

Commentary — From the Margins *Context Privileged*

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On a recently aired episode of The Outdoor Channel's *Gold Fever* show, host Tom Massey, with straight face, asked, "Why did the chicken cross the road? ... To prove to the possum that it could be done." He then went on to speak of the advantages of gold prospecting getting a person into the outdoors.

Massey's humor required context-specific knowledge to appreciate: the highways and byways of rural America are littered with the bodies of possums and raccoons that have been hit by cars and pickups, with the carnage of dead animals being great because vehicular traffic is presently the only population control being applied to these non-game animals that are not valued for their pelts or their flesh. People are not hunting and trapping—this is not an endorsement for eating unclean animals—as earlier generations did. Because of increased habitat and better game management, the whitetail deer population has made a strong comeback, as have turkeys. When moneys are spent to go hunting, sportsmen pursue those animals that are considered elite, leaving the lowly possum that once fed "the common man" (used both theologically and culturally) in rural America to live and breed until killed while attempting to cross a roadway. It was *common* knowledge when I grew up that if a person were to eat a raccoon or a possum, the person had to par-boil the carcass to get rid of fat before the animal was cooked. However, I have never eaten a possum, and apparently most of my Baby-Boom generation hasn't.

But it isn't possums that I want to address: it is the mending of context to privileged knowledge that, in the cited example, permits the rural traveler to visually see the dead possums that makes alive the risk a possum takes when venturing onto asphalt. Without this privileged knowledge ("privileged" because not everyone has it), Massey's remark seems a non-sequitor.

The same pertains to Christianity—

It is commonly taught and widely accepted that Christians are under the New Covenant that does not have the sins of Christians being remembered, that the first covenant ended at Calvary. But when asked, none of these Christians can identify the first covenant. They do not know of the Moab covenant made with the children of Israel; nor do they know that there is a second Sinai covenant. They want Christianity to be simple; they want salvation to be simple; they certainly don't want their religion to be as complex as how do human beings address the problem of over-population of non-game animals. They want a

simple, *If I live a good life I will go to heaven when I die.* Unfortunately, the world is not that simple, for Paul writes,

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.* For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:12–16 emphasis added)

Elsewhere Paul writes,

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. / But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Gal 2:15–21)

And

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For *apart from the law, sin lies dead.* I was once alive apart from the law, but *when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.* The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. *So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.* / Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For *I do not understand my own actions.*

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now *if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.* (Rom 7:7–20 emphasis added)

According to the Apostle Paul, is Christianity simple? If the person who is not under the law sins (i.e., transgresses the law — from 1 John 3:4), this person who does not have sin counted against the person (Rom 5:13) will perish according to Paul's gospel. The fact that sin is not counted against the person doesn't help the person: the sinner will still perish! Only if the person not under the law does by nature what the law requires will this person not perish; thus the person without the law operates in this world as a blind man [or woman]. This person is required to do what the law requires without knowing what it is that the law requires if this person is not to perish. Is that not complicated? Yet it is simple: the person only has to do by faith and by nature what the law requires, for it is not the hearer of the law who will be justified but the doer—but it isn't the works of the law that justifies the person; it is the person's willingness by faith to do what the law requires when neither sin nor the law has dominion over the person.

The law (i.e., the commandments spoken at Sinai) made sin alive so that sin might slay the entirety of the nation that left Egypt, from Aaron down to the lowest of the common men who had joined with Israel as the mixed multitude. Moses who was of Israel but who had been separated from Israel since he was weaned off milk was not with Israel for forty days after sin was made alive. Nor was Joshua, who was halfway up the mountain. But the people who would not listen to the Lord when they were in Egypt (Ezek 20:8) were spiritually slain when sin was made alive:

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.” And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. (Ex 32:1–6)

The people that had promised forty days earlier to keep the commandments and the rules and to do all that the Lord had said to Moses broke the foremost of the commandments: they made for themselves another god other than the Lord, a god of gold, the yellow color of the Adversary in this era. A god that was a calf, an image of the people—when King Nebuchadnezzar had his human nature taken from him for seven years, he was given the mind of an ox, a castrated calf, for he served as the shadow and type of the spiritual king of Babylon (Isa 14:4), the fallen Day Star, Lucifer. When the people of Israel at Sinai made for themselves another god, they returned to worshiping the Adversary.

But Christianity isn't complicated: no Christian will be justified by the works of the law, but it is the doer of the law who will be justified. The law that is holy makes sin alive so that sin can slay the person who is under the law, but sin also slays the person who isn't under the law.

Come on, grow up, Christianity is simple: the Christian must do what the Christian knows is right in every situation while continuing to grow in grace and knowledge. But the Christian will not do what the Christian knows is right, and indeed, cannot do what the Christian knows is right in every situation for sin continues to dwell in the fleshly members of disciples. And why sin continues to dwell in fleshly members of Christians is a mystery Paul, by his own admission, did not understand ... the privileged knowledge needed to put the indwelling of sin and death into context is that Christians are not yet under the New Covenant, but remain under the first covenant made on the day when the Lord led the fathers of Israel out from Egypt. This first covenant, the Passover covenant, was modified twice at Sinai (Ex chap 20–24 & 34), then again on the plains of Moab (Deut chap 29–32), then again by Joshua (chap 24), and finally by Christ Jesus. It will be replaced by the New Covenant that has been foreknown since the days of the Major Prophets, but it wasn't implemented at Calvary and it won't be implemented for as long as sin and death continue to dwell in the fleshly members of Christians.

There will be a Second Passover liberation of Israel, now the nation that is circumcised of heart, that was foreshadowed by the Passover liberation of the physically circumcised nation from physical slavery to a physical king/Pharaoh. The Christian Church will be filled with spirit so that every Christian no longer has any indwelling sin or death at a second Passover near in time: the Body of the Son of Man will be disrobed or stripped of grace because grace will not be needed. Christianity will then be truly simple; for the law [Torah] will be written on hearts and placed in minds so that every Christian *Knows the Lord*, regardless of present brand name or flavor. And this liberation of Christendom from indwelling sin and death must necessary precede the Rebellion of Israel in the great falling away when the man of perdition is revealed (2 Thess 2:3).

When Christians are liberated from indwelling sin and death, every Christian will know what the law is, and will have the ability to keep the commandments. But the Christian must still exercise faith, for the Christian must believe what is inside him or herself and not what the Christian has “always” known about Christ—

That is simple enough, isn't it? Believe God, or believe man and what man has said about God. The choice is simple, and prophecy records that most every Christian will make the wrong choice for Christians do not have the privileged knowledge necessary to put their liberation from indwelling sin into context. They will spiritually be as possums are on the rural highways and byways of America.

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