

The Faulty Logic of Antinomianism

A Key Premise of 'Fundamentalist' Persuasions is that Christ Ended the Law, "Nailing IT to His Cross". The Logical Ramifications of that idea are a Wonder to Behold. We need to Consider what this idea Requires that We Accept.

© Rich Traver, 81520-1411, 11-25-06 [71] www.goldensheaves.org

Ignoring the obvious, a key verse, one used to justify the belief system that the Law is 'all done away', is paraphrased with great regularity without taking note of what it is really saying. That verse is found in Colossians 2:14, which says, "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*". Without there being any specific mention of the Laws of God (the Ten Commandments), or any biblical ritual, nevertheless it is presumed and positively declared that this is in fact exactly what is 'nailed to the cross'! Here is a chapter with numerous mentions of the belief systems created by the minds of men, in fact, with heavy and direct allusion to significant 'Gnostic' elements. But it isn't what religious leaders want to think, so little is made of the content of the rest of this important chapter. In fact, they mis-assign these Gnostic 'elements' (referred to as worldly rudiments) as though they referred to formerly held Biblical teachings.

But, anyone would be remiss to draw such a conclusion without reading the contextual setting in which this jewel is so eloquently set.

What Colossians 2 Says

8: *Beware lest any man spoil you through **philosophy** and **vain deceit**, after the **tradition of men**, after the **rudiments of the world**, and not after Christ.* 9: *For in him dwelleth all the **fullness of the Godhead bodily**.*¹ 10: *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:* 11: *In whom also ye are circumcised with*

*the **circumcision** made without hands, in putting off the body of the **sins of the flesh** by the **circumcision of Christ**:* 12: *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* 13: *And you, being **dead in your sins** and the **uncircumcision** of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having **forgiven you all trespasses**;* 14: *Blotting out the handwriting of **ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;* 15: *And having spoiled **principalities** and **powers**, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over **them** in it.* 16: *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**:* 17: *Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body of Christ.* 18: *Let no **man** beguile you of your reward in a **voluntary humility** and **worshipping of angels**, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his **fleshly mind**,..." (KJV throughout, emphasis added.)*

A few things to notice: Three mentions are made of the Biblical form of worship: First, circumcision in verse 11, then food practices and Holyday or Sabbath keeping in verse 16. Each of these are shown in a positive light. Circumcision is not abandoned, but is shown as achieved in a more effective way. Holydays and Sabbath Days are not abandoned, but are explained as '*shadows of things to come*'. In other words, are shown to present in practice an illustration of future realities! The lunar calendar from which to date these Holy Days is referenced in the words **the new moon**, which is irrelevant to worldly holidays. Nor is the Church seen or encouraged to abandon these, but are admonished to let the 'Church' judge them in how they were observing them, and not to let '**men**' judge how they were. The saints were here shown

¹ This expression: '*the fullness of the Godhead bodily*' is a direct reference to Gnostic thinking, which accounts for the erroneous conclusion that Christ wasn't God but and IF He was, He never could have been manifest in a body of flesh! This is the same issue that John dealt with in 1st John 4:1-7.

observing these days, not as **not** observing them! They wouldn't be under criticism for **how** they were keeping them if they weren't keeping them!

Several code words should illustrate the real intent of this passage. Words such as: *philosophy*, *vain deceit*, *the tradition of men*, and *the rudiments of the world*,² in verse 8, show that the 'issues' are forms of religious belief which originated in the minds of men, not with God. Worldly religious concepts, not Biblical teachings! Verse 15 mentions *principalities* and *powers*, verse 18 refers to *voluntary humility* and *worshipping of angels*, clearly NOT Biblical practices, but elements commonly found in Gnostic forms of worship: Things which originated in their '*vainly puffed up fleshly minds*'! These '*ordinances*'³ which are '*done away in Christ*' are those religious philosophies that originated in the minds of men, not from God as recorded in the Old Testament! These '*ordinances*' are philosophical concepts, which, in **their** minds, forever barred the worshipper from escaping this (*evil*) physical dimension and entering into that of the spiritual. Clearly a *Gnostic* prohibition, but **not** a Biblical one. The idea in verse 13 of our being '*quickened together with him*' allows that our **body** **can** be brought into an immortal state as was His, which is the point of the statement in verse 9, "*For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead **bodily***."⁴ Gnostic philosophy represents our pure and holy '*soul*' as being trapped in this vile body, which could never enter into a state of true spirituality, due not only to the inescapable contamination of accumulated sin, but according to the Gnostic, merely by existing in the material dimension!

Obviously, this passage is more potent than is acknowledged by our main stream religions.

² Translated in the NRSV as '*elemental spirits*' which would mean more to a Gnostic than to a true Christian. The KJV renders the same phrase as '*the rudiments of the world*', which conveys the sense of something other than of Biblical origin!

³ The word: **Ordinances** is from the Greek: *dogma* (Strong's #1378 / 1379) which is rarely used in the New Testament and refers to a *humanly perceived* decree or 'law'. If it was Paul's intent to make reference here to 'the Laws of God', he certainly knew the word for that, as he used it frequently in so many other places! (Romans 7 for example.)

⁴ The point here being that Jesus was no less God even while manifest in the flesh!

What **was** '*nailed to his cross*' is what the verse immediately prior explains: "***all trespasses***"! In other words, all infractions committed against the Laws of God, were eliminated from our personal record, not the elimination of those Laws themselves! (True sin as being **defined** by the Law, as 1st John 3:4 so clearly explains!) But then, that accomplished, we now become heirs of a spiritual existence, as Philippians 3:21 explains, which is fully *realized* at Christ's appearing. "*Who shall change **our vile body**, that it may be **fashioned like unto his glorious body**, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*." This idea would give the Gnostic fits, which was the ultimate objective of Colossians 2.

Another noteworthy phrase is the one in verse 14, "...*the **handwriting of ordinances** that was **against us**, which was **contrary to us***,". To apply this passage as describing God's Laws would be to have the Apostle Paul identify Old Testament laws⁵ as **bad** for us! It also exposes a subliminal attitude of the modern proponent as being hostile to the things of God. This unique phraseology also is indicative of *Gnostic* theology. We should be attentive to this overall phrase, that it identifies some '*handwritten record*' of our individual and personal faults, not that overall moral code of conduct given unilaterally to all humanity by God. Those who represent these '*ordinances*' as being Biblical Law present the method of removing sin as being the removal of the moral code which defines it, not the accumulation of trespasses accrued within each individual! Paul must have sensed this fundamental perversion of reason when he reminded his hearers, "...*for where **no law** is, there is **no transgression***." Rom. 4:15 If there **is** no law, on the basis of what are people accounted as 'lawbreakers'?

The Law is Fulfilled

But behind this mis-application of Colossians 2, there is a natural orientation within all peoples, especially the religious un-converted, who subliminally desire to do the very thing Jesus early on in His ministry said **not** to do! "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am **not***

⁵ Laws, which Paul in other places affirmed as being 'good', "*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good*." Rom. 7:12

come to destroy, but to fulfill.” (Matt. 5:17) Then, many go on to define ‘**fulfilled**’ as meaning ‘*He did it all for us.*’ Another miscarriage of reason! Consider for example, if you were following behind the county employee who was responsible for putting up a particular STOP sign. When HE, ahead of you, stops at the sign he himself put up, he fulfills the requirement that the sign imposes. Then, would it be logical to say that since the person responsible for putting up the sign ‘fulfilled’ its requirement in full, that no-one thereafter needs to stop at it? Such logic, it seems, is reasonable enough to gain solid purchase in modern theological circles! Thus, the word **fulfilled** is flipped, so as to mean: ‘satisfied to the extent that it no longer needs to be obeyed’, which is a round-about way of reasoning that tacitly concludes the very thing Jesus said NOT to think! He used the words ‘*destroy*’ and ‘*fulfill*’ in extreme opposition to each other. Religion has labored long to provide the two with a semi-synonymous definition.

Abrogation v Application

There are basically two schools of thought in this area: that the Law is ‘all done away’, with another, that alleges it still *exists* but ‘no longer applies to the Christian’. This also involves curious logic.

Earlier, we touched upon the logical ramifications of the Law having been ‘all done away’. Paul states the obvious, that if there is no law, there is no sin! Then, on the basis of what is it concluded with such certainty, that ‘**all have sinned**’? This statement also dovetails itself into the ‘applicability’ question. Because, if there is no law, or if ‘the law’ applies only to a limited Jewish minority, then how can the ‘**all have sinned**’ statement be true?

If the Law was really and truly ‘done away’, it wouldn’t be possible to ever break it anymore! At least, not with any justifiable consequence. How could a Just God hold someone accountable, to the point of **eternal condemnation**, for breaking a Law that no longer was in effect?

If it’s a ‘Jewish’ Law, applicable only to a limited ethnicity, then how do **all** others become ‘sinners’? If a Gentile should violate Jewish Law, would he become a sinner, or is there some other means by which he attains that condition?

In a world in which the Law doesn’t exist, or has no applicability, what does a person need to do in order to become a sinner? Obviously, there is a fundamental oversight in these anti-law positions. Doing away with the Law would make it effectively impossible to sin! In order for it to BE possible, **another** Law would have to have been put in its place, thus making all of the ‘law’ comments we find in the New Testament applicable to that replacement Law! But, no-one seems to represent THAT position, as no one ever makes the distinction that any **different Law** is the subject of New Testament law-related comments.

But if the Law was in fact ‘done away’, then all would likely agree that it happened ‘*on the cross*’! That would mean it was in effect before the cross, but not after. That being the case, the vast majority were born in an era when it had already become ‘*abolished*’. IF we were born without the law (and naturally adversarial to it⁶) why then do we need to become ‘converted’ in order to have it officially lifted off us, when it was long gone / ‘done away’ (*‘nailed to His cross’*) before we were ever born!?

The fact that religionists need to revert to obscure narratives, particularly one that refers to something else, to draw their conclusion of law-abrogation, suggests their premise is bogus! Colossians 2 refers to ‘humanly derived commandments’, not the Laws of God. See for instance verses 21 thru 23, “*Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from **the rudiments of the world**, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to **ordinances**, 21: (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22: Which all are to perish with the using;) after the **commandments and doctrines of men**? 23: Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.* Had main stream religion honestly sought the true subject context of this chapter, we’d have a very different conclusion on their part!

⁶ Romans 8:4-7 “*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because **the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.***”

What we find among anti-law advocates is a rather underdone and poorly reasoned premise. We have on one hand the allegation that ‘*the law is all done away*’. But then, we hear these same people insist that the law remains incumbent, just upon the Jews. Well, how can that be if the law no longer exists? Then the capstone on this unstable pile of rocks is that ‘we come out from *under the law*’ when we accept Christ’s Sacrifice! Well, if Christ truly ‘*did away with the Law*’, how could it still be ‘*over us*’ until such time as we become ‘in Christ’? This area of discussion obviously needs serious re-definition.

We are NOT Under the Law

Another wonderfully mis-represented passage is the one found in Romans 6:14. “*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* 15: *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.* 16: *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* 17: *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* 18: *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*” The essential question here is that IF the Law is ‘done away’, how is it possible to sin? How could sin continue to have dominion over those **not** ‘under grace’ if the Law had been abolished?

(This particular passage warrants further explanation, and is addressed specifically in another article titled: “*We Are NOT ‘Under the Law’*.” In that separate article, that phrase he uses is closely and logically examined. Paul did not say, nor did he mean what he is represented to have meant! What so many fail to recognize and acknowledge is that Romans 6:23 is also a ‘law’! It’s called the ‘law of sin and death’! “*The wages of sin is death*”, paraphrased from the Old Testament, which affirms the same, “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*” Eze. 18:4)

“Keep My Commandments”

Much can be discerned regarding the matter of the Law from other passages. Not the least of which is Jesus’ admonition: “*If you love me, keep my commandments.*” Even more certain is the reiteration

of the Old Testament prophecy regarding the New Covenant found in Jeremiah 31 and repeated verbatim in Hebrews 8. “*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*” How could God’s Laws be put into our hearts and minds if they were abolished just before the New Covenant was to be instituted?

Paul’s True Position

Many note the several places where Paul seems very negative toward the Law, failing to read carefully enough to recognize his ultimate point. Where Paul is negative as to the Law’s effectiveness, it is always in the context of ‘*Justification*’. In other words, when a worshipper is of the opinion that he can attain remission of sins by means of ‘law-keeping’, he refutes that, as it should be! Law-keeping isn’t the **means** of our salvation, but it is the result of or the proper **response** to it! That’s the point of Romans 6 seen in the column to the left. The scriptures given below take us thru a logical progression of justification by faith, but which effects a law-compliant way of life!

Galatians 2:16-17 “*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 ⁷ Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* 17: ***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.***” (The subject is attaining justification!)

Romans 3:28-31 “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* 29: *Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:* 30: *Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.* 31: *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.* How could ones’ faith establish a thing that’s ‘all done away’?

⁷ It is important to distinguish between faith IN Christ and the faith OF Christ. See my article: “*From faith to Faith*”.

Romans 7:8-25 “*But sin, taking occasion **by the commandment**, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9: For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Here Paul is making the point that when the Law came to his full awareness, he finally saw his hopeless condition. That awareness came to him as he was becoming converted. It didn’t involve throwing off the Law, but more fully internalizing it! 10: “*And the **commandment, which was ordained to life**, I found to be unto death. 11: For sin, taking occasion **by the commandment**, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12: Wherefore **the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.** 13: 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. 14: For we know that **the law is spiritual**: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15: For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16: If then I do that which I would not, **I consent unto the law that it is good.** 17: Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19: For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20: Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For **I delight in the law of God after the inward man**: 23: But I see **another law** in my members, warring against **the law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to **the law of sin** which is in my members. 24: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then **with the mind I myself serve the law of God**; but with the flesh **the law of sin.***

We see another law, referred to elsewhere as ‘the law of sin and death’, which is basically the fact that the breaking of the commandments warrants the penalty of spiritual death! But, how could Paul ‘serve’ the law of God if it is abolished? Was it only because he was an ex-religious-Jew?

1st John 3:1-3 “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called **the sons of God**: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3: And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth himself, even as he is pure.**” Using what standard does one ‘purify himself’?*

Isaiah 8:13-20 describes how **the law** will become applied in the future, in a way the sinful nation had not achieved. “*Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14: And **he** shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence ⁸ to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15: And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. (Compare Daniel 11:35) 16: Bind up the testimony, seal ⁹ **the law among my disciples.** 17: And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. 18: Behold, I and **the children whom the LORD hath given me** are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. 19: And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? 20: **To the law and to the testimony**: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. How do modern religionists speak in regard to the law?*

Romans 3:1-3 “*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2: Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed **the oracles of God.** 3: For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith*

⁸ Romans 9:31-33 This line obviously referring to Christ. The Apostle Paul recognized the application of this prophecy, that it regarded Israel’s failure to achieve righteousness by means of their lawkeeping efforts. The Law wasn’t created for that purpose!

⁹ **Seal** is Strong’s #2856, ‘ghah-tham’, used in two other places: Est. 8:8 and Dan. 12:4. Seal in the sense of putting a stamp of finality or enduring permanency onto something. Not a dissimilar word to Paul’s use of ‘establish’ in Romans 3:31.

of God without effect? 4: God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. 5: But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) 6: God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

This same question was asked earlier. If the standard of definition of righteousness was ‘done away’, then on the basis of what can God rightfully judge the world? The point in verse 5 is interesting, “*But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?*” In effect, he’s asking how could God ‘justify’ either of two different individuals having identical (law-disregarding) lifestyles, with one being accounted as ‘saved’ and the other one not, and God remain righteous Himself? If God were to ‘justify’ one law-breaker while taking vengeance upon another law-breaker, how can that be regarded as ‘righteous’ on His part? (That’s why Paul explained his reasoning by saying, “*I speak as a man*”.) The point here being, that a ‘justified’ person is not a willful law-breaker! (recognizing, of course, that it is Christ living in us which produces effective compliance.) Thus, the Law could not be ‘all done away’!

We are His Workmanship

Where they’ve made their mistake is to assume that since keeping the law doesn’t remove sin, it has no practical purpose, and needs to be done away with. The law which originally was ‘*ordained to life*’ as Paul admits in Romans 7:10 (above) remains the guideline for conduct. Ephesians 2:8-10 explains it so well. Fundamentalists are extremely familiar with verses 8 & 9, but never seem to find the rest of that sentence particularly noteworthy! It continues: “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” That which was ‘before ordained’ is that code (the commandments) which were ‘ordained to life’!

Perhaps we should pause here to make the point that the New Testament speaks of more than one thing when referring to ‘the law’. There is the Law of God, there are the things God ADDED because

of unbelief, (ritual practices) and there are the legal additions which **men** created to illustrate or to somehow enhance **their** ‘righteousness’ as they saw it! Then there is the ‘law of sin and death’, so clearly stated in Romans 6:23. We should take care to distinguish the differences. The frustrating thing is that fundamentalists, so called, are so eager to discredit and abolish the Law from Christian practice, that they’ve blinded themselves to these obvious distinctions!

Reviewing briefly those things we’ve considered here, we see:

- We are justified by faith,
- That Faith is the faith OF Christ,
- Faith establishes the law, (seals it among His disciples),
- If there is no law, there is no transgression!
- The law imparts in us the consciousness of sin,
- The law is holy, (as it’s Spiritual),
- The commandment is holy, just and good,
- We are called upon to serve the law of God,
- There is another law which demands our death,
- Sons of God anticipate (hope for) glorification,
- Those who have this hope purify themselves,
- The premise that we can effect remission of sins (justification) by lawkeeping trips some people up,
- The idea that we should still keep the law (as an appropriate response to grace) trips up others,
- The law was ordained of God for Life,
- The law’s existence is essential as the basis of God’s just and righteous judgment,
- True ministers of God represent both Testaments (the law and the testimony) fully and accurately,

In the very end-time we have a potent witness of the orientation on the part of God’s True Saints on this matter. “*And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*” (Rev. 12: 17. The same ‘law and testimony’ as referred to in Isaiah 8:20) Revelation 22:14 concludes with the invitation of God to Life in His Kingdom with this: “*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*”

Where does that leave the adamant antinomian? 📖