

The Lost Generation:
The Error that Slays the Second Generation

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At the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) a resolution to the early Church's second serious conflict was thrashed out with a logic that has since eluded theologians of all traditions. The conflict revolved around the importance of the flesh: believers who were previously Pharisees contended that a Gentile convert must first become a physical Israelite before the person could become a spiritual Israelite, that physical circumcision must necessarily precede spiritual circumcision. (The reverse of this order is presently taught by some Sacred Names fellowships; i.e., physical circumcision must follow spiritual circumcision if the disciple is to take the Passover Sacraments with the fellowship.) Paul and Barnabas opposed the former Pharisees in "no small dissension" (v. 2). For Paul and Barnabas, any return to physical circumcision was, in this age from cup to cup (Matt 26:27-29), a serious doctrinal error, and confirmation that these former Pharisees never understood what circumcision represented. The former Pharisees would have argued that "No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary" (Ezek 44:9); so the former Pharisees would seem to have had Scripture on their side. Paul's epistles were not then written, let alone considered canonical. His revelation, the basis for his Aristotelian argument against circumcision in chapters 1 & 2 of his epistle to the Galatians, was not then given the authority of Scripture. Thus, Paul and Barnabas could only argue precedent, which is the direction the Council proceeded when Peter stood up and said, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe ... and [God] made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:7, 9).

What the former Pharisees sought from this Council was a decree requiring Gentiles disciples to be physically circumcised and ordered to keep the Law of Moses, which isn't one covenant but everything written by Moses; i.e., the *Torah*. And here is where the problem begins: the Lord made three apparent covenants with Noah, three with Abraham, one with Ishmael, at least one with Isaac, at least one with Jacob, and three with the nation of Israel, plus others outside of the usual discussion of the Law of Moses. Some of these covenants were ratified by blood. One with Noah was ratified with the rainbow. And the last covenant Moses mediated with the mixed circumcised and uncircumcised nation of Israel (Deu 29:1) was ratified with a song (Deu chap 32).

The former Pharisees didn't realize that copies of heavenly things are purified by blood, but the heavenly things themselves are purified by better sacrifices (Heb 9:23) which include bows in the sky and songs. Thus, covenants ratified by the shedding of blood are copies of heavenly covenants. There will not be another global flood, for this covenant made with Noah was not ratified by blood but by the setting of a bow in the sky. However, the covenant made at Sinai when Moses received the *Decalogue* inscribed on two tablets of stone was ratified by blood (Ex 24:5-8); hence, this Sinai covenant was *from its inception* scheduled to be abolished and replaced by a covenant that would have the laws of God written on two tablets of flesh, the heart and mind of disciples. Likewise, the covenant by which Abraham was made the father of many nations (Gen chap 17) was ratified by physical

circumcision, which requires the shedding of a few drops of blood. This, then, is a covenant that is a copy of a heavenly thing: spiritual circumcision. The heavenly thing is the *cleansing of the heart by faith*. Therefore, the cutting away of the foreskin is a shadow and type of spiritual circumcision, which is promised to Israel by the Moab covenant (Deu 30:6). But receiving this spiritual circumcision requires an action of faith (*vv.* 1-2).

Without faith, no one can please God, for the actions of humankind at their best are as bloody rags to God, the rags used to catch unfulfilled life. Israel was given a law that if pursued by faith would have led to righteousness (Rom 9:31-32), but Israel failed to reach that law or covenant, for the nation pursued it through the works of their hands. The lawyers of the nation knew what this law was (Luke 10:25-28), so it wasn't as if the law were hidden from the nation. But the fault was in the people (Heb 8:9), a fault of which God was aware when the Sinai covenant was ratified by blood. Again, the Sinai covenant was ratified to be abolished, for a covenant extends from *cutting* to *cutting*. It was established with blood and it would end with blood after the Second Covenant was finally implemented. The Sinai covenant was established as a rag used to catch a promise that would be sloughed away.

The Moab covenant was ratified by a song, and it is in this covenant where Moses stands as Israel's accuser for all time (*cf.* John 5:45; Deu 31:26-27). It is this covenant that would seem to have been given to Israel when the nation left Egypt, for during the years that Israel wandered in the wilderness, the nation's clothes did not wear out nor did the sandals wear off the nation's feet (Deu 29:5). Although the nation brought their kneading troughs out of Egypt before the dough was leavened, the nation didn't eat bread during the forty years of wandering (*v.* 6), nor did the nation drink wine or strong drink. Again, the forty years were as forty days (*cf.* Acts 1:3; Deu 1:3 & Deu 5:2-3). And here is a mystery of God revealed: the old self [Paul's *old man*] is to die between when the Father draws the person from the world (John 6:44, 65) and when the New Covenant is implemented, for the old self cannot enter into God's rest because of its unbelief (*cf.* Num chap 14; Heb 3:16-4:11). As long as the old self lives, the New Covenant with its promise of spiritual circumcision remains a promise in the future. Understand the significance of this, for every person's day of salvation begins not with baptism of the flesh, when the person comes under judgment, but when the person cleanses his or her heart through faith. All of Israel was baptized into Moses when the nation passed through (1) the sea and was (2) under the cloud (two aspects are involved in baptism, which is why Paul rebaptized disciples who were only baptized into repentance — Acts 19:1-6). But the fathers of the nation—the old selves of disciples—would not enter into God's rest *while the promise of entering still stood* (*cf.* Heb 4:1; Num 14:1-4, 40-41); therefore, they all died in the wilderness of Sin/Zin, unable to enter into God's rest. Literally, the promise of entering stood on the day the spies returned. The next day was too late. The time for making the decision to enter was brief, one day [one night, actually] in forty years. And for the nation that left Egypt, that one day was the nation's day of salvation.

Baptized disciples who do not enter into God's rest as Joshua and Caleb did, or as new selves born into the tents of the old selves will perish in unbelief—and the new selves must cleanse their hearts with faith before receiving spiritual circumcision. The baptism of a disciple, directly analogous to Israel crossing the Sea of Reeds, is not enough of itself for a disciple to enter into God's rest. Baptism must be accompanied by, or preceded by spiritual birth, for spiritual birth and baptism are visibly foreshadowed by human birth and physical circumcision (a making naked of the Israelite before God). Then following baptism and spiritual birth, the disciple must by faith cleanse the heart, with the faith necessary to

cleansed the heart being of the quality displayed by the patriarch Abraham. For in Paul's treatise to the converts at Rome, Paul writes that an Israelite is not one outwardly through circumcision made with hands, but one inwardly through circumcision by the Spirit (Rom 2:28-29), that not all of Israel belongs to Israel (Rom 9:6). It is this cleansing of the heart by faith that works to spiritually circumcise the heart.

Now, back to what Peter said: *God has made no distinction between natural Israel and Gentile converts, having cleansed the hearts of those Gentile converts by faith.* Receiving a circumcised heart and mind requires faith of the magnitude Abraham displayed when leaving kith and kin and journeying to Canaan where he sought a city whose builder and designer was the Lord (Heb 11:8-10). A circumcised heart doesn't require physical circumcision, or sidelocks, or tassels, or any physical thing to remind the person of the Commandments, for the laws of God are written on the heart and placed in the mind through receipt of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't require relocating home and business to physical Jerusalem. The ruling of the Jerusalem Council was simplified in the letter sent out:

The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Celicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. (Acts 15:23-29)

What degree of faith is necessary for a Greek living as a Greek to turn to God, profess that Jesus is Lord, and cease living as a Greek, cease eating blood, cease eating meats that were strangled so as to retain the blood, cease eating meats offered to idols, cease frequenting prostitutes, and begin entering the synagogue on the Sabbath day to hear Moses read? Is not the above degree of faith comparable to the faith of Abraham who left home and kin to journey to Canaan, the Promised Land, the visible representation of God's rest? It is, isn't it? And since it is, then do these Greek converts need to do anything more to have their hearts cleansed by faith? They don't, do they?

What about the children of these Gentiles? They will grow up not eating blood or meats strangled or offered to idols, and will grow up in a household shunning all forms of sexual immorality. What degree of faith is required of them to continue doing what they grew up doing? Not much? That is correct. If a child grows to maturity in an environment where the laws of God are kept, the child will keep these laws as part of the expectation of the household. Solomon wrote, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). Both Lenin and the Roman Church have similar sayings.

It takes considerable faith to leave kith and kin and the practices of the household in which a child grew to maturity. Therefore, no great amount of faith is required to continue doing what the person has always done—and this includes keeping the commandments of God as well as keeping the limited requirements of the Jerusalem Council ... but the limited

requirements of the Council were addressed to a specific audience as a solution to a specific problem, just as the ordination of deacons to serve the neglected Hellenists widows was the solution to the first serious conflict the Church addressed (Acts 6:1-6). There will be no *next generation* like the generation of the Gentile households that first professed that Jesus is Lord. The next generation will not be without knowledge of Jesus. The next generation will not grow up eating blood and visiting prostitutes (hopefully, the next generation won't). So what is an appropriate action of faith—an act that will cleanse hearts—for the first generation of Gentile converts will not have been an appropriate action of faith for the next generation. Rather, the second generation of disciple must go beyond the first generation in deeds; for faith of a comparable quality to that of the first generation's must be displayed by this second generation. Doing what the first generation did is not enough, for the second generation does not begin where the first generation began. Therefore, before the hearts of the second generation will be cleansed by faith and spiritually circumcised, this second generation must display faith of the quality of the patriarch Abraham.

The above is a convoluted way of saying what Jesus told the rich young ruler:

And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not Steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Luke 18:18-22)

Keeping the commandments is not enough for the person who has grown up in a household or a culture keeping the commandments—no faith is necessary to continue keeping the commandments. For example, the person who has grown up in a household that kept the 7th-day Sabbath needs no faith to continue keeping this transitional representation of God's rest, but it requires the degree of faith that Abraham displayed for the person who has grown up in an 8th-day fellowship and has grown up eating vermin of all sorts to begin keeping the precepts of the laws of God. For the kith and kin of this second person will *pray for the immortal soul* of whom they believe has come under the spell of *legalism*, little realizing the difficulty of the mental journey this second person undertook. This second person journeyed from the figurative Wilderness of Paran (where the nation that left Egypt refused to enter God rest while the promise of entering stood) to the River Jordan, then crossed the Jordan through baptism, and instead of being physically circumcised as natural Israel was (Josh 5:2-7), this second person was spiritually circumcised through having the person's heart cleansed by faith.

What about the person who grew up keeping the precepts of the law?

Nothing done by the flesh or by a person who remains flesh is truly good—this is the reality of Jesus' question about why the young ruler called Him good. Jesus was without sin. If anyone could be called good, it was Jesus. So if being without sin [i.e., having perfectly kept the Commandments] could make a person a "good person," Jesus would have been *good*. But once born of Mary, Jesus was a man, tempted in all things as all men are. Only God is above temptation; only God is truly good, for only God is incapable of lawlessness. Therefore, for all who are of the household of God (1 Pet 4:17) every act of law-keeping is not an action that represents *goodness*, but an action that represents the expectation of the household. Keeping the Sabbath is the expectation of everyone in the household of Israel.

It is not an action that represents goodness, or a cleansing of the heart. Rather, selling all one has, giving the proceeds to the poor, and following Jesus are two actions that approximately correspond to faith Abraham displayed in leaving home and kin, journeying to Canaan, and believing God about an heir coming from between his loins.

The person who today mentally dwells in a Christian fellowship that has remained in spiritual Babylon [Judea is the geographical representation of God's rest as the Sabbath is the transition representation — *cf.* Ps 95-10-11; Heb 3:16-4:11] can, by faith, cleanse the person's heart by beginning to keep the precepts of the law (Rom 2:26), which will have the person keeping the Sabbath. But for the person who grew up in a spiritually circumcised Israelite's household, the person needs, by faith, to follow Jesus in a manner similar to how Timothy followed Paul before the person's faith will be counted as righteousness.

Faith is not of the flesh, so by extension, faith is not of this world but is a gift from God (Eph 2:8); thus, faith is not a result of works (*v.* 9). But without works, faith is dead rhetoric (Jas 2:17), nothing but hollow words that are so much wind blown slow. And since faith is not a *thing* made with the hands, a disciple's display of faith can truly please God, whereas everything made with the hands is as unfulfilled promises.

The relationship between dead faith and the living faith of Abraham that cleanses hearts—the faith of mid-1st Century Gentile converts that caused them to quit living as Greeks and begin living as Judeans—is what the Anabaptist remnant that left spiritual Babylon as a remnant of natural Israel left physical Babylon failed to understand. After seventy years, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, a remnant of Israel by the decree of Cyrus king of Persia (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3) journeyed across the plains and hills of what is now western Iraq, waded the River Jordan, and again entered the geographical representation of God's rest. Likewise, after twelve centuries [325 CE – 1525 CE], a remnant of spiritually circumcised Israel left spiritual Babylon and began a nearly five century trek back across the traditions of the early Church. And for men like Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, Georg Blaurock, the faith required for them to break with the Roman Church and with the fledgling Reformed Church was faith that would be counted to them as righteousness (regardless of their theology)—was faith akin to that of the patriarch Abraham, and was the degree of faith that cleanses hearts. The faith of a Menno Simmons was of the quality necessary to cleanse a heart, but the faith of a 7th or 8th or 9th generation Mennonite who has been reared in the traditions taught by Menno Simmons is not of the quality necessary to cleanse a heart, for this person needs to, as Mr. Raymond Dick did, spiritually leave kith and kin and mentally journey into keeping all of the precepts of the law, including the Sabbath commandment.

And when a son or a daughter of the disciple who by faith left his or her kith and kin and began to keep the precepts of the law comes to the parent to ask the same question that the rich young ruler asked Christ Jesus, the parent needs to give the same answer—then needs to bring to the young person's attention the Apostle Paul's instructions to Timothy before sending the young person forth into the world to take Christ to the last sheep of the house of Israel. For today's greatest mission field is within the 8th-day Church, that majority of spiritual Israel still in Babylon and still mired in lawlessness.

The top-down, centralized governmental structure of the derivative splinters of the former Radio Church of God effectively stymied personal evangelism and missionary activity and killed, or will kill the organization. These fellowships have, within their institutional patterns, the seeds of their own demise—as do fellowships like the Seventh Day Adventists. For within a few generations, few are left who have cleansed their hearts by

faith. The organization is spiritually dead. And today, such an organization is the Seventh-Day Baptists, which publicly acknowledges that the fellowship grows by familial association (i.e., the fellowship's growth comes from baptizing their own children).

The fellowship that will grow is the one which sends forth second generation disciples as missionaries for Christ Jesus, with each missionary teaching first generation converts to cleanse their hearts by faith. It does no good, say, for a Seventh-Day Baptist household to send forth missionaries who do not teach that the Sabbath is to be kept (i.e., to send their young people out as missionaries with 8th-day Baptists). Likewise, it will do no good for a United Church of God household to send forth missionaries who do not teach that all of the Sabbaths of God are to be kept.

Households of differing faiths cannot truly work together for they do not walk together before the Lord. Participation in a great ecumenical work will not produce the quality of faith necessary to cleanse hearts, for beliefs must be compromised so that all can get along—and a compromised belief is an erasing of faith.

But what, say, the Seventh-Day Baptist household, or the United Church of God household will discover in sending forth its young people is that in teaching Christ to Gentile converts, the young person will grow in grace and knowledge, and in experience in rightly dividing the Word of God. The young person will journey beyond where the household is presently theologically located to the horror of the household. This young person will journey closer to that heavenly city of Jerusalem where the temple of God is presently under construction. Therefore, perhaps intuitively recognizing that households such as the Seventh-Day Baptists or United Church of God will fail if their young people actually sell all they have and follow Christ Jesus, these organization place prohibitively restrictive barriers in front of their young people. These barriers are primarily intended to protect the organization—and in protecting the organization, the fellowship prevents its second [next] generation from cleaning hearts by faith, thereby assuring that the organization will disappear into the flotsam of history as spindrift along the lips of the spiritual River Jordan.

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