

Commentary — From the Margins *A Contrary Gospel*

Late at night, driving along British Columbia's Peace River near Attachie, a moose trotted onto the paved road and away from the vehicle I was driving. Seeing the moose in the headlights, my daughter's twenty-one pound Maine Coon cat jumped onto the dash, apparently ready to pounce on the moose, its gait recognizable to the cat as the gait of a prey animal. Distance and darkness caused the cat to lose size perspective—at seventy-five yards the moose appeared to the cat no larger than a mouse in pouncing distance. Only when the car approached to within a dozen or so yards of the moose did the cat finally lose interest in tackling the full-grown cow.

Historic distance has distorted the doubly accursed gospel preached to the saints in Galatia, a gospel preached by someone coming with the authority of the headquarters Church at Jerusalem. From the perspective of the affected saints, the person coming from Jerusalem carried equal or greater credibility than did the Apostle Paul, who had visited or helped establish the churches in what would today be modern Turkey. From the distance of two millennia, the Apostle Paul would seem to have the authority to command the saints to stop the nonsense of physically circumcising themselves. But the person who had come from Jerusalem had Scripture on his side: *El Shaddai* [God Almighty] told Abraham. “So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant” (Gen 17:13-14). An everlasting covenant would seem to mean **everlasting**, but the Apostle Paul said not so. And therein lies the central dispute of the 1st-Century Church. The Apostle Paul said that because of “a revelation” (Gal 2:2) that he had, an everlasting covenant had been abolished. An everlasting passage of Scripture no longer pertained to Christians. Obviously, those of the circumcision faction—an influential part of the Church located at Jerusalem—didn't recognize Paul's revelation as genuine. They worked as hard as they could to undo the damage Paul initiated wherever he preached.

The circumcision faction consisted of sincere disciples. Sincere but wrong. They wrote letters that didn't survive; they preached sermons that are not remembered; for history has judged Paul's revelation genuine. History, however, doesn't well explain why the circumcision faction was wrong.

A physically circumcised Israelite in the flesh, living in a house in Egypt or in a tent in the Wilderness of Sin, together (man and house) foreshadow the spiritually circumcised Israelite, born-from-above, living in a tabernacle of flesh. Spiritual circumcision is a euphemistic expression for having the law of God written on one's heart and mind through receipt of the Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*]. A male Hebrew infant between one and seven days of age

was, in his flesh, like a male infant of any other nation. For one week, a Hebrew infant was not under the covenant made in its flesh. Likewise, human beings as sons or daughters of the first Eve are alike until those who are drawn by the Father (John 6:44) and chosen by Christ Jesus (John 15:16) receive birth-from-above through receipt of the Holy Spirit (a doctrine of election). Those human beings that are drawn and chosen in this present age are involuntarily made part of the firstfruits; i.e., part of early barley harvest. The remainder of humanity will become part of the later wheat harvest, gathered into the barns of God during the great White Throne Judgment. Again, spiritual circumcision comes with receipt of the Holy Spirit [*Pneuma 'Agion*]. Thus, all human beings can be likened to Hebrew male infants in their first week of life, for God is not a respecter of persons, offering salvation to one person and not to another. Every person will receive birth-from-above, either while still alive in this age, or after death (the reality of the resurrection) in the great White Throne Judgment. Physical circumcision of the Hebrew male on the eighth day now equates directly to resurrection from death on the spiritual eighth day. Therefore, baptism of those human beings that have been drawn and chosen to become part of the early barley harvest equates to actual death. Spiritual circumcision occurs to these individuals with inclusion into the household of God, upon whom judgment has come (1 Pet 4:17).

With physical circumcision came judgment—and a whole nation was condemned to death, for no one is justified by works under the law (Gal 2:16). Yet this physical nation had a law that if pursued by faith would have led to righteousness (Rom 9:31). And therein is the stickler. Under the second covenant mediated by Moses (Deu 29:1), if the circumcised-in-the-flesh nation when in a far land remembered God and returned to obeying His voice with all of the nation's heart and mind, a national act of faith, God would bring the nation again to Judea and would give the nation circumcised hearts and minds (Deu 30:1-6). This is the righteousness that comes by faith, which the Apostle Paul cites (Rom 10:6-8). This promise of spiritual circumcision was why the lawyer (Luke 10:25) and the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18) ask Jesus what they must do to receive everlasting life. Both knew that eternal life was possible and was promised. But within the nation where everyone from their youth kept the commandments through the obligation of circumcision, no faith entered into keeping the law. Thus, no one truly kept the law (John 7:19).

When the lawyer asked Jesus what he must do to receive everlasting life, Jesus asks the lawyer, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (Luke 10:26) The lawyer replies, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all you mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (*v.* 27). Jesus tells the lawyer that he had answered correctly as to what he must do to receive eternal life—receiving eternal life was just this simple. This is the law that if pursued by faith will lead to eternal life, and the lawyer knew the path he must travel. But the lawyer had no love for his neighbor; he did not want to love just anyone as his neighbor. And without

loving his neighbor, the lawyer really didn't love God. So the lawyer had the right words, but had no love.

The young ruler didn't want to give his wealth to the poor and by faith follow Jesus, whereas the disciples, when Jesus asked them to follow Him, by faith left their nets and established lives and followed. Thus, spiritual circumcision was offered to the physical descendants of Abraham through a law that if pursued by faith and with love would have lead to everlasting life. King David received this promise of life. So too did other men and women of old, who, by faith left their physical lives behind them to follow God, going wherever He sent them, doing whatever He directed them. They received the Breath of God, and upon them was their judgment.

With spiritual circumcision through birth-from-above comes judgment. Not judgment of the flesh, but of the new creature born of Spirit into the tabernacle of the old man. And the same criteria for judgment applies: by faith, the born anew disciple must mentally return to God, thereby leaving behind the distant land into which he was born. This disciple must mentally journey to spiritual Judea where he will follow Christ Jesus just as the Twelve physically followed Jesus. This disciple will live as a spiritual Judean, meaning that this son of God will keep the laws of God that have been written on his heart and mind. The lawyer answered Jesus correctly—the disciple will love God with all his heart and mind and strength, and will love his neighbor as himself. The disciple will keep the commandments of God, which are no longer outside the disciple in a book or inscribed on tablets of stone, but are inside the tabernacle of flesh.

A physically circumcised Israelite in the temple where the commandments of God were kept on two inscribed tablets of stone becomes the visible representation of the invisible spiritually circumcised son of God, born of spirit, dwelling in the tabernacle of flesh which has the laws of God written on the heart and in the mind of this quickened earthen jar. This analogy was one that the Apostle Paul well understood. But this analogy has become muddled by history.

Moving from physical to spiritual, and from the visible creation to the invisible creation, the physically circumcised Israelite equates to the self-aware presence that is the Apostle Paul's new creature. The house in Egypt in which this Israelite lived equates to the fleshly body in which the new creature, a son of God, temporarily dwells. And it matters not a whit if the house is red, or brown, or white, or has inside plumbing, or outside plumbing, or if the outside plumbing has been trimmed back. It makes no difference if the house is owned free and clear, or if there is a mortgage on the house. Except as the house inconveniences the son of God, the house in which a son of God dwells is meaningless. And this analogy was what the Apostle Paul struggled to explain in his letters, and what the circumcision faction refused to believe. After all, the circumcision faction had Scripture on its side, for Paul's epistles were not then canonized.

The two-house doctrine held by the Churches of God and by the Christian Identity Movement descends from the teaching of the circumcision faction,

which would assign spiritual meaning to the house or tabernacle in which the born-from-above son of God dwells. This errant doctrine holds that if the house or tabernacle in which a son of God dwells does not descend directly from the patriarch Abraham's house, this son of God is a bastard. This error also holds that the plumbing of the house determines whether this son of God can speak the words of his Father. And those disciples who today teach this error will not be remembered. They question who their neighbor is, just as the lawyer asked Jesus who his neighbor was (Luke 10:29). They can answer the question about what does the law say, but they answer without love and without faith.

The journey of every spiritually circumcised Israelite is from sin [Egypt] to life [Jerusalem]. The crucified old self will die along the way because of unbelief that became disobedience. The son of God born into the same tabernacle of flesh will complete the journey and by faith will live as a Judean, or this son of God, upon whom judgment has come, will return to lawlessness and die in the wilderness of sin. This son of God has no other choice but life or death. And this death isn't the death of the tabernacle, which is assured. Rather, this death will be of the born-from-above son of God, who didn't love righteousness enough to walk uprightly before God. This death will be the second death, from which there will be no resurrection.

The house or tabernacle in which every person lives, whether already born of Spirit or still awaiting birth-from-above, is subject to decay and death. Spiritually, these houses are earthenware jars. Some are created for honor, thus receiving the birth of a son of God prior to the tabernacle's decay and destruction. Some are created to decay before the son of God to be born-from-above receives birth in the great White Throne Resurrection, where judgment will be received for those things done in the flesh. Therefore, refusing to honor an earthenware jar that the Father has honored places a disciple at odds with the Father and the Son. The two-house doctrine refuses honor to earthenware jars that the Father has drawn from the world. Those who hold this two-house doctrine would deny sons of God entrance into the kingdom of heaven; therefore, they will be denied entrance.

The two-house doctrine is an elevation of racism that has no place in the Churches of God. Although it has been widely accepted and is the basis for the prevailing understanding of prophecy, the doctrine is spiritually hideous. The Apostle Paul doubly cursed the gospel of the circumcision faction. Their doubly accursed gospel includes all forms of the modern two-house doctrine, which, as with physical circumcision, has scriptural support. But the doctrine condemns those who hold it, for holding the doctrine is *prima facie* evidence of questioning who is one's neighbor. Holding the doctrine is sufficient evidence of not loving one's neighbor to condemn the person under the law.

While the two-house doctrine effectively bars disciples from understanding biblical prophecy, the doctrine promotes an elitism based upon the flesh that stands opposed to the spiritual precedent of Jesus washing the feet of Judas Iscariot shortly before being betrayed by Judas. The two-house message is

entirely based upon the origin of the flesh. Those disciples who teach this message transform light into darkness.

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