been

still to **retain the shadow, while we possess the substance**. And no answer can be given to this by the transparent special pleading that he was speaking only of that which was Jewish in such observances: the whole argument being general and **the axiom of verse 17 universally applicable**."

The question is: Why would any believer in Christ, who subjects himself to the mentorship of the Apostle Paul, want to retain a shadow when he has access to the substance, the real thing? To insist on the shadow of a thing when you can possess the actual object rather than its shadow cannot be good policy. It is bound to have a weakening effect on our relationship to Jesus.

The whole theology of Paul is based on the need for us believers to relate to the Christ who has come and who has been exalted to the second position in the universe, under the One God the Father. Christ is to be in the Christian, via his spirit. Any teaching which diminishes or undermines this precious relationship between the risen Jesus and the Christian needs to be exposed and corrected. The vitality of Christian life is sapped by such misunderstanding and false practice.

Paul recoils in the whole book of Galatians at the awful thought of mixing two covenants. He battles the "Jewish" party who wanted to bring believers back under Moses! Circumcision in the flesh, the law in the letter, is the great issue. Genesis 17 had mandated that all males, Jew and Gentile, who wanted to be part of the covenant **had to be circumcised** in the flesh. This was the mark of being truly Jewish (i.e. part of the Old Covenant) and in right relationship with God. It is true then to say that according to Scripture**, under the Mosaic covenant**, and earlier as commanded to Abraham, physical circumcision was an absolute requirement, on pain of death! God did not mince words on this point. Disobedience incurred the death penalty.

But in the NT everything is new and changed. The water of the old system is replaced by the intoxicating wine of the New Covenant. Paul spiritualizes circumcision and comes strongly and passionately against all who want to retain the letter of the law. Paul is incensed against any who would revert to the Old Covenant system.

Circumcision is now expressly not literal but a circumcision **made without hands. This non-literal circumcision has replaced the literal circumcision commanded in Genesis 17 for all males of all nations.**

Paul makes his point over and over again: "I warn you that if you get circumcised [in the flesh] you will be obliged to keep the whole law" (Gal. 5:3). "If I were still preaching circumcision [which I am not!] why am I being persecuted?" (Gal. 5:11).

Readers must face this question: What is this "whole law" connected with circumcision which Christians must NOT observe, lest they fall away from Christ and back under the wrong covenant? Lest they interfere with their glorious freedom in Christ who has come and is now exalted to the supreme position under God?

In Colossians and Ephesians this subject is prominent, as Paul battles for Christian freedom in Christ who is now at the right hand of God, according to the prophecy in Psalm 110:1, where the Messiah is not a second GOD, but the supreme human being *adoni*, my lord, which never means Deity.

The problem of mixing the two covenants persisted in NT times, since Jewish believers were reluctant to give up on the Torah of Moses in the letter! Paul waged a continuous battle against the false theology which drew believers away from Jesus and back under the letter of the law of Moses.

This problem has not gone away. I have met folk who claim a special relationship to God because they wear prayer tassels or because they scrupulously observe the holy days of the Jewish OT calendar. One man told me how blessed it was to be observing the New Moons. (Yes, but did he represent the Christian faith well to his neighbor who saw him contemplating the moon every month?)

The issue we are discussing is dealt with deliberately and head-on in Colossians 2. The context is all important and also the connection with Ephesians which treats the same issues with equal clarity.

The words of Henry Alford, the famous commentator, are powerful. He reacts to Colossians 2:16-17 where the annual holy days, the monthly new moons and the weekly Sabbaths are expressly mentioned. The whole Jewish, OT calendar is a single shadow. Yes, a single shadow, one shadow, taken together. The trio of observances is called "a single shadow." There is not the slightest difference in the importance of annual holy days, monthly new moons, and the weekly Sabbath. It is an impossible struggle to try to force any difference between these observances. The language is crystal clear. The annual holy days (feasts), the monthly new moons and the weekly Saturday Sabbath stand or fall together!

What then is the value of that Old Testament calendar? Paul describes it as a shadow and contrasts the whole system negatively with the substance which is the Christ who has come and who now heads the Church.

The language is not hard. The calendar, all three elements of it, is the arena of discussion. We are not to allow anyone at all to be our judge in matters of food and drink. And we are not to be told what to do in respect of the OT calendar. Why is this? Because the calendar is a single shadow. Paul shows us how he is thinking here. Do not allow anyone to put you in the shadow, because as a believer in Jesus you now possess the substance, of which the calendar was a mere shadow. The shadow takes you

back to the wrong covenant and takes you away from Christ, who is the fulfillment of the shadows.

The efforts by some to avoid the obvious here are not convincing. They involve a twist of words. The calendar is a shadow: "which things [the annual feasts, new moons and Sabbath day] are a shadow of things which were to come, but the substance belongs to Messiah." This is in the immediate context of the present, **Christian circumcision** "made without hands" (v. 11). That is, a non-literal, spiritual circumcision has replaced the letter of the circumcision law. In the same way the literal calendar is now replaced by Jesus, who has come. The calendar is a shadow now superseded by the risen Christ who is head of the body and dwells in us via his spirit.

Adam, Paul says, was the type of Christ. Adam was the type of "the one who **is** to come" — that is to say Adam was the type and shadow of the one who has now come. This is not a reference to the future second coming but denotes the Christ who has come. So exactly in Colossians 2:16-17 the calendar is the shadow of the coming one, the one who has now come and who authorizes circumcision "made without hands," i.e. non-literal. The literal calendar is not for us in the New Covenant. We have the spiritual calendar, a permanent feasting in Jesus and a permanent rest in him, not just one day in the week.

Paul's warning is directed to the issues of eating and drinking and secondly (note the "or" of Colossians 2:16 — a separate category) the Jewish calendar. The calendar is the second category of concern, and it is now defined as a **shadow** and contrasted with the body or substance which is Christ.

So Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:8 speaks of an ongoing festival for Christians: "Let us be keeping festival," i.e. celebrating daily — nothing to do with literal leaven removed for one week (as in the OT festival) but a permanent removal of the leaven of sin and misunderstanding from our lives, every day.

Paul exhorts us to be observing the Lord's supper at church meetings. He uses a conjunction of "indefinite frequency": "as often as you do it." This is not an annual Passover but a continuous New Covenant festival observed when the body comes together (exact frequency is not specified). It is certainly not just once a year!

Paul has to make his point with maximum emphasis. He lumps the whole Mosaic revelation at Sinai together and treats it very negatively. You might as well become like Hagar, a slave in bondage, if you think the Ten Commandments are the final word. The Covenant made at Sinai, including the weekly Sabbath which is part of the total calendar, is not better than slavery. The picture of the Old Covenant is like Hagar. But the freedom in Christ from this bondage is likened to Sarah whose son was born supernaturally and according to divine Promise. 2 Corinthians 3 should be pondered in depth. It is eye-opening as a strong warning against trying to mix and muddle two different covenants. The glory of the Ten Commandments is now superseded by the Torah of Messiah (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).

Context is always all-important. Look at Colossians chapter 2. Paul is in a struggle for the converts in Colosse and Laodicea. These people need all the conviction which comes from a good understanding of the "mystery" of God, which is the Christ, the Messiah. All the treasures of wisdom are hidden in Christ. But danger lurks. No one is to lead them astray by "attractive but false argument" (v. 4). Paul is with them in spirit and wants them not to be misled.

His aim is to describe the fullness of life in Christ in the New Covenant, by which we become a new creation. Again, he warns in verse 8: See that no one misleads you in such a way as to distance yourself from Christ. Note the constant repetition of "in him," in Christ. "In Christ" you have all the circumcision you need. It is a non-physical, non-literal circumcision, a spiritual "circumcision not made with hands" (v. 11).

Remember that with physical circumcision, which Paul is not preaching, goes "the whole law" (Gal. 5:3) The topic is the same in Colossians 2. There is a Christian circumcision which is "not made with hands" (Col. 2:11) The Christian has been buried with Christ and raised with Christ. This is the new spiritual journey. Our natural "uncircumcision of the heart" cannot be remedied by a physical circumcision! Certain dogmas have been abolished (Eph 2:14, 15). They are no longer binding, because of the cross, and the cross inaugurates the new dispensation of the New Covenant. Christ has triumphed over all other authorities. Our circumcision is now spiritual, "not made with hands."

In view of these Christian facts, Colossians 2:16 warns: Don't let anyone take you to task in matters of food and drink, nor (a separate category) with regard to the calendar of Israel, annual feasts, new moons and weekly Sabbath. Why? Because these observances are a **shadow**. Christ has come. They are a shadow of things which were to come, just as Adam is a shadow of the one who has now come (Rom. 5:14). The shadow is contrasted and dismissed as irrelevant. Now the new creation is in full force and our link to Christ is the vital thing. And Christ is the substance which replaces the shadow and makes it non-effective. Thus any insistence on rules of food and drink or calendar is dangerous, since it promotes the wrong covenant and takes us away from the full Christian life in Christ.

Paul goes on: Why allow yourself to be "dogmatized" (v. 20) by these misleading teachings? Though they refer to commandments given in the OT, in the NT they have only the status of "commandments of men" (v. 22). God

has changed the covenant; the schoolmaster rules are no more. Life is now in the realm of spirit, and physical circumcision and the "whole law" which goes with (Gal. 5:3) it is no longer in force. It was exactly the refusal of circumcision and the whole law which caused Paul to be persecuted as he says in Galatians 5:11.

It is precisely those laws which separated Jew and Gentile, the food laws and the calendar, which no longer should be allowed to do so. There is one new people of God, Jew and Gentile without distinction, all equally "in Christ" and related to the risen Christ.

Sabbath and other calendar laws divide believers. Unity is shattered when people argue over foods and laws about what day of the week to rest on. Sunday is no more binding than Saturday, but Sunday early became a traditional day for meeting, because on that "third day" Jesus was raised from the dead.

A further misunderstanding was introduced when it was claimed that the resurrection was on Saturday. This is easily exposed as wrong by Luke. It was on Sunday that the disciples were met by the risen Jesus on the road. The forlorn disciples knew that the resurrection was to be "on the third day" (Luke 24.21). The angels reminded them of that fact, too. The angels said, "Jesus is not here. He has been resurrected" (Luke 24:6). He was to be resurrected on "the third day" (Luke 24:7). Yes, resurrected "**on the third day**" as is repeated many times as being the day of the resurrection, according to Scripture (1 Cor. 15:4).

So then which day is the "third day"? This is easily answered. The disciples are walking on that same day on which the angels had spoken to them — "that very same day" (Luke 24:13). Later that same day, Sunday, the disciples confirm that they expected the resurrection on that "third day." They lament the fact that the "third day" has now arrived since the crucifixion (Luke 24:21). "Today [Sunday] is the third day" since the crucifixion, they say. They do not yet understand that Jesus had indeed been raised on that same "third day" as promised by the angels in the same context in Luke 24:7.

The third day is Sunday and that is the day of the resurrection. Sunday is exactly the "third day" since Friday. Luke counts inclusively as we see from "today, tomorrow and the third day" (Luke 13:32). This was a familiar reckoning from the Hebrew Bible too. "This year, next year and the third year." "Today, tomorrow and the third day." So Friday (1), Saturday (2) and Sunday (3). All is clear.

Confirmation comes from the united testimony of the gospels that the crucifixion was on the preparation day for the Saturday Sabbath. The preparation day was Friday and it remains so to this day.

It is a great mistake to use the exceptional Matthew 12:40 to contradict this clear, primary evidence. One verse against 20 verses! Matthew is well known for his very Jewish flavor, and Jews knew that parts of whole days could be reckoned as full days! Jesus was dead for part of Friday, all of Saturday and part of Sunday. The NT is not an English book in terms of its idioms.✧

Pardon my Asking

How can it be that the President, who is committed under oath to uphold the American constitution, does not see that his public claim to be Christian commits him equally to upholding the Biblical constitution?

I thought that Scripture is the sacred and holy text of believers in Christ. That holy writing is blatantly in condemnation of "same sex marriage." Is Scripture to be tossed aside? Does Scripture have nothing to say about the amazing redefinition of marriage as between male and male and female and female?

The same biblical text also commends and commands believers to treat everyone with gentleness. But we must ask: Where is the full, public discussion about what Paul has to say about homosexuality in Romans 1? About Paul's authoritative words as a speaker for Jesus Christ and for God?

Where is the outrage that the Christian Bible in "one nation under God" no longer counts? It no longer has any voice. Is God in favor of same-sex marriage? That is *the only* question which ultimately matters. Where is the consistency in the claim to be Christian, without a corresponding reverence for the Christian Apostles? The claim to be Christian has become hollow and false on this central issue of Christian conduct. Is not the wrath of God invited by such dishonesty? With such trashing of Holy Scripture, while we maintain a veneer of faith in Christianity, on what basis can a nation claim to be honest before God? Is Zechariah 7:12 applicable?✧

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