

Faith and Works

Luther's Distortion of Paul's Teaching

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Topics

I	Paul versus James	2
II	Luther's Distortion	4
III	Luther Denies Free Will	8
IV	Faith Working Through Love	10
V	First Commandment: Faith <u>not</u> Love	12
VI	The Works of the Law	14
VII	The Doctrine of Moral Helplessness	19
VIII	You Can't Keep the Law	23
IX	Total Depravity	25
X	Jesus Teaches the Opposite	27
XI	The Lease on the Promised Land	29
XII	Keeping the Law: Just Men and Women	32
XIII	Great Sinner Doctrine	35
XIV	God's Fellow Workers	40
	Appendix A Paul Teaches Good Works	45
	Appendix B Balthasar Hubmaier on Justification	48
	Appendix C Action and Passion	49

Summary:

This paper criticizes the doctrine of SAVED BY FAITH, NOT WORKS which originated with Martin Luther, which was promulgated by the Protestant Reformation generally, and which is still taught with varying emphasis by most Protestant denominations. I am going to argue that Luther's teaching was a serious distortion of what Saint Paul taught.

Context: I am not arguing the Catholic case versus this basic Protestant doctrine. Rather, I am arguing against it in the context of the attempt by Dispensationalist theology to correct Protestant theology on this point by the doctrine that there are **two different gospels**, one which requires works, and one which doesn't. This doctrine is not of course widely held in the mainstream Protestant tradition. And I don't agree with it either. But it makes a convincing case that **Jesus and James et al taught WORKS**. So, in trying to resolve a basic contradiction in Protestant theology created by the FAITH, NOT WORKS doctrine, it shows the consequences of that contradiction.

Sources: *LUTHER'S WORKS* show how he arrived at his teaching of FAITH, NOT WORKS. The most important of these are: *Freedom of a Christian* 1520 found in volume 31, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* found in volume 36, *Lectures on Galatians* 1535 and *Lectures on Galatians* 1519 found in volumes 26 & 27, and *Treatise on Good Works* 1520 found in volume 44. The treatise on *Bondage of the Will* in volume 33 shows the theology of moral helplessness which Luther got from Augustine, and which is the real foundation of the FAITH, NOT WORKS doctrine and its corollary *Passive Righteousness*. The same treatise sets forth the doctrine of *Sovereign Grace* or Irresistible Grace, which is the flip side of the denial of free will. The treatise *On the Jews and their Lies* 1543 in volume 47, and excerpts from other treatises reveal something important about Luther's personal character and suggest a basic spiritual reason for his vehement rejection of *Love God and love your neighbor* as central to the Christian faith.

Another primary source that I studied is the Battles edition of the 1536 version of John Calvin's *Institutes*. Calvin copied Luther's basic attitude as to the uselessness and the spiritual danger of attempting *GOOD WORKS*. A believer who takes John Calvin seriously might very well conclude that the wisest course is to shun *WORKS* entirely lest he offend God by his presumption.

My source for Dispensationalist theology is mainly Bob Enyart's book, *THE PLOT OF THE BIBLE*. I also read several pamphlets by Pastor Bob Hill of the Derby Bible Church, which make a good case that Augustine (and Calvin et al) derived the doctrine of the *Immutability of God* from *classic* (i.e. pagan) philosophy, not from the bible. And I have had some conversations with individuals who belong to this church. For the purposes of this paper I am making the assumption that the theology in Bob Enyart's book, the theology of Pastor Bob Hill of the Derby Bible Church, and the theology associated with the Dispensationalist movement are substantially the same. The Derby Bible Church is also a school of Dispensationalist theology and Pastor Hill endorses Mr. Enyart's book. I should make it clear that I have not made a careful comparison study of variations in Dispensationalist theology. My aim here is to argue with Luther's doctrines, so I am not going to dig into Dispensationalist theology except insofar as it serves that purpose.

I Paul versus James

Luther recognized that the teaching found in the epistle of James: *faith without works is dead* contradicts the *faith not works* doctrine that he found in Saint Paul. Luther resolved the contradiction by disparaging the epistle of James. It was an *epistle of straw* he said. It was not by an apostle. It should be *thrown into the Elbe River*. Later Reformers modified Luther's judgment on James and modern Protestantism has worked up various formulas to reconcile what Luther saw as the contradiction between Paul and James.

However, Dispensationalist doctrine agrees with Luther that the *faith and works* teaching of James is contrary to the *faith not works* doctrine of Paul. And then they go much, much further, not without some logic on their side. They argue that James and all of the original apostles (exclusive of Paul) taught a gospel of *faith and works* which is essentially different from the *faith not works* teaching of Paul. They argue that *faith and works* was the original teaching of Jesus himself as found in the gospels. But after the Jews were *cast out*, Paul began teaching a *gospel of grace* to the gentiles which is essentially different from the *gospel of the Kingdom* intended for the Jews. The *gospel of the Kingdom*, according to Dispensationalist doctrine, did require *works*. But Paul's *gospel of grace*--which has to do with the *Body of Christ* rather than the *Kingdom*--does not require any *works*.

In brief summary, this is the *Dispensationalist* theology, which Bob Enyart argues at length in his book *The Plot of the Bible*. And he makes a convincing case that Jesus Christ teaches the necessity of *works*--you had to do something to be saved. You had to do many things in fact. But then he argues that it was only the Jews who were required to do these things. We Gentiles, who have received Paul's *gospel of grace* don't have to do any of it. The *KEY VERSE*, which shows that there are **two different gospels** is Galatians 2.7: *gospel of the uncircumcision committed unto me . . . gospel of the circumcision unto Peter*. (See Chapter 4 page 29 of The Plot.)

On page 11 of Chapter 7 of his book, Mr. Enyart summarizes the *WORKS* teaching of Jesus: *So Christ taught that the Kingdom believer had to love his neighbor, forgive, bear good fruit, do the will of the Father, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, show mercy, endure until the end, be patient, fit and profitable in order to enter into the Kingdom. Whew ! When God gave to Paul the dispensation of grace for the Body of Christ, He gave a marvelous new thing to His newest followers.*

As indicated by the sigh of relief--*Whew !* -- we non Jews who have received Paul's *gospel of grace* are freed from the necessity of doing any of these *WORKS* which Jesus Christ commanded. According to this Dispensationalist doctrine, you can call yourself a *Christian* even while you disregard the plain teaching of Jesus Christ as found in the four gospels--*He's not talking to me.*

Most Protestant denominations do not of course subscribe to this extreme logic. But it does make explicit what is implicit in the *saved by faith not works* doctrine which is commonly held. It points up the serious moral danger of this doctrine. People are taught to believe that *I don't have to do anything to be saved*. God has saved me. That's it. I can't get to heaven by good works. My salvation is already assured. It would show a lack of faith if I did anything in respect to good works. Instead, with God's help, I will go out and make a million in real estate.

Luther himself used the phrase *Passive Righteousness* to describe his doctrine. And the attitude evoked by that phrase is commonly seen among evangelical believers. They rather turn up their noses at the strenuous good works of Mother Teresa and her *Missionaries of Charity* who are as it were trying to *work their way into heaven*. If these believers do engage in *good works* now and then, they do it as a hobby, not as something necessary to the Christian life. The gentleman land owner may do a little gardening now and then, if he feels like it, but his privileged position excuses him from getting out in the field and working up a sweat helping his laborers with the harvest (contra the hard-working farmer in 2nd Timothy 2.6). That is the attitude towards a Christian life of good works and personal sacrifices which tends to grow out of the *faith not works* doctrine.

Of course many Protestant churches have modified the extreme doctrines of the Reformers, and, even if the result is somewhat illogical, the effect is to move away from the worst consequences of Reformation doctrine. And individual believers often do not practice what they preach, for better and for worse. Those who insist upon *faith not works* are to be found helping their neighbors. Those who make the best argument in favor of *works* sometimes appear to feel that, once they have made the argument, nothing more is required of them.

But it is still the case that the *saved by faith not works* doctrine provides thousands of Christians with an excuse for not bothering with the works of mercy which Jesus commanded in Matthew 25.31-46. Instead of recognizing that you will be among the goats on Judgment Day, if you neglect to do what is enjoined by Matthew 25.35: *I was a stranger, and you took me in* (cf. also Romans 12.13, Isaiah 58.7) many Christians recognize no duty to the homeless except to call in on the talk show to help mock those who pretend to be helping them. The **Good Samaritan Reformed** passes by the fallen man with a shrug: *probably drunk*.

That is where the logic found in chapter 7 of Mr. Enyart's book is intellectually refreshing even while it is morally disheartening. He declares explicitly what is in fact the implicit doctrine of many believers, who defend their neglect of Christian good works and their apathy about living a Christian life by the famous doctrine which Martin Luther launched: we are *saved by faith not works*.

It is hardly possible to read the gospels conscientiously without seeing that **Jesus commands good works as essential to our salvation**. The description of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25.31-46 plainly states that a person who performs these works of mercy thereby achieves salvation, and that you risk damnation by not doing them. He tells us that the two great commandments to love God and to love our neighbor fulfill the law. He illustrates the essential commandment of the Christian life *love thy neighbor* with the story of the Good Samaritan, a man of doubtful faith who is contrasted with the orthodox priest and the orthodox Levite who pass by without helping. What is it that the Samaritan does, if it is not a *good work*? And Jesus tells this story in response to the question: *what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* (Luke 10.25) And compare Romans 2.7 **WELL DOING** leads to **ETERNAL LIFE**.

In Luke 10.25-28 Jesus says that *eternal life* is the reward for someone who Loves God and his neighbor. Then Jesus illustrates what is required with the story of a man who stops to help another man. This doctrine is the opposite of the doctrine, which the Reformation adopted, as I will show further on.

Can you **love your neighbor** without performing **acts of love** ? Do you love your wife, if you occasionally say *I love you* but never **DO** anything for her ? So aren't *acts of love* ABSOLUTELY REQUIRED? And aren't *acts of love* the same as *good works* and *well doing* ? These questions, which are ignored or fudged in most churches, are at least dealt with in the peculiar theology of the Dispensationalist tradition. So it points up a vital question of Christian faith and morals. If the Dispensationalists have the wrong answer, at least they are asking the right question.

What Did Paul Really Teach ?

Attempt at a Succinct Summary of what Paul was arguing to the *foolish Galatians*: Contrary to your teachers and contrary to what is written in the five books of Moses, you cannot get rid of your sins by having goats, bullocks and doves sacrificed in the Temple: *a man is not justified by the works of The Law*. (Galatians 2.16) The blood of Jesus Christ made a complete atonement for your sins. We no longer need the blood of the goat sacrificed on the Day of Atonement. Justification is the free gift (*grace*) of God. You don't need to pursue *justification* through these endless **works** of the temple. Just like Abraham, our covenant with God is by faith. We are freed from the *old covenant of circumcision* and all its laws just as a widow is no longer bound to her former husband. We no longer have to conform to **The Law** of Moses. (And we *fulfill* the 10 commandments when we obey the two great commandments.) If you try to get right with God through *the works of the Law*, you in effect admit that you never received grace and that you have no faith in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ we have become Sons of God and we are no longer servants bound by **The Law**. (Romans 3.28) *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of The Law.*

II Luther's Distortion

Paul's epistle to the Galatians takes up 5 pages. Luther's *Lectures on Galatians*, which were given in 1531 at the University of Wittenberg, and published as the *Commentary on Galatians* in 1535, take up 610 pages in volumes 26 and 27 of the Luther's Works edition. An earlier series of lectures on Galatians is found in volume 27 as the 1519 *Commentary on Galatians*. It takes up 257 pages. Like most academic lectures, much of what is found in these two Commentaries might be fairly described as filler. They are verbose, discursive and redundant. And then often fail to give any argument for controversial assertions. There are also major differences between the 1519 version and the 1535 version. Luther's thinking *evolved* as time passed. He even contradicted himself within the limits of one treatise. So you can quote him on both sides of many of these questions. Nonetheless his position on *faith, not works* was fairly consistent by the time of the 1535 version.

Galatians 2.16: *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 Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no man be justified.*

Luther: "These words, *works of the Law*, are to be taken in the broadest possible sense and are very emphatic. I am saying this because of the smug and idle scholastics and monks, who obscure such words in Paul--in fact everything in Paul--with their foolish and wicked glosses, which even they themselves do not understand. Therefore take *works of the Law* generally, to mean whatever is opposed to grace: Whatever is not grace is Law,

whether it be the Civil Law, the Ceremonial Law, or the Decalog. Therefore even if you were to do the work of the Law, according to the commandment *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart* etc. (Matt. 22:37) you still would not be justified in the sight of God; for a man is not justified by works of the Law." (Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* 2.16, *Luther's Works*, Volume 26 page 122.)

What Luther slips in here is the startling assertion that *the great commandment* found in Matthew 22:37 *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind* is not primary and central to the relationship between God and the Christian. And that it belongs in the category of those *works of the Law* which Paul says cannot *justify* us and which are "opposed to grace."

Luther offers no argument here for his assertion that Paul meant to include *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God* among *the works of the law*. He just asserts it contra "the smug and idle scholastics and monks with their foolish and wicked glosses." Since these fellows take the other view, since they are *smug and idle*, you know that Luther's view must be right. It is typical of Luther's arguments that, instead of explaining his position, he abuses his opponents, re-states his view in an authoritative way and then moves on. So here is an ENORMOUS ASSERTION which rests upon no coherent argument. It isn't even clear what is wrong with their *idleness* if we are saved by *faith, not works*. In fact *smug and idle* accurately describes many who have embraced Luther's doctrine. Thus: *I am Saved because I say so and I don't have to Do Anything!*

It is true that keeping the 10 commandments by fulfilling the two great commandments has to do with avoiding sin rather than with making atonement for sins already committed. If you love God with your whole heart, you fulfill the law, so you don't need to make atonement for breaking the law. The two great commandments to love God and your neighbor fulfill the 10 commandments. They summarize them. They go beyond avoiding sin, and the need to make atonement does not arise.

Loving God is No Use

But Luther is not making this argument. Instead, what Jesus Christ calls The Greatest Commandment is lumped in with Civil Law and Ceremonial Law as contrary to grace: *you still would not be justified in the sight of God*. Even if you Love God with your whole heart he may say to you "Sorry, you are not one of the elect, so you can't get into heaven. I don't care if you love me. You didn't fit into the formula, so buzz off!"

It is true in one sense that the Commandment to Love God is *opposed to grace*: Grace is what God gives us. It is God's love for us. Is God's *grace* different from God's *love*? Obviously, it is the same. What we give him back, our whole-hearted love, is our response to grace, that is, our response to Love. But it is absurd to see them as excluding one another. When two people love one other are they going to argue: She: *I Love You!* He: *NO! I Love You!!*? And in fact, how can I love God unless I have God's love? Through God's love I receive the Spirit of Love. Through the Spirit of Love I love God back. And if I refuse that Spirit, if I lose the Spirit, will God still love me as his son? Romans 8.15 says that it is through the Spirit *whereby we cry, Abba, Father*.

But Luther's argument comes from some place else entirely. In fact, what he is doing is imposing his doctrines upon Paul under the guise of interpreting Paul. These doctrines are *Bondage of the Will*, that is, man's lack of free will; Man's moral helplessness, which means that his only hope is *God's Sovereign and irresistible grace* which infuses faith and

confers upon him *Passive Righteousness*. So man is not an actor at all in the drama of his own salvation. And that is the doctrinal reason why Luther excludes Love of God from our primary relationship with God. In Luther's theology our relationship with God is one way. God does it all. So it cannot be a love relationship. So he insists that Paul is including *Love God* with the *works of the Law* which are irrelevant to salvation.

A little later, on page 138, Luther emphasizes that *works* means ALL WORKS: "Thus we must learn to distinguish all laws, even those of God, and ***all works*** from faith and from Christ if we are to define Christ accurately." This is Luther's interpretation--his assertion--as to what Paul means by *works of the law*--it means ***all law*** and ***all works***.

But, quite obviously, it does not mean ***all law*** and it does not mean ***all works***. *Works* is limited by *of the Law*. *Law* plainly means ***THE LAW OF MOSES***. If I swear by ***THE GOLD IN THE TEMPLE***, (Matthew 23.16) am I swearing by ***ALL GOLD***? No. The second term **strictly limits** the first. Am I swearing by ***ALL TEMPLES***? No. Only The Temple in Jerusalem.

He Meant It LITERALLY !

When Paul speaks of *the works of the Law*, he means just that. He does not mean All Works. Nor does he mean All Laws. The second term **strictly limits** the first. And *the Law* means precisely: THE LAW, as is obvious from the context. By *Works of the Law*, he means those prescribed in Leviticus etc. by which the Jews made *atonement* for their sins and *justified* themselves. He means the regulations of the Jewish religion. He means all the ceremonies and sacrifices and purifications which the ancient Jews performed to make themselves *clean* again. By The Law he means the 613 commandments found in the 5 books of Moses, THE LAW by which ancient Israel lived, THE LAW which was the foundation of the Jewish religion. That is what Paul was arguing against when he argued against relying upon the *works of the law*: Galatians 4.10 *You observe days and months and seasons and years.* Colossians 2.16 *Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths.* 17 *which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.* By *works* Paul does not mean good works, acts of love etc.

Actually the term Paul uses in 2.16 is *faith* rather than *grace*, implying something we do versus something that God does. Is not God's *grace* the same as God's *Love*? Luther will not recognize that my active response must be both *faith* and *love*. Obviously, they go together. Both are essential to the Christian life. They are two aspects of the one relationship we have with God. Paul keeps emphasizing *faith*, because his key argument against the Judaizers is that the faith of Abraham was the basis of the original Covenant, and that the New Covenant does not require ***The Law*** of Moses and the *works of the law*. His argument is that the New Covenant renews the covenant of faith that God made with Abraham while it releases us from the Law given to Moses.

But these distinctions are ignored by Luther. Because, following Augustine, he subscribes to the Bondage of the Will doctrine. Luther's *faith* is passive, not active. And Luther's *grace* does not mean gift. It means God's Attack, his lightning bolt of election. Like the Mafia, God makes you an offer you cannot refuse. It is this false doctrine of *grace* which leads Luther to contrast it with everything else. Luther's Bondage is derived from Augustine's doctrine that man is morally helpless. And, logically, how can man love God if he does not have free will?

What Luther is saying here is not an INTERPRETATION of Galatians 2.16. Rather he is IMPOSING HIS DOCTRINE upon Galatians 2.16. Paul cannot possibly have meant to include Civil Law and the Commandment to Love God in the phrase *works of the law* found in 2.16. No one was teaching the Galatians to do the "works" of the Civil Law to get rid of their sins. What would it even mean ? And, if their new teachers were telling them to *Love God with your whole heart*, Saint Paul could not have objected to it as a false gospel.

Luther's Political Agenda

Luther had a political mandate from the German princes, as their major propagandist, to undermine the authority of the medieval Catholic Church, which was asserted through its canon laws. His career depended upon his success. And he wished also to undermine the authority of the monastic rules which bound him and others. That is the political reason why he asserts that Paul is disparaging church laws in general instead of what Paul meant: The Law of Moses. He had a similar motive for attacking all the church works of the medieval Church which were important to its revenue and its power. Luther's theological arguments are driven and often distorted by this political agenda.

If Luther had been content to argue that the church works and ceremonies of the medieval Catholic Church were similar to the *meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnal ordinances* (Hebrews 9.10) found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, and which Paul described as the *works of the Law*, he had a good case. But his state church theology and his precarious political and personal situation pushed Luther to distort Paul's teaching far beyond what Paul meant by it.

Luther was targeting gross abuses found in the medieval church, in respect to *working your way into heaven* via church works--buying your way into heaven even--whether or not he was sincere and disinterested--he wasn't. But the Anti Works theological principle he developed in response is so extreme that it negates the Christian life. There wasn't much Christian life to be seen in the Imperial Church of the Middle Ages but the Reformation doctrines compounded the problem. Consider three examples of *works*: 1) the Canterbury pilgrim walks all the way to Canterbury where he says 100 Aves and 100 Pater Nosters while kneeling on thorns so as to obtain a plenary indulgence for himself or for his brother who is in Purgatory (at best) after being killed in a tavern brawl. 2) Saint Paul suffers beatings and jailings while he makes arduous and dangerous journeys to preach the gospel. 3) A Sister of the Sick Poor spends days and nights at the bedside of a sick patient. Are the 2nd and 3rd examples of *works* to be lumped in with the first as useless for salvation, presumptuous and even offensive to God ? Has Paul offended God by thinking that his works are important and necessary in God's plan of Salvation ? Has the Sister fallen into error in thinking that by complying with the caring for the sick injunction found in Matthew 25.31-46 she is securing her inclusion with the sheep ? Isn't that what it says ?

Luther's attack on the powers of the priesthood and his re-definition of the sacrament of the Eucharist were necessary to undercut the power of Rome and the threat of the Interdict. The false history of the Protestant Reformation ignores the basic fact that Luther was first to last entirely dependent upon the German princes and entirely at their service in their rebellion against Rome and the Empire. His theology is shaped and re-shaped by the necessities of Reformation era politics.

III Luther's Denies Free Will

But there were basic theological reasons for Luther's doctrines. Luther was a follower of Augustine in his theology and no doubt he believed the propositions which led him to his *faith not works* doctrine. Luther discounts works, including such *WORKS* as Love of God and Neighbor, including *all kinds of works, even contemplation, meditation, and all that the soul can do* (*Freedom of a Christian* volume 31 LW p. 345) because no action or motion of any kind, even the most spiritual, can be squared with his and Augustine's doctrines of **God's Absolute Power, Man's Lack of Free Will, Salvation by Irresistible Grace, and Passive Righteousness**. That is the basic reason for his dogmatic insistence that even Love of God is somehow outside of our essential relationship with God through *faith*.

In the conclusion of his argument against Desiderius Erasmus, at the end of his treatise *Bondage of the Will*, Luther says that "on the testimony of reason itself there cannot be any free choice in man or angel or any creature." That is, even aside from Adam's Fall, there can be no free will, even in angels. Then he says: "Similarly, if we believe that Satan is the ruler of this world, who is forever plotting and fighting against the Kingdom of Christ with all his powers, and that he will not let men go who are his captives unless he is forced to do so by the divine power of the Spirit, then again it is evident that there can be no such thing as free choice." (page 293 volume 33 of Luther's Works) Luther means that we are bound by the force of Satan until we are overwhelmed instead by the force of God. And Luther means that EVEN AFTER WE HAVE RECEIVED GRACE we do not recover free will. So we never have any moral power. Before God saves him, the Christian is, as it were, a horse ridden by the devil. When he is Saved, it means that God is now in the saddle.

Irresistible Grace or Fatalism

And this doctrine was copied, with later modifications, by other Reformers such as Melanchthon: "At first Luther's cardinal doctrine of grace appeared to Melanchthon inconsistent with any view of free will . . . *the sacred writings represent all moral power as lost by the fall.* In the first edition of the *Loci Communes Rerum Theologicarum* (1521) he (Melanchthon) held, to the length of fatalism, the Augustinian doctrine of irresistible grace, working according to God's immutable decrees, and denied freedom of will in matters civil and religious alike." (1890 *Britannica* article on **Melanchthon** XV 834 cd) Melanchthon modified this position in later years. And Luther's original position was eventually modified, or at least confused, in both the Lutheran churches and the Reformed churches. But the *faith not works* doctrine which grew out of this denial of free will has never been properly corrected. That is, the proscription of works has been retained even when the denial of free will has been abandoned. But they are logically tied together, as they were in Luther's theology.

An astonishing passage from Melanchthon, showing how the 10 commandments, unlike the two commandments, are compatible with Passive Righteousness

Melanchthon: "The Spirit of God cannot be in the human heart without fulfilling the Decalogue. [which] is therefore observed by necessity . . . The Decalogue contains mostly negative laws. This is in order that it may be clear that no definite work, circumscribed by persons, places or times is required, but rather the righteousness of the heart." (Battles notes p. 250)

This passage shows the mind set of the Reformers. They put the ten commandments in place of the Two Commandments because the ten commandments fit into their doctrine that **the more passive you are, the holier you are.** It explains why Calvin has put the Two Commandments under the head of the ten commandments of the Decalogue and why he insists that they are somehow subordinate to the ten commandments. This is a clear error of the Reformers. In most places their discussions of works, law etc are too murky and ambivalent to justify an accusation that they teach this or that error. But this citation from Melanchthon spotlights the essential error of their doctrine of Passive Righteousness.

Melanchthon is right in stating that the 10 commandments are essentially negative and that they require only passive conformity. You can sit quietly in a chair and thereby keep all of the 10 commandments. You also thereby negate the Christian life which is based upon the two great commandments to Love God and your Neighbor and which require you to get up out of the chair and **DO SOMETHING.**

The Spirit of God cannot be in the human heart without fulfilling the Decalogue. Is the Spirit of God the same as the Holy Spirit ? Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Love ? So can you have the *Spirit of God* in your heart and fail to keep the two great commandments: love God with your whole heart; love your neighbor as yourself ? Can you do this without Acts of Love, Doing Good, Well Doing ? That is, can you do it without GOOD WORKS ? *no definite work is required* says Melanchthon. But the works of mercy described in Matthew 25.31-46 are clearly required in fulfillment of the two great commandments to love God and your neighbor.

Stunted Christianity

What is astonishing is the blindness of the Reformers to the moral and spiritual stunting which results from this *Passive Righteousness*. We disregard all the positive obligations created by the two great commandments to Love God and Neighbor. (Not to mention *Love One Another* and *Love thine Enemies*, which are also ignored.) It is manifestly a stunted and dried up kind of Christianity which is derived from these doctrines.

The Great Commandment is like a large cedar chest in which the commandments not to worship idols or take the Lord's name in vain etc. fit like four small boxes (or 3) which leave most of the chest still empty. And the Second Greatest Commandment similarly *fulfills* all six (or 7) of the commandments on the right hand Tablet as the first step towards an open-ended commitment to living the Christian life. But Reformation theology, to all intents and purposes, discards the positive injunctions of the gospels and replaces them with the twin tablets, which were put in the Ark, carried around on ceremonial occasions, and otherwise ignored.

What is *Faith* ? *Passive Righteousness*

By *faith* Luther really means **God's Irresistible Grace, His Absolute Power.** Although Luther regularly obscures the matter, it becomes clear that Luther cannot mean by *faith* any active assent or acceptance on the part of the one who is saved by Irresistible Grace. Luther's endorsement of infant baptism shows that he views *faith* itself as something which is passively received. (Calvin endorsed it also.) In the Preface to the *Commentary on Galatians* he emphasizes that: *this most excellent righteousness, the righteousness of faith, which God imputes to us through Christ without works, [is] a merely passive righteousness, while all the others, listed above are active. For here we work nothing, render nothing to God; we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely, God. Therefore it is appropriate to call the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness "passive."*

In his attack on the Catholic sacraments, Luther keeps insisting that only through the faith of the recipient does a sacrament become efficacious. But then he can give no coherent explanation as to how an infant can be said to have the necessary faith to receive the sacrament of baptism. Nor what it can mean to have the *passive faith* which equals *passive righteousness*. It is clear enough that what Paul meant by *faith* is an *active*, not a *passive* Spirit. Cf. Galatians 5.6 *faith working through love*.

IV *Faith Working Through Love*

In his 1519 commentary on Galatians 5.6: *faith which worketh by love*, Luther has no trouble conceding that faith and love go together: "Therefore he who hears the Word of Christ sincerely and clings to Him in faith is **at once** also clothed with the Spirit of love . . . For if you hear Christ sincerely, it is impossible for you not to love Him **forthwith**." (pages 335-336 Luther's Works volume 27)

So faith is *at once also clothed with the Spirit of love*. Of course ! What else ? If you have faith in Jesus, *it is impossible for you not to love Him forthwith*. Faith in God and the Love of God go together and why should there be any separation between them, or any delay in time between having faith in God and having love for God ?

Luther elsewhere says that *faith* is *the gift of God that is infused in the heart by the Holy Spirit*. Does the Holy Spirit stick around or does he just "infuse" the faith and then leave ? Since he is the Holy Spirit of Love why would he not infuse Love at the same time ? Or, if he does stay around, do I not thereby have the Love of God in me ?

Faith not Love !

But by the time of his 1535 *Commentary on Galatians*, Luther does his best to explain away Galatians 5.6: "The sophists apply this passage in support of their doctrine that we are justified by love or by works. . . . they completely transfer justification from faith and attribute it solely to love as thus defined. . . . He makes love the tool through which faith works. . . . in this passage Paul is not dealing with the question of what faith is or of what avails in the sight of God; he is not discussing justification." (page 28-29 of v. 27) Luther then makes a series of authoritative and unsupported statements to deny that love and faith go together.

He is driven into this corner by his doctrine of ***Passive Righteousness***. Luther cannot concede that the Holy Spirit must infuse Love for God along with faith, because that gives it all away: you can't Love God without loving your neighbor; you can't love your neighbor except through acts of love; that is, through good works. He can't concede that **something we do**, namely, Loving God, is essential to our relationship with God and therefore central to living the Christian life.

Luther has no coherent argument against the idea that love and faith work together, which is clearly what Paul means. In Galatians 5.4-6 Paul is talking about *the hope of righteousness by faith* in verse 5 and this is directly followed by *faith which worketh by love* in verse 6. Faith, hope and love are all put together with grace in verse 4 and this is stated contra *The Law* and contra *Circumcision*.

Marriage Without Love !

The attempt to somehow separate *faith* from *love* leads Luther to an even more bizarre argument in part of his commentary on Galatians 2.16 (LW v. 26, page 137) where he says that: "By faith we are in Him, and He is in us. This Bridegroom, Christ, must be alone with His bride in His private chamber, and all the family and household must be shunted away. But later on, when the Bridegroom opens the door and comes out, then let the servants return to take care of them and serve them food and drink. **Then let works and love begin.**"

Luther has taken Paul's image of the church as the bride of Christ. Then he applies it to the individual. Then he makes it depend solely upon *faith*. The result is that the believer is united with Jesus Christ in a nuptial encounter FROM WHICH **LOVE IS LOCKED OUT** !! ! They go into the bedroom together and are united, not by love, but by faith alone ! What drives Luther to this absurd presentation is the doctrine that the Christian is the entirely passive recipient of an Absolute and Irresistible Grace.

In terms of his bedroom image, the transaction is rape. It requires no assent or response from the one who thereby receives *passive righteousness* through *Irresistible grace*. So the doctrine which Luther developed from the theology of Augustine does logically negate the love relationship between the Christian and Jesus Christ.

How in fact do we receive *faith* ? What is *faith* ? Is it a 5 letter concept which is inserted into my brain as I recite the magic formula: *I accept Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour ! date_____ time_____* ? Is it a commission to endlessly argue bible verses thereafter to validate **MY FAITH** ?

It is clear from Paul's letters and from the gospels themselves that what we receive is the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. And this indwelling Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Courage, the Spirit of Love and the Spirit of Truth. He guides us into all truth. *Faith* is his gift. So is *Love*. Can you somehow receive *grace* or *faith* apart from the Holy Spirit who gives *grace*, *faith* and *love* ? Oddly enough, it does seem that Luther spawned a whole branch of Secular Christianity for whom the Christian life is made up of **FAITH** and endless **WORDS** in the absence of the Spirit of Courage, Love and Truth.

The Holy Spirit is an active principle, an energizing principle. The apostles threw open the doors and began to preach and work miracles. The Spirit transformed their lives. They manifested Jesus Christ in their lives. They would not have comprehended *Passive Righteousness*. As James 2.17 states, *faith without [good] works is dead*. Even demons have faith. We must also **LOVE** God.

In Paul's theology, *love & faith* go together. *Love* is not included with the *works of the Law* which men turn to in vain to achieve *justification* in 5.4. In Luther's theology *Love*, *Acts of Love*, *Works of Mercy*, *Well-Doing* and *Good Works* are all put in with *The Law and the works of the law*. But that is not Paul's teaching. Rather, it is the logic of the Augustinian doctrine that man is morally helpless. It is the logic of Luther's doctrine that the Christian must await *Passive Righteousness* because he can do nothing good, because he has no free will. Because any kind of "active righteousness" is useless, is even offensive to God, our only hope is *infused faith*--something that is done to us. And *love*--which requires us to do something--plays no role in our salvation. Thus Luther imposes his doctrine on Paul.

The doctrines which Luther arrives at displace the teaching of Jesus that Love God and Love thy Neighbor are primary and essential to the Christian life. He spells this out in a passage from *Freedom of a Christian* LW volume 31, pages 352-353: "From this you once more see that much is ascribed to faith, namely, that it alone can fulfil the law and justify without works. You see that **the First Commandment, which says, You shall worship one God, is fulfilled by faith alone.** Though you were nothing but good works from the soles of your feet to the crown of your head, you would still not be righteous or worship God or fulfill the First Commandment, since God cannot be worshipped unless you ascribe to him the glory of truthfulness and all goodness which is due him. This cannot be done by works but only by the faith of the heart. Not by the doing of works but by believing do we glorify God and acknowledge that he is truthful. Therefore faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian and the fulfilling of all the commandments, for **he who fulfills the First Commandment has no difficulty in fulfilling all the rest.**"

V First Commandment: Faith, not Love

Therefore faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian and the fulfilling of all the commandments, for he who fulfills the First Commandment has no difficulty in fulfilling all the rest. This oddly echoes the teaching of Jesus Christ even while it contradicts it. Jesus said that the *First and Greatest Commandment* was to Love God. And this "fulfills" the commandments of the left hand tablet (whether 3 or 4), including of course the *first commandment* in respect to the worship of God. And then he associated it so closely with Love thy Neighbor that acts of love--Good Works--as called for in Matthew 25.31-46, fulfill both commandments. So Jesus teaches that the two commandments fulfill the 10 commandments. But Luther does not mean "Love God" when he refers to the First Commandment. And he is doing everything he can to avoid saying *Love, Acts of Love, Good Works* which are contrary to his doctrine. So Luther has given us a **First Commandment of Faith** which displaces the **First Commandment of Love.** Because the first of the 10 commandments is compatible with Passive Righteousness while the Great Commandment to Love God is not compatible with Passive Righteousness.

In his treatise *The Freedom of a Christian* Luther insists upon his doctrine of *Passive Righteousness*. And it precludes any relevant act or work on the part of the person who is saved by God's absolute saving power. By his sovereign and irresistible grace God does it all. Therefore, the Savee can do nothing and should do nothing. But shouldn't he *Love God with all thy heart* ? No ! Not now, anyway. Because that means an act done by you. And every act or work or deed by man is excluded from the Salvation which comes from God alone. The modern attitude of so many Christians follows naturally from this attitude of Luther's. The less I do, the more righteous I am. I am righteous without regard to what I do or don't do.

Obviously you cannot Love God and Your Neighbor without **Doing Something.** Without doing the kinds of things that Paul did when Paul was **the hardest working man in the bible.** [see Appendix A] And the question "What should I do ? " Is fully answered when you pay attention to the teaching and follow the example of Jesus Christ. That is why the Saved by Faith not Works doctrine of the Reformation negates the real Christian life. Faith, hope and love are responses on our part to God's love for us; it is the Spirit of God who gives us the power to respond. Even a baby responds with love to love. Even a baby is not just the passive recipient of love. What excuse then do we have once we have received the Spirit of Love ? And, if we have not received that Spirit, what *faith* could we possibly have ? What claim upon God do we have except through the Spirit ?

Augustine and the Reformers allow us no claim upon God. Their God is an Absolute Autocrat, the Great Emperor of the Heavens. He is not The Father who loves us and asks us to love Him, or the demanding Missionary Team Leader of the gospels, or the Spirit who is my guide and companion on the hard road of the way of the gospels. None of them are found in the concept of Absolute Power which these worldly Christians worshipped.

Jesus and Paul teach that I must love God and love my neighbor. Matthew 25.31-46 spells out that you show your love for Jesus, by showing your love for *the least of these*. 1 John 4.20 says the same: *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* How do you show love? By **acts of love** (John 15.13) a.k.a. **good works**.

works, not faith

It is notable that the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 uses the good works of a man with a wrong faith as the illustration of *love thy neighbor* and contrasts him with the priest and the Levite: two men of orthodox faith who wouldn't help. Is Jesus really going to save me on the basis of **a set of orthodox opinions** if I do not *love my neighbor* as shown by my acts, by my good works? If I do nothing for *the least of these*, I don't love them. Which means that I do not love Jesus. (Matthew 25.45) Does Jesus want to spend eternity in the company of someone who does not love him? He says not! (25.41) Why should He? Would you want to live forever with someone who does not love you?

Luther's doctrine, derived from Augustine's doctrine, is that man, wholly depraved, and with his will in bondage can **do nothing**. Nor does he recover his free will after he receives grace. Either the devil controls him or God controls him. Before he receives grace and after he has received God's Sovereign Grace, he can **do nothing** himself. So how can he love God and his Neighbor? How can he perform acts of love? This really is Luther's position. So he puts *Love God* in with *works of the Law* which are irrelevant to our salvation! Why? Because we are saved purely and entirely by Passive Righteousness--by what God does to us. Nothing we do matters at all.

Paul's doctrine is not different from the teaching of Jesus Christ. In Luke 7.47-50 Jesus says: *Much has been forgiven her because she loves much . . . Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace.* Here he attributes both faith and love to the woman. If *justification* means the *forgiveness of sin*, as it does in the story of the repentant publican in Luke 18.14 then clearly the woman has achieved *justification* by her love and being *saved by her faith* is joined together with it.

The reason that the Reformers so greatly resist this conclusion is that their doctrine of *justification* is fundamentally different from the doctrine of *justification* found in the New Testament. It is also at odds with what is found in the Old Testament. Their doctrine is greatly distorted because it is tied to the false doctrines of Bondage of the Will, Predestination and God's Sovereign or Irresistible Grace, the doctrines which they derived from Augustine--doctrines which are fundamentally neither Jewish nor Christian but Manichaean

What is Justification?

These doctrines of Augustine and Luther--God's Absolute Power and Man's Lack of Free Will--lead Luther to an entirely different meaning of justification from that which Paul and Jesus taught. When Paul taught that *a man is not justified by the works of the law* (Galatians 2.16) he meant what Jesus teaches in Luke 18.10-14: the Pharisee did not justify himself--did not have his sins taken away--despite his strict conformity to **The Law** and his performance of *the works of the law*. But Jesus did not mean that the publican, who went

away *justified*, was **Saved once and for all**. That is the doctrine which is imposed upon Paul by the Reformers who followed Augustine in their basic theology. The Reformers impose the doctrine whereby Salvation is not a long and difficult journey undertaken by the believer, but a one step *Election* so Absolute and Final that it negates any possibility of free will and any possibility of further dereliction in the one who is *elected*.

Instant, complete and final salvation without any good works or acts of love or responses of any kind on my part are the logical corollaries of the doctrines of *Bondage of the Will*, *God's Absolute Power* and *Sovereign Grace*, and *Passive Righteousness* which Luther derived from Augustine. If you add the doctrine that **YOU KNOW when you are SAVED** you arrive at the modern revival doctrine--I was saved at 9:37 pm March 3rd of last year. That's it. Write it in your bible. Then you too can participate in the "Christian life" which consists of endless arguments about bible verses, while you put all your energy into politics and business.

The Reformers followed Augustine in obscuring the basic differences between the books of the Old Covenant and the books of the New Covenant. They refused to recognize that *justification through the works of the Law* is a basic doctrine of the five books of Moses. Contra the later prophets (cf. Isaiah 64.6 *filthy rags*) and contra the New Testament, the concept of being a *just* man and a *righteous* man through conformity to The Law and scrupulous performance of all of its *works* is a central doctrine of the Old Testament. The basic concept of the Old Testament is that you maintained your right standing with the Lord by keeping his Law and that you atoned for your sins and *justified* yourself anew by performing the works of the Law.

Of course The Law, meaning the 613 rules of the Torah, creates all sorts of sins--not washing your hands, picking an ear of corn on the Sabbath etc. The *works of the Law* were the way to get rid of all these sins and return to the kind of righteousness which The Law conferred upon those who were careful to observe all those rules.

VI The Works of the Law

The foolish Galatians and their teachers had not invented some new doctrine whereby they abandoned their faith in Jesus Christ in favor of doing good works. They did not think you could work your way into heaven independently of Jesus Christ. But they believed what many modern Christians believe: they were still bound by the whole Bible. They still had to follow The Law found in the five books of Moses. They still had to offer bullocks, goats and pigeons to make atonement for their sins. They still had to strictly keep the Sabbath and they still had to participate in all the Jewish festivals which are ordained in Leviticus. They still joined the Jewish religion and all its works to the new Christian faith. They had not invented the doctrine that you make *atonement* for your sins through the *works of the law*. They found it in the scriptures: Leviticus 1.4 *And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.* 4.3 *If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people, then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish for a sin offering.*

It is hardly necessary to cite verses for a doctrine which is every where in the five books of Moses, but, for example, Deuteronomy 12.6 describes The Sin Offering: *There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your free will offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.* 12.27 *the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord, your God.* 14.3-21 lays

down the rules for clean and unclean animals. Leviticus chapters 4-7 gives The Law as to offerings for sin, Chapters 4 and 5 especially give the directions as to sin offerings. Through these *works of the Law* you *justified* yourself--got rid of your sins and became a righteous man before The Lord.

A just man, a righteous man, was one who kept the Law. He walked in the ordinances of the Lord. He was careful to keep all the commandments and observe all the observances. And he was rewarded with a prosperous life. That is the basic faith of the early Old Testament. If you **do right** by God, God will do right by you. In this life and without any reference to a life beyond this one. The reality was something different. That is why the book of Job has to tackle the question as to why a just and righteous man suffers failure and defeat and tragedy. And elsewhere they have to ask, as we must ask today: *Why do the wicked prosper?*

It isn't only the virtuous few who are *justified* in the sense of being put right with God. The way was open for the sinful man to *justify* himself by repentance and sacrifice as when The Lord instructs Job's comforters to make a sacrifice to atone for their foolishness. Job 42.8. The Law assumed Sinfulness, not Perfection, and made provision for the washing away of sin. You were washed in the blood of the lamb--or the goat, the bullock and the pigeon.

Justification: three different doctrines:

Justified, righteous, justification, righteousness, a just man, a righteous man, are all forms of the same idea which is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. But the idea of righteousness which is found in the later prophets and in the New Testament is different from the idea of righteousness which is found in the earliest part of the Old Testament. And the concept of *justification* which Luther and Calvin copied from Augustine is a major departure from both the Christian doctrine of *justification* and the Jewish doctrine found in the five books of Moses.

Justification I: Old Testament Righteousness

There are some 350 citations of *just, justify, righteous righteousness*, and related words in the Concordance of the Old Testament. It is a term which is basic to the Jewish religion. It means that you "stand right" with God; it contrasts with "wicked." It means "free from sin." It means that you have made *atonement* for your sins by performing the proper works and sacrifices. The *righteousness* of a *just* man like Abraham or Job was contrasted with the *unrighteous* character (*adikia*) of the wicked men around them.

In making a case against *works*, people cite Isaiah 64.6: *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.* But look at Isaiah 64.5 The Lord goes to meet the man who *worketh righteousness*. And if Isaiah is rightly interpreted here as denigrating the *works of righteousness* required by the Law, it simply shows the tendency of the later prophets to anticipate the radical rejection of the Jewish religion by Jesus and his followers. Jesus tells the pharisees: *go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice* (Mt. 9.13, Mt 12.7) And it refers them to Hosea 6.6 which emphasizes that the prophets themselves had a different understanding of God from that which is found in the earliest books of the old covenant.

But it is simply **bible abuse** to argue that the doctrine of *faith not works* is the basic doctrine of the Old Testament. The doctrine that appears every where in the early books of the Old Testament is that a man achieved *righteousness* by a careful and conscientious performance of the works of the law. Like Job (1.5) you made atonement for your sins and the sins of others by performing various washings and sacrifices.

The later Prophets move away from the ancient nationalist theology of Israel. With the nation conquered, the king in exile and the temple destroyed, they developed a spiritual faith which did not center upon the Nation and the national Temple. They moved a long ways away from the early theology of the Lord as the war god of the Jewish nation who guaranteed them success in battle so long as they delivered the daily bucket of bull's blood. They began to develop a faith in which the relationship between God and the individual took the place of the relationship between the Lord and his King and the Prophet whose commission was to the King. This new faith, which does not center upon the Nation of Israel and its King and upon the Temple and its Priesthood and its animal Sacrifices is the faith that Jesus Christ brings to fulfillment. (Luke 16.16-17, Luke 24.44, Matthew 11.13)

But the early books of the Old Testament are filled with the insistence upon *works* as the way to *righteousness*. You put yourself right with God by strictly conforming to The Law and by performing all of the *works of the Law* to make atonement for your sins. When Paul says that *no one is justified by the Law* he is taking aim at the doctrine which is found throughout the Old Testament and which was still the basic belief of orthodox Jews, including many of those who had converted to Christianity. It wasn't an academic argument for Paul, it was an urgent and divisive question in the Christian churches of his time as Acts chapter 15 shows. And Paul's opponents had **The Bible** on their side--or the five books of Moses, anyway--when they argued the necessity of *doing the works of the Law*.

The Righteousness of the Law

Clearly, those who kept the Law in the Old Testament could see themselves as Righteous men. They were supposed to regard themselves as righteous men ! The Lord laid out a whole set of Do's and Don'ts. And spelled out that how you stood with Him depended on your Doing and Not Doing. Righteous was not an assertion from your own vanity, it was the correct label for one who did right according to the rules of the Law. To deny your own righteousness was to deny the righteousness of the Lord's ordinances. Which were objective ordinances. It was only later that the prophets began to argue the importance of inward motivation, of having a **CIRCUMCISED HEART**. Originally, circumcision and all that followed from it was measured by external conformity. You brought the two goats on the proper day, or you didn't. They were blemished or they weren't. You took a bath, put on the proper garment and carried out the proper ceremony. You carefully followed all the instructions, supposedly from *The Lord*, which fill up The Law.

Paul disparages the Righteousness which came from the Law. If the Reformers would recognize that Paul taught a doctrine which was contrary to the Old Testament, then they would not insist that "Scripture" as a whole is designed to denigrate all human works and humiliate men. Paul is disparaging Old Testament works not New Testament works. He is contrasting the works of the Law with the works of Jesus Christ and those who receive his Spirit. Because he is emphasizing that Christians can and should leave the Jewish religion behind. But the conclusion of the Reformers, that Paul is disparaging all human works is false. He clearly believes in the "human works" done by Christians who have received the Holy Spirit. He clearly believes in his own works as a follower of Jesus Christ.

[see Appendix A: *Paul Teaches Good Works.*]

Keep The Law !

The *righteousness* and the *justification* of the Old Testament came from keeping The Law. The reward was not eternal life, it was the renewal of their Lease on the Promised Land, and a guarantee of peace, prosperity and protection from all their enemies. The nation was *put right* with the Lord by regular sacrifices and festivals such as the annual sacrifice of the goats on the Day of Atonement as described in Leviticus chapter 16 which made Atonement for the sins of the people through these "works of the Law." It was still the most important ceremony of the Jewish religion in the time of Solomon's Temple. It was central to the old Jewish religion: you make *atonement* to the Lord and *justify* yourself through the performance of the *works of the Law*. Leviticus 16.17 describes the annual sacrifice of the goat as *an atonement . . . for all the congregation of Israel*.

The *righteousness* and the *justification* which the Jews achieved was not a once and final transaction which guaranteed them permanent possession of the Promised Land. The annual Day of Atonement, along with all of the weekly and monthly sacrifices and "works" were the way by which they renewed their right-standing with the Lord and obtained his favor for another year. They renewed their lease on the Promised Land by Keeping the Law.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which replaced all the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant, was a once and forever event. But that does not mean that the *justification* which the individual sinner receives is a once and forever event. Those are two different doctrines.

The word *Justification*

In arguing with Luther's interpretations of Paul, it has to be kept in mind that the King James text of the New Testament was substantially that of William Tyndale who did his translation of the New Testament in 1524 while staying at Wittenberg, where Luther was in residence. Tyndale also translated the prefaces and notes of Luther's bible into English and added them to his first version of the English New Testament which was published in Germany with Lutheran help. So it is fair to say that the earliest version of what eventually became the King James Bible was produced under Luther's influence and that it tended to conform to Reformation doctrine in its translations of key concepts. But the problem with *justification* goes all the way back to the apostate church of Jerome and Augustine. Both the Greek and Latin texts which they put into The Bible were translated and edited by them and the other servants of the Imperial Church.

In the article on Paul in the 1890 *Britannica* the essayist says that: "It is difficult to estimate the mischief which has been caused by the fact that *justificare* was adopted from early times as the translation of *dikaioun*, and the consequent fact that a large part of Western theology has been based upon the etymological signification of *justificare* rather than upon the meaning of the Greek original. One of the clearest instances of the meaning of *dikaioun* in Biblical Greek is LXX Exod xxii 7, *ou dikaioseis ton asebe eneken doron* = "thou shalt not *acquit* the wicked man for bribes."

Justification II: Case Dismissed

In this sense *justification* means something like **Case Dismissed**. You go to court and, because the cop doesn't show up, the city attorney has to move to dismiss your case. Does it mean that you have been found innocent ? No, and you know perfectly well that you did in fact make that right turn without signalling. Does it mean that you have been proclaimed a good and righteous man by an official tribunal ? No. Does it mean that you are now guaranteed that you will never get another ticket or that it will be Automatically Dismissed the next time ? Don't Count on it.

As Reformation theology uses the term, *justification* implies too much. It implies that God has granted us at once everything we need. I am Saved ! By grace ! by **GRACE !!! SHAZAM !** I am overwhelmed and sanctified and justified and it is only a matter of time before I am carried off to heaven. Love God ? Why ? What does it mean ? If the tornado takes you away, what does it signify how you feel about the tornado ? It's done !

What Jesus taught about *justification* is shown in the story of the humble and repentant publican in Luke 18.14 who goes home *justified* unlike the proud Pharisee. *Justified* meant that his sins were forgiven. Whereas the Pharisee, relying upon his strict performance of the works of the Law, and proclaiming his own righteousness, offended God, the publican made a humble act of contrition and a plea for mercy. He showed that he had a *circumcised heart*. But it was still something the publican did which led to his going home *justified*. God responded to his plea. That runs contrary to the Reformation doctrine of *Unconditional Atonement*--God's grace is given without regard to anything that we do.

Was the publican *justified* in the sense of being elected by God then and there to eternal life ? There is no indication of that whatever in this story. Did he then receive the Holy Spirit and become a follower of Jesus ? Clearly, Jesus only means that his sins were forgiven him, unlike the proud Pharisee. For the *justified* publican, Justification was not a once and final step into eternal life whereby he could thereafter rest serenely in a state of *passive righteousness*. The publican didn't go from being a sinner to being an instant saint at one bound. But he had in effect heard those wonderful words: **case dismissed**. He didn't write down the date and time on which he was SAVED Once and Forever. But he did walk away leaving his sins behind him.

And in other instances in the gospels where Jesus forgives someone's sins it is clear that they do not thereby receive any final salvation. Jesus identifies his miraculous cures with the forgiveness of sin, as in Matthew 9.2-6. You are healed and saved from your sins at the same time. But he also makes it clear that you are not thereby given any permanent guarantee of salvation. In John 5.14 he tells the man he has just cured of paralysis: *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*. You have been given a reprieve, make the best of it. Because a man has free will, he may lose what he has been given. The forgiveness of sin by Jesus Christ was conditional: Matthew 6.14-15 *if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*. In Matthew 18.23-35 Jesus tells the story of a servant whose forgiveness is revoked after he refuses to forgive the debt of a fellow servant ! Unlike the **Unconditional Justification** of the Reformers, Jesus teaches that God forgives our debts and sins and trespasses only if we forgive others.

Justification III: Instant Salvation

The doctrine of Augustine and the Reformers is that, when God saves a man, that's it. Because God's Absolute Power Decrees it. They do not allow God the freedom to give free will to men. And this is the doctrine that Augustine and the Reformers impose upon Saint Paul. As Pastor Hill shows in his pamphlets, Augustine's doctrine of the Absolute and Immutable character of God comes from Platonic philosophy (from *Neoplatonism*) rather than the bible and the opposite doctrine appears in many places in the Bible where God is free to change, contrary to Plato's rules, and so is man. (As in the story of Jonah and the repentance of Nineveh where God relents.) Contrary to the notion of Plato, Augustine and the Reformers, God does not exist in a kind of frozen perfection which prevents him from ever changing. In the bible God responds to what man does and man is expected to respond to what God does.

The doctrine of *justification* which Augustine and Luther and Calvin impose upon Saint Paul is instant salvation. If you are *justified* at all you are saved once and for all. Because, according to Augustine's Manichaean doctrine of Original Sin, man is totally evil. Because God's Absolute Power eliminates man's free will. Only through God's absolute and sovereign Grace is man saved. And once God has saved him, he is forever saved. Justification isn't just the first step into the Christian life in this theology. Because their doctrine insists that we can take no step at all. Since our salvation depends upon God's Absolute Power grabbing us once and for all, the first step is the last and only step, and God makes it, not man. So the doctrines of man's total helplessness and God's sovereign grace lead to the serious distortion of what Jesus and Paul meant by justification. Now it is **JUSTIFICATION**--instant and eternal salvation. **I'M SAVED !**

In the Reformer's doctrine *justification* is not the beginning of your walk with God, it is the beginning and the end at once. God's absolute and immutable decree has saved you. End of Story. The beginning of the story of salvation is also the end of the story. You were the property of the devil, now you are the property of God. Nothing you did and nothing you will do has any consequence. The maiden locked up in the tower has no role to play in her own rescue except to thank the noble knight who delivers her. It would be presumptuous of her to try and help by making a rope out of her hair, dropping a sleeping pill into the jailer's tea, or unlocking the door from the inside. So, in Luther's scheme of salvation, it is up to God to save me. It is foolish presumption on my part to attempt any role in it.

VII The Doctrine of Moral Helplessness:

The doctrine of **MORAL HELPLESSNESS** marks all of Augustine's theology. It had been substantially modified and half-forgotten by the medieval church until the Reformers revived it and made it the basis of their own theology. It borrowed from "classic" (pagan) philosophy the doctrine of God's absolute power and man's consequent lack of free will. Augustine, who had passed a good part of his life as a Manichaean, brought in one of their basic doctrines under the label of Original Sin. This is the doctrine that man is an evil creation. Augustine's pseudo-Christian version of this doctrine is that man became an evil creation after Adam's Fall. But for all intents and purposes it is the same as the Manichaean doctrine: the entire human race is totally depraved and morally helpless. This doctrine is contrary to what is found in the Old Testament in respect to Adam's Fall but it was imposed upon Christian theology in the time of Augustine and it was revived in full force by the Reformation.

A second argument, which Luther uses in Bondage of the Will, is that God's Absolute Power simply eliminates the very possibility of free will in man. And in angels as well. Which means that Adam's sin cannot be the cause.

Since man is wholly depraved and helpless and since God's power is absolute and God's decrees are immutable, it follows that, if you are saved at all, your salvation is instant, complete and final. That's it. So *justification* means first, last and always. You don't just get rid of your sins for now, you get rid of all of them forever. You can't sin again, or, if you can, it doesn't matter. They are **covered**. Your good works are equally irrelevant. If you are saved by Passive Righteousness you are saved by God's Sovereign and Irresistible Grace and any subsequent actions of yours, bad or good, can't change a thing. Thus the *irresistible grace, not works* doctrine which Augustine and the Reformers find in Saint Paul--which they impose upon Saint Paul.

Paul's doctrine of *justification* is not different from the doctrine of Jesus. But it has been so thoroughly distorted by Augustine and by the Reformers that it is understandable that the Dispensationalist theologians, comparing the teaching of Jesus with what Paul supposedly taught, are pushed to the conclusion that there are two very different doctrines of salvation in the New Testament. When you compare Luther's distortion with what Jesus teaches, there are. And that is what is interesting about Dispensationalist theology. By further exaggerating the basic error of Reformation theology, it highlights that error.

There is a whole shift in emphasis in the teaching of Jesus Christ which reflects what is found in the later prophets: *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* That is, the mechanical conformity to The Law is replaced by a moral and spiritual faithfulness to the Love of God and man. Doing right by the widow and the orphan *justifies* a man and making the prescribed sacrifice of bullocks does not. Jesus makes the same kind of argument by pointing to the humble repentance of the publican contra the boastful righteousness of the Pharisee. The woman whose sins have been forgiven because she loved much. The widow with her two mites. What is not found is the doctrine of the Reformers that man is wholly depraved and helpless. That he does not have free will. That he is not a moral agent. That he can only have *passive righteousness* (Luther) or *imputed righteousness* (Calvin).

Doers, not just Hearers

In Romans 2.13 Paul says: *For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.* This refers to gentiles who keep the law by natural means. They are *just before God.* It can't mean they are Elected. It means they are "put right" with God **BY WHAT THEY DO.** The same doctrine is found in many New Testament scriptures: James 1.22 *be ye doers of the word and not hearers only;* 1 John 3.18 *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth.* Matthew 21.28-31 Jesus contrasts the son who *did the will of his father* with the one who said something but did nothing. Luke 6.46 *why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?*

Paul is not contradicting this in Romans 3.20-30 when he says *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight* 24 *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* 25 *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.* The distinction is between moral acts by which we keep the moral law versus the sacrificial acts--*the deeds of the law*--which were required for atonement for sin. *Justified by grace* means the forgiveness of sin. Note **sins that are past.** Contra the assertion of the Reformers that justification is a one time transaction which covers all future sins as well. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a complete and sufficient atonement for all sin. But that is not the same as the doctrine that the sinner is justified once and for all.

If a man was "justified" by the "works of the law" it did not mean that he was elected to heaven. It meant that he was free from sin, for the time being, in his standing before God here upon this earth. And there is no hint here of grace as meaning an *irresistible election* to *permanent Salvation.* Romans 3.30 says that both Jew and Gentile are justified through faith. Paul cannot be thinking of grace as irresistible and of man as being the passive recipient of it. Is faith forced upon us ? What Jesus says about faith, praising those who have it, talking about the *growth of faith*, does not square with the assumption that faith is a permanent condition immediately and finally forced upon people by sovereign grace. *Sovereign Grace* is a contradiction in terms. Grace means *gift*, while Sovereign means God's Absolute Force in Reformation theology. It is not a gift if it is forced upon you !

Paul's account of Abraham's **FAITH** shows that it was ACTIVE--**something that Abraham did:** Romans 4.2-4.22 *For if Abraham were justified by works . . . believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.* 13. Romans 5.8-9 *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* Here **justified is followed by RECONCILIATION and SALVATION.** It is **the beginning** of our relationship with God, not the end of it. His death took away our sins; his life in us then **leads us** to salvation.

Romans 9.28-32 *the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to . . . the righteousness which is of faith. 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore ? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.* Here the "righteousness which is of faith" means the same as "justified by faith." And Paul contrasts it with the *works of the law* required by the ancient religion of Israel.

1 Corinthians 1.30 *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption* 4.3-4 *I judge not mine own self 4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.* 6.11 *And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Read it in the context of 6.9-10 which describes what Paul means by the *unrighteous: fornicators, idolaters.* We are justified, we are made righteous, means primarily that our sins are taken away. It cannot mean that thereafter we may safely commit the sins of omission by failing to love our neighbor etc. Or that we can leave it up to God and the Government to do everything.

Fallen from Grace

Galatians 5.4 says: *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.* Which clearly indicates that Paul does not see "grace" as a once and forever situation. You can **FALL FROM GRACE.** As other verses indicate: Romans 11.22 *Consider the kindness and the severity of God--severity toward those who fell, kindness toward you, provided you remain in His kindness; if you do not, you too will be cut off.* 1 Corinthians 9.26-27 *I do not run like a man who loses sight of the finish line. I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. What I do is discipline my own body and master it, for fear that after having preached to others I myself should be rejected.* I run, I fight . . . Does that sound like *Passive Righteousness* ? 1 Corinthians 10.12 *Let anyone who thinks he is standing upright watch out lest he fall.* 2nd Corinthians 6.1 *we . . . plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain* Grace is supposed to start us doing the Lord's work. If we do not thereafter love God and love our neighbor, we have received the grace of God in vain. Philippians 2.12 *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Paul here uses *justified by the law* as the equivalent to *justified by the works of the law.* He clearly is talking about The Law of ancient Israel and its works. He is not talking about good works. He is arguing against the religion of Israel, against their faith in The Law of Moses. And he goes well beyond saying that keeping The Law is useless, to say that it means you are **fallen from grace.**

These verses from Philippians show that Paul claimed "righteousness" and that this was the beginning--not the end--of his effort to "attain" and "apprehend" and "press toward the mark." : Philippians 1.11 *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness* 3.6 *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless* 3.9 *not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* 10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death* 11 *If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* 12 *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* 13 *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

The attitude engendered by the *faith not works* dogma is rather: *I believe in Jesus ! My sins are gone ! I rejoice in my Salvation ! I praise the name of Jesus!* There is no sense that I have begun a long journey and joined in a tough battle. That I have joined the army. The idea is rather that the battle is over and victory is won. I don't have to fight the battle, all I have to do is pick up my share of the spoils. I have retired from the army without ever being on the front line.

Voluntary Love

There is a major reason why Love is incompatible with Faith as Luther teaches it. Love has to be voluntary. You cannot talk about forced love. Love has to be active, not passive. Love has to mean doing and acting. It has to be truly free, not nominally free. It obeys itself, not some external coercion. It obeys an indwelling Spirit of Love. The teaching that God is a Father who loves us and that we must love him in return is the fundamental teaching of Jesus Christ. But man, as Augustine and Luther present him, has no capacity to do anything which requires a free response. How can he be said to *love* ?

The Bad Character and Bad Theology of Secular Christians

The theology of both Augustine and Luther was driven by the kind of men they were. The moral helplessness in Augustine's theology flows from his own character. He was subservient to the Power of the Emperor and he believed in that Power. He incorporated this belief into his theology. His conception of God is the Great Emperor up in the sky. Augustine conformed to the Imperial State Church and he would never have had the Courage to belong to the nonconforming Christian Church which did not have the backing of the magistrate, the police and the army. Luther also lived his life in dependence upon the Elector of Saxony and in service to the German princes and to the State Church to which he owed his career. Calvin addressed the *Institutes* to King Francis I. Later, he was the head of a little totalitarian Church State in Geneva, where he decreed the cold blooded execution of others, like Servetus, who disagreed with him on doctrine. Unlike Paul, who worked to support himself and shared the poverty of the early Christians, Augustine, Luther and Calvin occupied the sinecures of the State Church. They were men who had strong personal reasons for identifying with the power and wealth of the Established Church, whether that establishment was Catholic or Protestant. They were comfortable with Military Christianity and Millionaire Christianity.

Luther's Hatreds

Luther had so much bile in him that the very thought of *love your enemies, do good to those who hate you* must have choked him with rage. It is apparent from the violent hatred in Luther's treatise ***On the Jews and their lies***, (which became the model for the Nazi attack

on the Jews), his call for exterminating the rebellious peasants--***stab, smite, slay***--(which the Princes carried out), and his caustic and filthy *Table Talk*, and the savage personal animosity which creeps into all his writings, whether against Catholic opponents or rival Reformers, that Luther was full of hatred. If loving God and your neighbor and your enemies are necessary for salvation, Luther did not achieve salvation on the record of his life and work. His writings betray a basic spiritual and moral reason as to why he was so adverse to allowing that the two great commandments to love are central to the Christian faith and necessary to salvation. His passionate enthusiasm for **Acts of Hatred** and **Works of Violence** --***set fire to their synagogues or schools . . . I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed*** (LW v. 47 p. 268)--is in marked contrast to his antipathy for Good Works and Acts of Love. Do nothing for God and everything for the devil.

Rewarded According to Your Works

In 1.38 of the 1536 *Institutes* (page 40 of the Battles edition) Calvin offers an assertion rather than an argument to explain away Romans 2.6-7: *Who will render to every man according to his deeds 7 To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.* It promises ***eternal life*** to those who continue patiently in ***well-doing***. That is, in doing good. Which means ***good works*** ! Just as Luke 10.25-28 links ***eternal life*** to *loving your neighbor*.

Calvin cites and then ignores: Matthew 16.27 *For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works;* 1 Corinthians 3.8 *every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour;* 3.14 *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward;* 2 Corinthians 5.10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

And is this not the same doctrine which is found in Matthew 25.31-46 ? Which actually teaches us that the failure to perform good works will condemn us to hell ! (And Matthew 5.16.) And again in Revelations 20.11: *And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done.* And again in 2 Timothy 4.14 *Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works.* This basic Christian doctrine is not compatible with the Reformation theology which dogmatically insists that you are Saved without any regard to your works, or your lack of works, that what you do does not matter.

VIII You Can't Keep the Law

The doctrines which Luther and Calvin developed from the theology of Augustine also deny that a man can keep the law. Meanwhile, they mix up, confuse and obscure: I. **The Law**, meaning the 613 rules of the 5 books of Moses with II. The 10 Commandments with III. The Two Great Commandments set forth by Jesus Christ, to which he added: ***love one another*** and ***love your enemies*** with IV. the laws of the Empire.

Everyone Covets

Freedom of a Christian LW 31 p. 348: "Should you ask how it happens that faith alone justifies and offers us such a treasure of great benefits without works in view of the fact that so many works, ceremonies, and laws are prescribed in the Scriptures . . . the commandments show us what we ought to do but do not give us the power to do it . . . he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair. . . . For example, the commandment "you shall not covet [Exod 20.17] proves us all to be sinners, for no one can avoid coveting no matter how much he may struggle against it."

Luther here argues the doctrine of moral helplessness and inability to keep the law using an example which relies upon the vagueness of "covet." Luther uses "covet" to imply something like desire in general. But the commandments had specifically to do with coveting your neighbor's wife or his goods and clearly imply an active and aggressive attempt to take what belongs to your neighbor. Setting aside the two "covet" commandments, it cannot be argued that the other commandments were impossible to keep or that God did not expect the Jews to keep them. Obviously the 10 commandments were meant to be kept and can be kept. When you have plenty of wives, It is quite possible to keep the commandment against committing adultery. Especially when you could be immediately stoned to death if you were caught. With the rock pile handy, and the Levites monitoring your conversation, you could avoid taking the Lord's name in vain.

348 "As we fare with respect to one commandment, so we fare with all, for it is equally impossible for us to keep any one of them." Luther isn't even thinking what he is saying. Is it impossible to avoid stealing or bearing false witness ? And supposing you break a commandment. Is that the end ? Didn't the Lord build in a system for dealing with sin ? Atonement and forgiveness ? The 10 commandments never assumed that men would obey them perfectly. 348 continued: "Now when man has learned through the commandments to recognize his *HELPLESSNESS* and is distressed about how he might satisfy the law--since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope--then, being truly humbled " . . . Luther is winging it here--working out a pre-determined doctrine while borrowing phrases from the bible.

In their teaching about the commandments and the law, Luther and Calvin base their doctrines loosely on the Old Testament and ignore what Jesus taught. In Matthew 19.16-19 Jesus says to *keep the commandments . . . Thou shalt do no murder . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* Jesus here gives 5 commandments and then replaces the two *covet* commandments with *love thy neighbor*. Does Jesus give any indication here that it is impossible to keep these commandments ? That it is impossible to *love thy neighbor* ? The story of the Good Samaritan which illustrates *love thy neighbor* is clearly meant to be do-able. Why isn't it ? Matthew 25.31-46 spells out that *love thy neighbor* means you must take in the stranger etc. and that you will be condemned if you don't. Is it impossible to take in the stranger ? For modern Secular Christians it seems to be impossible. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns the criminal law against adultery into a moral commandment which prohibits even *lust* and which carries a spiritual penalty--*hell fire*--instead of stoning. (cf. John 8.3-11) Then he revokes the Old Testament law which allowed divorce. Similarly, the commandment against killing now includes hatred. (Matthew 5.21-32.)

Moral Helplessness: Calvin's Version

John Calvin has his own version of why it is impossible to keep the Law. In 1.3 of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (page 16 of the 1536 Edition as Translated and Annotated by Ford Lewis Battles) he argues that: "Even though **we have been so born** that nothing is left for us to do which could be acceptable to God, nor has it been put in our power to please him--yet we do not cease to owe the very thing we cannot supply. Inasmuch as we are God's creatures, we ought to serve his honor and glory, and obey his commandments. And we are not allowed to excuse ourselves by claiming that we lack ability and, like impoverished debtors, cannot pay our debt. For the guilt that binds us is our own, arising from our own sin, leaving us without the will or the capacity to do good [John 8:34-38; Rom. 7:15-25]. Now, since God justly avenges crimes, we must recognize that we are subject to the curse and deserve the judgment of eternal death. Indeed **there is no one of us with either the will or the ability to do his duty.**" Note that we are **born** that way. We owe what we never borrowed and cannot pay. This is how he presents the JUSTICE of God !

IX Total Depravity

Calvin Page 16 1.4 continued "To man is left no reason why he should seek in himself his righteousness, power, life, and salvation; for all these are in God only; cut off and separated from Him by sin man will find in himself only unhappiness, weakness, wickedness, death, in short, hell itself. To keep men from being ignorant of these things, the Lord engraved and, so to speak, stamped the law upon the hearts of all. But this is nothing but conscience, for us the witness within of what we owe God; it sets before us good and evil, thus accusing and condemning us, conscious as we are within ourselves that we have not discharged our duty, as was fitting."

This passage can be criticized as a distorted version of Paul's teaching but it also entirely mis-describes the situation in the Old Testament. Calvin writes about *the law* without making any distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Hebrews 8.10 cites Jeremiah 31 in stating the law will be written on our hearts as part of the **new covenant**. Not the old covenant where the whole emphasis is on the written Law of Moses which is in the custody of those who rule Israel. The individual does not have a relationship with God except through Moses, through the priesthood and through obedience to the Law which is imposed by the King. By keeping the law he avoids being stoned to death. But there is no after life and no eternal salvation. The Law and the blessing of the Law is given only to the Jews. It **Does Not Apply** to the rest of mankind. The assumption of the Old Testament is that **men can be righteous** by keeping the Law. It was a temporal righteousness whereby God allowed them to occupy the Promised Land. The punishment for individual sin was that you were stoned to death. The nearest rock pile was the argument for keeping the ten commandments. The punishment for national unrighteousness was that you would be conquered by your enemies and driven into exile.

Your Righteousness or The Law's Righteousness ?

no reason why he should seek in himself his righteousness The question for Paul is whether a believer should seek righteousness by keeping The Law. Confidence in "the works of the Law" is **not the same thing** as confidence in himself or in his own works. If you believed what is set forth in the 5 books of Moses, you had every reason to believe that *righteousness* could be achieved by meeting the requirements of The Law--performing the works demanded by The Lord. That is where Luther confused and distorted the whole question. Luther's **passive righteousness** is a righteousness that is imposed from the outside. So Luther attacks any ACTIVE righteousness; any righteousness which depends upon what we do. But, throughout the Old Testament, righteousness did depend on what they did ! What they did had to be in conformity with the ordinances of The Lord given by the Law. And, in the New Testament, what we do by way of Acts of Love for our neighbor is the test of our righteousness as defined by Matthew 25.31-46 and Luke 10.25-28 etc.

Loving God is the Wrong Way

Calvin Page 17 1.4 "we are to seek another way to salvation than the righteousness of our own works." If I attempt to Love God, I cannot do it. It means I have sought **salvation** through the **righteousness** of my own **works**. Therefore if I try to follow the First and Great Commandment and Love God, **I am off on the wrong road**, says Calvin ! A primary characteristic of real love is that it goes beyond self-seeking. It isn't that we love God in hopes of saving our own skin. Such a calculating and self-interested love is not love. We love him, if we have any capacity for love, because he is lovable, because He loves us. That consideration never seems to occur to Calvin or to Luther. Their doctrines are based upon the calculations of enlightened selfishness. Are you **SAVED** ? That's it then.

All Men Cut Off from God

cut off and separated from Him by sin Calvin means that all men are cut off from God and separated from Him by sin. But **that is not what the Old Testament teaches !** The Old Testament teaches that some men are cut off and others are not. Hosea 13.4-9 is one of many passages where the Lord reproaches the Jews for falling away. But that is not the doctrine that all men were totally depraved. 13.2 *And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images.* Cf. Deuteronomy 27.15 *Cursed be he that maketh any graven or molten image*, a commandment given to them as they are about to cross the Jordan. They have alienated themselves from God by worshipping images, contrary to His plain commandment. That is not the same doctrine as the one which says that all men have always been alienated from God.

Was it impossible for them to refrain from making these images ? Did no one in the Old Testament faithfully observe the commandment against the making and worshipping of images ? The statement that *they sin more and more* is not the same as saying that they and everyone else have ever been hopelessly lost in a state of sin, regardless of what they did. This has a specific reference to what they did. And carries the assumption that they could have refrained from doing it. They are guilty for **what they did not for what they are.** Cf. the Irish song *they scorned us just for bein what we are.* It is one thing to be estranged from God because of what you are and another to have antagonized God because you refused to comply with an ordinance which you could have kept and which others did keep. cf. Job 1.5 where he offers sacrifices because *it may be that my sons have sinned.* Clearly, Job believes that even if his sons have sinned--*cursed God in their hearts*--God will accept his sacrifice as atonement.

stamped the law upon the hearts of all The 10 commandments constitute a natural law which is the same as conscience. But the other 601 commandments of The Law (613 minus 10 and minus the 2 great commandments) focus upon the relationship between The Lord and his peculiar people. They are a specific set of laws which govern a specific situation in which Israel is God's chosen nation at the expense of all others. That is, these laws are specifically written as part of a covenant which excludes the rest of mankind. The Promised Land is promised to no one except the Jews. The Lord is not offering victory in war to all nations that establish a Temple in his honor.

Impossible to Keep the Law = Impossible to Love God

Calvin Page 176 VI 3: "The precept of the law is that *we should love our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.* [Deut. 6:5] . . . What are they to do here, while they feel that there is nothing they are less able to do than to fulfill the law ? . . . They will, they aspire, they try, but not at all **with due perfection.** If they look at the law, whatever work they may attempt or intend they see accursed. . . . For the **law in requiring perfect love condemns all imperfection.** . . . See how all our works are under the curse of the law if they are measured by the standard of the law !" Here Calvin imposes upon *Love God with all your heart* the dogma that it requires imperfect people to love God with a perfection they can never achieve. Calvin cites Deuteronomy 6.5 as his source for this Law and ignores what Jesus Christ teaches about this Law. He makes it an absolute standard which no one can meet, because God is perfect and I am imperfect. Did Jesus not say that when I love my neighbor (Luke 10.25-28) and when I love *the least of these* (Matthew

25.31-46) I thereby love God sufficiently to please him ? By greatly exaggerating what Love God and your Neighbor requires, **and ignoring what Jesus said about it**, Calvin gives himself and us the excuse for not doing it. That is what makes this theology **SPIRITUAL POISON.**

In discussing "the law" Calvin leaves out the "second greatest commandment" as stated in Galatians 5.14: *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* A second distortion is that he treats what Jesus calls "the first and greatest commandment" as "an example"--as one of the precepts of The Law. Whereas Jesus says that these two commandments summarize and fulfill the whole law. Where Luther relied upon the vagueness of *COVET*, to argue that no one can keep the Law, Calvin hangs the same doctrine on an interpretation of *LOVE GOD* which just ignores everything that Jesus said about it.

X Jesus Teaches the Opposite

The difficulty of loving God with your whole heart is greatly modified by the teaching of Jesus that loving your neighbor is the way you love God. In telling the story of the Good Samaritan and in instructing us to feed the hungry etc. in Matthew 25.31-46 Jesus gives us a simple and practical program whereby we can fulfill the two great commandments which are combined into one in Matthew 25.31-46. (a text which Calvin never discusses in this edition of his *Institutes*)

It is apparent that Jesus Christ did expect his followers to keep these two commandments. In Matthew 25.31-46 and in Luke 10.25-37 he describes in a simple and sensible way what he means by these commandments. Is it impossible for us to follow the example of the Good Samaritan ? Does He tell us to take in the homeless person only so that we will condemn ourselves when we refuse to do it ?

And Paul says the same thing in Galatians 5.13-14: *by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* Is the admonition of this verse canceled by Romans 3.23 *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ?* Obviously not. There is no suggestion at all here that you cannot *serve one another by love* or that Paul stuck this in just to convict people of sin and show them how morally helpless they are. 5.16 *Walk in the Spirit* Paul says. What Spirit ? The Holy Spirit of Love, of Truth, of Courage. And how can you walk in the Spirit if you do not love God and your neighbor ? What claim do you have to be a Christian ? 5.18 *if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.* That is, you have fulfilled the law.

Calvin invents major difficulties in respect to keeping the law which are not found in the law. Granted, it is difficult to love God with your whole heart if we interpret that in some abstract and absolute sense. It is no doubt difficult to love your neighbor as much as yourself. But it is perfectly possible for us to follow the example of the Good Samaritan. It is perfectly possible to take in the stranger. And since Jesus explicitly commands these things in the context of fulfilling the Two Great Commandments, why should we not take his word for it that we are thereby keeping the Two Great Commandments ? And, whatever difficulty we had before, it must vanish if we truly receive the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

In respect to the 10 commandments, Is it impossible to keep them ? Did God decree them only to watch us fail ? Is it impossible to obey the injunctions: Do Not Kill; Do Not Steal; Do Not Commit Adultery ? We are supposed to go beyond these commandments in loving God and in loving our neighbor. But that is hardly an excuse for throwing up our hands in respect to the possibility of keeping the 10 commandments. Is it impossible to refrain from Bearing False Witness ? For some people that may be true.

In respect to **The Law**, which means the 613 injunctions of the Torah, there is no impossibility in doing these things--no impossibility in sacrificing pigeons and goats at the

proper times; no impossibility in avoiding pork and oysters; no impossibility in washing your hands. Here Calvin has introduced another distortion: VI 3. "See how all our works are under the curse of the law if they are measured by the standard of the law !" That isn't what Paul means by *the curse of the law*. As stated in Galatians 3.10, the curse of the law comes upon those who fail to keep all the rules. Paul doesn't say it is not possible to do these things. They mostly come down to nuisance regulations which are well within the powers of a man to do. You don't have to love God or your neighbor in order to refrain from pork, participate in the festivals etc. (You can keep the law cf. Deuteronomy 30.11-20 Paul says that he kept the Law, Philippians 3.6)

Calvin, following Luther, lumps the Two Great Commandments in with The Law. So he puts the teaching of Jesus in respect to the Law of the New Covenant, which *fulfills* the Law of the Old Covenant, under the heading of The Law of the Old Covenant. By what right ? Following Luther, he makes the Two Great Commandments **subordinate** to the 10 Commandments whereas Jesus says that they fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Then he takes everything that Paul says about The Law as applying to the Two Great Commandments as well as to the 10 commandments as well as to the remaining 601 Commandments of the Law--which is what Paul meant.

Calvin Page 17 1.4 continued "For the Lord promises that, if anyone should perfectly and exactly fulfill by his effort whatever is commanded, he will receive the reward of eternal life [Lev. 18:5] if any could be found among men." Calvin ignores the promise of eternal life given in Luke 10.25-37 to a man who loves his neighbor as best he can, however imperfect his Samaritan faith. Instead he gives an Old Testament citation which says nothing about it--

Take a Bath

Eternal Life ? Leviticus 18.5 *Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them. I am the Lord.* 18.3 *neither shall ye walk in their ordinances [Canaan and Egypt]* 18.4 *Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein. I am the Lord your God.* The promise is a prosperous temporal life. Just before this in Chapter 17 the Lord orders them to avoid the eating of blood. And that, if they eat of an animal that has died or been torn by beasts they must bathe and wash their clothes. Are these ordinances impossible to keep ? **Is it impossible to take a bath ?** Were they given in order to convict men of their sinfulness ? Did they win eternal life if they would only take a bath ?

Nor contra Calvin, does Deuteronomy 27.26 have anything to do with *the judgment of eternal death upon all who do not fully and without exception keep the whole righteousness of the law*. Look at the set of commandments which The Lord gives to the Jews in Deuteronomy chapter 27 just before they cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. Keeping these commandments are the terms of their lease on the Promised Land. They are accompanied by *blessings* if they keep them (chapter 28) and *curses* if they don't. Are these commandments impossible to keep: ? 27.2 set up stones and write the law on them ? 27.4 build an altar without using any iron tool and make burnt offerings upon it ? 27.15 Don't make any graven or molten image ? 27.16 honor your father and your mother ? 27.17 Don't remove your neighbor's landmark ? 27.18 Don't make the blind wander out of the way ? 27.19 Don't pervert the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless, or a widow ? 27.20 Don't lie with your father's wife ? 27.21 Don't lie with any manner of beast ? 27.22 Don't lie with your sister ? 27.23 Don't lie with your mother-in-law ? 27.24 Don't smite your neighbor secretly ? 27.25 Don't take payment to slay an innocent person ? Clearly, they were expected to keep these commandments. And they could keep them. Don't lie with a beast. Don't lie with your father's wife. Don't take money to slay an innocent person.

These are not impossible commandments. Especially in a rocky country and in a close knit tribal society where death by stoning was the immediate penalty for violating these laws. You Can Do It ! And You Had Better Do It ! 27.26 *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.*

*This commandment is not far off
Neither is it beyond the sea*

Calvin cites 27.26 as showing that no one can keep the law and so everyone is condemned by it. But any half decent pagan would keep the laws stated in 27.2-25, even without the threat of being immediately stoned to death and even without the threat of The Lord's curse replacing his blessing. It is clear that The Lord expected these commandments to be obeyed as he spells out in Deuteronomy 30.11-20: *For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ? 14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. 15. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; 16 In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply. And the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. 17 But if thine heart turn away, so that they wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them, 18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. 20 That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him. For he is thy life, and the length of thy days, that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

XI The Lease on the Promised Land

The curses and blessings pronounced in these chapters have to do with the nation rather than the individual and the promised reward is not eternal life, it is safety and prosperity in the national home land across the Jordan. 28.3-6 promises increase of cattle etc. 28.7 promises defeat of the enemies of Israel. Deuteronomy chapter 29 warns them that the Lord will do to them what he did to Egypt if they worship idols. Deuteronomy chapter 30 further emphasizes that the Lord expects them to keep these ordinances and that they can keep them. He promises further that even if they have been taken captive for failing to keep the law, he will still honor his promise if they repent. In sum, the Reformation dogma that they could not keep the Law and were not really expected to keep it **has been imposed** upon scriptures like these which **state the opposite**.

There is an insane perfectionism in Calvin and Luther, in what they demand of men. They demand it to show that it is not possible. Since we cannot be Absolutely Good, we can't be good at all. Therefore we have only Passive Righteousness. Calvin writes about The Law of The Old Covenant, not as something which passed away because of Jesus Christ, (Hebrews 8.13) but as still in force although impossible to keep. Which is the opposite of what Paul taught. The 10 commandments have been summarized as the 2 commandments by Jesus Christ. The 2 commandments become possible when we receive the Spirit. The Reformers ignore what Jesus taught and impose their own doctrine.

*not one can be pointed out
we are able to carry out exactly nothing*

Calvin Page 17 1.4 continued ". . . reward of eternal life [Lev. 18:5]. By this he undoubtedly points out to us that the perfection of life taught in the law is truly righteousness, is so considered with him, and would be worthy of such a reward if any could be found among men. But he pronounces a curse and announces the judgment of eternal death upon all who do not fully and without exception keep the whole righteousness of the law. [Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10] Surely by this punishment he constrains all men that ever were, are, or will be. Among them **not one can be pointed out** who is not a transgressor of the law. The law teaches us God's will, which we are constrained to fulfill and to which we are in debt; it shows us how **we are able to carry out exactly nothing of what God has commanded us** [Rom. 3:19; 7:7-25] . . . it is a mirror for us Now we are ready to understand what we are to learn from the law. God is the Creator, or Lord and Father. For this reason **we owe him glory, honor, and love**. Since however, **not one of us performs these duties, we all deserve the curse, judgment**, in short eternal death. Therefore **we are to seek another way to salvation than the righteousness of our own works**. This way is forgiveness of sins. Then since it is not in our power or ability to discharge what we owe the law, we must despair of ourselves and must seek and await help from another quarter. After we descend to this humility and submission, the Lord will shine upon us and show himself lenient, kindly, gentle, indulgent."

impossible to keep any of these 613 ordinances
= impossible to wash your hands etc.

The law teaches us God's will, which we are constrained to fulfill and to which we are in debt; it shows us how we are able to carry out exactly nothing of what God has commanded us [Rom. 3:19; 7:7-25] . . . it is a mirror for us What can he mean here by "the law" ? It is some abstract ideal of *the law* which is something other than The Law of the 613 ordinances of the Old Testament. Who is **WE** ? We ancient Hebrews ? Why is it that we can carry out *exactly nothing* ? Is it impossible to obey Thou Shalt not Steal ? Is it impossible to take it easy on the Sabbath by watching the football game ? Is it impossible to wash your hands before eating in accordance with the rules for ritual cleanliness ?

Paul Kept The Law

In Philippians 3.6 Paul says of himself: *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*. He is not saying that no one can keep any of the laws. He is saying rather that we are *not justified by the deeds of the law*. Romans 7.7-25 *Is the law sin* ? etc. It does not say that we cannot keep the law. Rather it presents the believer as still entangled with sin while he is trying to keep the law. What Paul means is that the practice of the Jewish religion did not lead to holiness. Only through Jesus Christ was he delivered. That is not the same as saying that it was impossible to practice the Jewish religion. That doctrine, the doctrine of Moral Helplessness, originally from Augustine, deeply infects all of the theology of the Protestant Reformation. But it is alien to the Old Covenant and it is alien to the New Covenant. It is one of Augustine's distortions of Christian theology (which I described at length in *The Church of the Empire*) which was copied and expanded by Luther and Calvin.

he pronounces a curse and announces the judgment of eternal death upon all who do not fully and without exception keep the whole righteousness of the law [Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10]. The curse is not *eternal death*, it is exile from the Promised Land etc. Deuteronomy chapter 28 sets forth the blessings versus the curses. *without exception* demands an impossible perfection. But The Lord provided ways by which sin was forgiven. The repentant exiles could return to the Promised Land.

The Law was for The Jews

"Surely by this punishment he constrains all men that ever were, are, or will be." Deuteronomy 27.26 has a very limited reference. Deuteronomy 26.16 to 28.7 is taught directly to the Jews at the time when they were about to cross the Jordan River to take possession of the Promised Land. It has specifically to do with the Jews at a particular time in their exodus, not with all men at all times. It has to do with their Exclusive Covenant made with The Lord. It was the condition for them getting and keeping possession of the land beyond the Jordan. They were expected to keep these ordinances and threatened with a specific curse if they did not keep them. They would be exiled from the Promised Land. 27.2-25 is a set of perfectly sensible ordinances which they can and must keep. *And all the people shall say Amen* was their response.

God Demands the Impossible

We owe him glory, honor, and love. Since however, not one of us performs these duties, we all deserve the curse, judgment, in short eternal death. What's wrong with the formula that Jesus uses, the First and Great Commandment is to **Love God with all thy heart** ? Why does Calvin need to re-formulate it ? To obscure the fact that he is teaching a doctrine which is at odds with what Jesus taught ? Where is there any indication by Jesus that he knows we cannot keep the Commandment to Love God ? Does God demand perfect love from imperfect people ? Did my mother love me *perfectly*, or not at all ? Does my dog love me *perfectly* ? Does God demand that we love him *perfectly* ? Does he create imperfect people and then demand perfection from them ? Then He must be as big a knot head as "Saint" Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin and the modern TV evangelist.

Did Jesus Christ demand *perfect love* from his followers ? Did he demand that they love him beyond their capacity to love ? It is clear from the gospels that He located his demand within the limits of what they were capable of. Didn't the Apostles of Jesus love Him ? Did He not accept the love of Peter and James and John ? Is it impossible for me to follow their example ? Of course it isn't. That is the **MORALLY INSANE DISTORTION** which arises from the doctrine of Man's Moral Helplessness and the Bondage of his Will. As a matter of iron logic, it means that man is hopelessly depraved and that all of his works are therefore unrighteous. It is all the same whether you murdered a dozen people or failed to wash your hands. No reason to distinguish one from the other. The thief and the honest man are shoved into the same category because both *covet*.

The corollary doctrine is that man can only be saved by the one time act of God, an act that is complete and final. You were condemned, now you are Saved--forever. There is no role for any "right acts" on your part. They are irrelevant to the drama of Salvation. That is why "the righteousness of Christ alone" is all that matters. His right act saved you. That's it. Your right act--loving God or your neighbor--is superfluous. Is presumptuous. You can't do it anyway. God told us to do it just to prove that we couldn't. It is some kind of game that only John Calvin was clever enough to figure out.

Melanchthon echoes Luther's doctrine: "Therefore, no matter how many works of the law are done without faith, man sins." But how does that square with the story of the Good Samaritan. What faith did he have ? The Reformers want to include **Love thy Neighbor** with the Law. But the exemplar of **Love thy Neighbor** is presented by Jesus as doing a good work and performing an act of love towards his "neighbor" despite the deficiency of his Samaritan faith. There is no trace in this story of the Reformation Dogma that we can do nothing good and that *faith*, meaning *Passive Righteousness*, is all that is required of us.

XII Keeping The Law: Just Men and Women

not one can be pointed out who is not a transgressor of the law says Calvin. But that is negated by dozens of Old Testament verses: Genesis 6.9 *Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations and Noah walked with God;* 7.1 *thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.* Deuteronomy 1.36 *Caleb . . . hath wholly followed the Lord.* 2 Samuel 4.11 *wicked men have slain a righteous man.* Job 1.1 1.8 2.3 *a perfect and an upright man.* Psalms **100 references** to *righteous, righteousness* for example: Psalm 32.11 *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart;* and Psalm 36.10 *O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee, and thy righteousness to the upright in heart;* and Psalm 37.37 *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.* Proverbs chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, many references. Isaiah 26.7 *the way of the just is uprightness.* Ezekiel 14.14 & 20 *Noah, Daniel and Job . . . deliver their own souls by their righteousness.* Ezekiel 18.20 *the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him.* Ezekiel 33.13 *if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered* implies that he can trust in it, if he does not commit iniquity. And negates the dogma that once you are Saved, it covers all future sins.

New Testament references: Matthew 19.17-20 *keep the commandments . . . All these I have observed* Mark 6.20 *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy* Luke 1.6 *Zacharias and Elisabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* Luke 2.25 *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him.* 2.36 Anna the prophetess Acts 10.22 *Cornelius the centurion, a just man* Note that Cornelius was already a just man when he received the Holy Spirit in 10.22; Simeon also; Romans 2.13 *the doers of the law shall be justified* Philippians 3.6 *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* Paul kept the law.

There are verses which support the contrary argument: Psalm 143.2 *in thy sight shall no man living be justified;* Ecclesiastes 7.20 *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.* Isaiah 53.6 *All we like sheep have gone astray* Micah 7.2 *The godly man has perished from the earth, and there is none upright among men; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts his brother with a net.* Romans 3.9-10 *as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one;* Romans 3.23 *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

But you can't hang a doctrine on these verses and ignore all contrary verses the way it is done by the **bible abusers**. These verses are rhetorical and can be reconciled with verses which say the opposite. Paul says he was *blameless* in respect to *the righteousness which is in the law.* (Philippians 3.6) and then in 3.8-9 goes on to say that the righteousness which comes by the law is *dung* compared to the righteousness which is of God by faith. Which is not the doctrine that keeping the law is impossible, or that no one ever kept it.

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In this context, it seems to mean that none have attained the perfection which would entitle us to attain eternal life with God. But that is a far different doctrine than that which Calvin, Luther and Augustine impose upon the Christian religion. Their doctrine says that we are entirely evil by nature and can do no good. And it is not the same as saying that there were no men who kept The Law of the Old Covenant and that The Lord never expected them to keep it. These assertions are patently false and constitute bible abuse by those who make them.

Paul's Teaching: Romans 3.10-20

Romans 3.10-20 is a compendium of a series of Old Testament verses, which show the context of what Paul is saying--Psalm 14.1-2 (Psalm 53.1-2) psalm 5.9 psalm 140.3 psalm 10.7 Isaiah 59.7-8 psalm 36.1.

Psalm 14.1-3 (= Psalm 53) *The fool says in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none that does good. There is none that does good, no not one 5 God is with the generation of the righteous.* Does this mean that no men can ever do good because they are wholly depraved and evil from birth? Does it mean that it is impossible to keep the Law? Neither of these doctrines is here. *the generation of the righteous* in verse 5 does not square with the assertion that there aren't any righteous. Psalm 52.1 *the godly 52.6 the righteous.*

Paul cannot take these verses out of context any more than any one else can. They do not say that all men are always inevitably evil. In fact, it is clearly implied that men can do good and that they should do good. The very next psalm, # 15, describes a righteous man: *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. . . . He that doeth these things shall never be moved.* Psalm 14 may be taken as saying: "this whole generation is perverse!" But that is not the same as saying "there never was a good man." "No one can be good." "Since Adam, all men, women and children have been evil."

Psalm 5.9 cf R. 3.13 *their throat is an open sepulchre 5.7-8 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple 8 Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.* The rest of psalm 5 calls upon God to destroy the unrighteous and to *let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee 12 For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous;* So the psalm read as a whole clearly does not say that all men are unrighteous. The writer of psalm 5 makes a clear distinction between himself and those he is denouncing. The wicked are contrasted with David himself and others "who love thy name." This psalm indicates that some are righteous. He does not conclude that he cannot be righteous.

Psalm 140.3 cf R. 3.13 *the poison of asps is under their lips 140.13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name. The upright shall dwell in thy presence.* Look at the contrast between the wicked and those they come against--David and others who are *righteous* and *upright*. Hardly the doctrine that no one is righteous. psalm 10.7 cf R. 3.14 *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness* psalm 10 is a description of the evil doings of the wicked together with an appeal that God protect the humble, the fatherless and the oppressed There is no doctrine in this psalm that all men are equally wicked without distinction. 10.2 *the wicked hotly pursue the poor* describes the activities of wicked men but clearly implies that those they pursue are not wicked.

Isaiah 59.7-8 cf R. 3.15 *Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways* Isaiah 59 is a general denunciation of the wickedness of the Jews. Calls for repentance. chapters 58 and 60 have another theme of God's promises if they keep the sabbath etc.

Psalm 36.1 *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* psalm 36.10 *O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee, and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.* 36.12 *There are the workers of iniquity fallen;* And look also at 34.16-17 *The righteous cry . . . Again there is a clear distinction in this psalm between the wicked man who has no fear of God and the upright in heart.*

Man's Depravity

Calvin's Institutes, page 31, I.27 has a series of proof texts showing man's utter depravity: "Surely those cut themselves off from self-knowledge who judge themselves to be other (45) than Scripture describes all the children of Adam to be. Their excellence Scripture sets off with these titles: that they are of wicked and inflexible heart; [Jer 17:9] that the whole imagination of men's hearts is evil from their first years; [Gen. 8:21] *that all their thoughts are vain*; [Ps. 94:11] that they are *the light of darkness*; [cf. Job 10:22] that all like sheep have gone astray, each having departed from his path; [Matt. 6:23] that not a single one has been found who does good; [Is. 53:6] that no one of them understands or seeks after God; [Ps. 14:2] that they do not have the fear of God before their eyes; [cf. Ex. 20:20] in short, that they are flesh [Gen. 6:3]. . . . All our works, if judged by their own worth are nothing but corruption and filth."

Calvin thereby imposes his doctrine with a handful of verses. *Contra Matthew 10.42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward. evil from their first years* Contra Jesus setting a child in their midst as the exemplar of innocence. 32 "Moreover sin is an utterly execrable thing in God's sight and of such gravity that men's whole righteousness, gathered together in one heap, could not make compensation for a single sin." *Contra Luke 7.47 her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.*

Summary: none of these references, read in context, support the doctrine that no one is righteous. If that appears at all, it appears as a judgment upon a particular group or generation. Just as Jesus denounced the ***Generation of Vipers!*** not meaning to include everyone in that epithet. In all of these psalms or in next door psalms there are verses which clearly indicate that David and others contrasted themselves with the wicked.

If Paul really did intend to argue in Romans 3.10-20 that there is no such thing as a good man and never has been, then Paul was arguing contrary to the Old Testament scriptures he uses, while failing to point that out. The safer assumption is that Augustine and the Reformers are misreading Saint Paul [or interpolating him] when they find this doctrine in these verses. You have to read Old Testament verses in the context of New Testament verses which cite them. But, where the meaning is ambiguous, you have to read them in their original context and assume that the New Testament meaning is not different, unless the New Testament writer clearly states a contrast. So Paul must have meant what these references say: the contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

Augustine and his followers, Luther and Calvin, impose their doctrine on what is said in the Old Testament. Wherever something is said about the Law not being kept, that no one is keeping the Law, they say "yes and no one ever could keep the Law because men are totally depraved and morally helpless because of Original Sin." At the same time they insist that men are somehow morally responsible even though they are morally helpless. You owe 1 million dollars even though you personally never borrowed 1 million dollars and even though you can't pay it. Their doctrine slanders the justice of God. And gives men the excuse for not doing what God asks us to do.

you didn't have to be perfect

You didn't have to be perfect or lose it all. There was a system of forgiveness for sin prescribed in the law, cf Job 1.5 and 42.8. It isn't that no room was made for failure. Proverbs 24.16 *for a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again;* Ezekiel 18.21 *But if the wicked man will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and*

do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, and he shall not die. 22 All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him. In his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. He is expected to keep the law, but when he does not keep it, he can still repent and atone.

These are four different propositions:

- I. I have never sinned.
- II. I have never done any good action. ALL of the actions of my entire life have been sins.
- III. If I have ever committed even one sin, however minor, it means I am wholly evil, corrupt and depraved in the sight of God. One sin makes you helpless and hopeless and there is nothing you can do to escape your condition.
- IV. Even if you have never personally committed a sin (such as a new born baby) you are still a Great Sinner because all human beings are totally depraved and incapable of doing anything but evil, from the egg. All men are evil by nature. All women are evil by nature. All children are evil by nature. It's not what you did, it's what you are. Man was an evil creation, or, what comes practically to the same doctrine, man became an evil creation after Adam's Fall.

XIII Great Sinner Doctrine

In modern TV evangelism there is a regular caricature of the doctrines of the Reformation which leads to a Salvation Drama revolving around the Great Sinner and his Instant Salvation **VIA ACCEPTANCE CARD.** *I was a Pirate who terrorized both coasts ! Women fainted at my approach ! I drank a gallon of rum before breakfast ! I made the governor walk the plank ! Then JESUS SAVED ME ! January 1st, 7:13 p.m. Since then, my acne has disappeared and I have made 10 million dollars via blessed investments.* In real life, this fellow was a failure as a sinner as in everything else he tried. He once thought to commit adultery but lost his nerve. Got sick on two beers. Took some stationary home from the office, then lived in fear that the boss would find out.

The exaggerated emphasis on what a terrible sinner I was, is used to obscure the real **SIN OF OMISSION**--the Great Sin of Doing Nothing--which is epidemic among Secular Christians, and especially among those who suppose themselves to be SAVED. The stress on the drama of Jesus saving me from my sins distracts us from our real sin. The illustration of the Good Samaritan and Matthew 25.31-46 place the major stress of the Christian life on the positive obligation to rescue others. In the gospels, Jesus shows himself merciful towards fallen women and those who have committed sins of the flesh. But he strictly condemns those who omit acts of love and mercy.

It isn't that we are murderers. We wouldn't have the nerve. Rather we go along with murder by war and murder by abortion, because we haven't the Courage to oppose it. We go along with murder by starvation and neglect because we are too busy with our investments to worry much about what is happening to others. The doctrine of *saved by faith, not works*, soothes those who might otherwise recognize that they are not living the Christian life which is described in the gospels and epistles. It lulls those who shrug off what is required by The two Great Commandments. The whole focus of Reformation theology is on saving my own skin without any effort on my part. The doctrine that I DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING TO BE SAVED is very popular. It won't be so popular with those who have to stand before the Judgment which is described in Matthew 25.31-46.

Fallen Israel

Reformation theology confuses the fate of Fallen Israel with the question of Fallen Human Nature. The Reformation doctrine of the total depravity of Man is not just based upon Adam's Fall. It is also based upon the theology of Israel's Fall which is found in the earlier part of the Old Testament. The major premise of primitive Hebrew theology is that God punishes sin immediately here in this world and that he rewards righteousness by worldly success. So the fall of Israel has to be attributed to national sin. Which means that everybody is a sinner. Even if everyone isn't a sinner, the fact of the King being a sinner is enough. Just as everyone is a sinner because Adam sinned, so everyone is a sinner because the King has sinned.

But it was bad theology. The doctrine that God reliably rewards and punishes in this world is false. The doctrine that God is a God of Battles, who gives Military Victory to the Righteous, is false. The doctrine that God chose one nation out of all others to display his military pride and glory is false. The doctrine that he switched his fickle choice to the Roman Empire and then, much later, to the American empire is also false.

distinction without a difference:

We don't abolish good works says Calvin,
we only condemn all pursuit of them by men

Calvin 38 1.36 refutation of those "who slanderously charge us with abolishing good works when **WE CONDEMN ALL PURSUIT OF THEM BY MEN**; with preaching too easy forgiveness of sins when we make it free;" Looking at the churches which rely upon Reformation theology 450 years later, it is fair to say that they offer cheap grace and that they effectively teach people to forget good works. The Reformers do everything they can to disparage good works and then argue that they haven't done this somehow. Even though you don't need to do good works you will. You will continue to go in to your job every day--if you feel like it--even after you win the lottery. You will continue to make the monthly mortgage payment even after you discover a loophole in the contract which dispenses you from the obligation. Sure you will.

In fact that attitude of **CONDEMNATION OF ALL PURSUIT OF GOOD WORKS BY MEN** is characteristic of a large segment of modern Protestantism where it serves as a kind of insulating self righteousness against being shamed into doing the works of mercy by the example of others. It provides the perfect excuse for treating the works of mercy as optional. Something to be done as a hobby, if and when I feel like it, rather than as the necessary work of the Spirit which is essential to living a Christian life. There is a conspicuous neglect of good works in modern secular Christianity. The personal acts of love required by Matthew 25.31-46 are turned over to professional organizations or to the government itself. *Professional*, meaning those who get paid for doing it. Versus *amateur* in the old sense of doing something for love and without payment. Which is clearly what Jesus commanded. And he commanded individuals, not organizations.

Calvin 1.34 continued "In brief, because all his things are ours and we have all things in him, **IN US THERE IS NOTHING.**" The peculiar idea here is oriental, not Christian, in the way that it makes the person disappear into God. This **PASSIVISM** includes a kind of mysticism which is quite different from the spirit of the early church in which Christians are apostles and prophets, in which they carry on the work of Jesus Christ in partnership with his Holy Spirit.

You have the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ in you, but you still are nothing ? Instead, God is up in heaven. I go where he is by a process of salvation whereby I empty myself of myself. I am nothing, God is everything. The root of this has to be the doctrine, whether

Manichaean or mystical or Quietist or otherwise labeled, that all is evil except for God. That God is to be found apart from his creation. Contrast this attitude with the attitude of a real Christian, a man who had the Holy Spirit as Saint Paul did. A man who had put on Christ, who had become *another Christ*.

It is true that *grace is free* in the sense that it is a *gift*. But do gifts really confer no obligation ? If someone gives you a birthday gift, are you not expected to make a gift in return when that person's birthday comes ? So when God gives me his Love, is that the end of it ? Does he not rather give me his Spirit of Love, with the expectation that I will Love Him in return ? With the expectation that I will love my neighbor ? That I will love the brothers and the sisters as Jesus loved them ?

Men Can Do No Good

Calvin 38 1.36: "And we are not dividing the credit for good works between God and man, as they do, but we are preserving it whole, complete and unimpaired for the Lord. To man we assign only this in good works: that he pollutes and contaminates by his impurity those very things which were good. For nothing proceeds from a man, however perfect he be, that is not defiled by some spot. Let the Lord, then, **call to judgment** the best in human works and he will not recognize in them his own righteousness but man's confusion."

Is God in need of the exclusive *credit for good works* which Calvin awards him ? And have we no need for such *credit* ? Instead we are to find a perverse righteousness in proclaiming our own depravity and wallowing in it ? The less we do and the more we grovel and throw dirt on ourselves, the better God likes it ? Calvin's God does anyway. cf The custom of the Roman emperors whereby men had to crawl in their presence. Contra Jesus washing the feet of his disciples.

call to judgment How does this doctrine square with the description of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25.31-46 ? Does the judge not recognize *his own righteousness* in these *human works* ? Calvin is thinking only of his dogma, not of what is actually found in the gospels and the epistles.

The Lord demanded that only *unblemished* animals be used for sacrifice. He specifically prohibited the Jews from getting rid of their sick or lame animals by palming them off on the priests to be used for sacrifice. But an *unblemished* animal is not the same thing as a *perfect* animal. There is no such thing as a perfect animal or a perfect man. But if God wanted a perfect creation why did he create an imperfect one ?

The record of the Old Testament shows that God deals with his creation as he finds it. He gives us commandments to keep that we can keep. He asks sacrifices of us that we are able to make. And so, when Jesus commands us to Love God and Neighbor, there is no reason to suppose that he does not expect us to do it.

Was the Good Samaritan perfect ? Did Jesus condemn his works because he wasn't perfect ? Jesus doesn't say so, he says the opposite. Jesus praises the widow for giving her two mites to the temple because she has made a whole-hearted gift. He says that the publican went home justified because of his humble confession. In these and many other passages he shows God as a Father who values the gift of a crumpled dandelion from his child. The experience of a real spiritual life is that you can love first, just the way the Good Samaritan did, and that faith will grow out of persistence in good works. That is, Love is primary to our relationship with God. If you truly love your neighbor even while you perceive God dimly if at all, your faith in God will grow. A child senses his father's love and experiences the benefits of it long before he really knows his father. Even the unjust man can rejoice in the rain from heaven and learn to feel some gratitude towards an unknown Father who loves us.

Calvin's God is a Tyrant who demands that we make bricks without straw. Then, in lieu of whipping us for our failure, he takes control of us through Sovereign Grace. Paul says we are now sons of God and no longer servants. The Reformation doctrine is that we have gone from being slaves of the devil to being slaves of God. Luther's *Freedom of a Christian* rhetoric is rendered meaningless by his actual doctrines of Bondage of the Will, Irresistible Grace and Passive Righteousness. In this theological schema God alone has freedom, nor can he give it to us.

Men's Efforts are Accursed

Calvin 38-39 1.36 continued "For this reason we **condemn men's efforts**, that is, **whatever man has or does by himself we declare accursed.**" This statement is a good example of the Reformation's extreme doctrine. Like Luther and like Augustine he in effect denies the reality and the implications of John 20.22 ***Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*** Aside from theological argument, there was a basic reason for this: the Holy Spirit had long since departed from the Worldly Church to which these men belonged.

The attitude created by this **QUIETIST** doctrine permeates modern Secular Christianity. All the things you do in pursuit of wealth and pleasure are blest but personal actions which aim at pursuing good and opposing evil are suspect as usurpations of the functions of God and Government. So Secular Christians are checked by fear and weakened by lack of faith from the challenge of building a Christian society. It is up to God and the Prince to put things right. My function is to pray.

Calvin 39 1.37.: "Now it is plain which persons prefer to cheapen the forgiveness of sins. They make believe that God is appeased by their wretched satisfaction, that is, dung [Phil. 3:8]. We affirm that **the guilt of sin is too heavy to be atoned for by such light trifles**, that it is too great an offense against God to be remitted by these worthless satisfactions, that this is the prerogative of Christ's blood alone." Philippians 3.8 and before says that Paul counts as worthless the righteousness he achieved as a Jew who kept the Law, compared to the righteousness he now has through Jesus Christ. But Paul is not talking about good works and he is not talking about the acts of love towards God and neighbor commanded in the gospel and commanded by Paul himself.

Are the works of mercy described in Matthew 25.31-46 no more than *dung* ? If so, why does Jesus describe our salvation or condemnation as depending upon whether we do them ? Why does He tie our relationship to Him into whether we fed the hungry and sheltered the homeless if these things are irrelevant to our relationship with God ? If these are not the "good works" which Calvin is referring to, what is he referring to and why doesn't he distinguish them from the works described there ? Calvin avoids this gospel text.

The Purpose of Good Works

The reason we carry out the works of mercy mandated by Matthew 25.31-46 is to avoid the great sin of omission, the great sin of refusing to love God and neighbor. Jesus is very little bothered about people guilty of sins of commission. He is tolerant of women whose virtue has been lost. But there is a heavy condemnation upon those who are guilty of sins of omission--the hard-hearted who do not love. In short he condemns those who neglect good works ! Like Luther, Calvin ignores I. the great sin of omission, the neglect of the works of mercy described in Matthew 25.31-46. II. the injunctions to love God and neighbor which are mandates to do good works, not to make atonement for sin, but to go beyond sin and beyond the question of atonement for sin.

The works of mercy and the acts of love are not ordained as atonement for sin as were the *works of the law*. But Matthew 25.31-46 clearly says that performing the works of mercy shows that I love God and leads me to eternal life. There is an obvious doctrine in these verses: God wants to live with those who love Him and **has no interest in living with those who do not love Him**. He isn't playing some game with us, with some elaborate and mysterious set of rules. Neither does he have any interest in collecting human slugs or human vegetables and clasping them to his breast. If you don't love Him, why would he want to spend eternity in your company ? If you do love Him, now is the time to show it by loving your neighbor.

The Wrong Question

Calvin asks and answers the wrong question here: QUESTION: Can good works atone for my sins ? ANSWER: NO ! Only the blood of Jesus Christ can atone for my sins ! Let me ask and answer a similar wrong question: QUESTION: Can my faith atone for my sins ? ANSWER: NO ! Only the blood of Jesus Christ can atone for my sins !

Calvin's question is the wrong question because it puts terms where they do not belong. The purpose of good works is not to provide an alternative to the blood of Jesus. (That is the accusation which Paul makes against relying upon *the works of The Law*.) Good Works are Acts of Love which manifest the Love of God and the Love of Neighbor which are essential to living the Christian life.

My faith does not replace the blood of Jesus Christ. My love does not replace the blood of Jesus Christ. My Acts of Love do not replace the blood of Jesus Christ. My Good Acts (Works Deeds) do not replace the blood of Jesus Christ. All of which is only to say that I am saved by his love for me, not by my love for him.

But why separate them ? One is the response to the other. One is the CONDITION of the other. That is, God won't love me if I don't love him--if I don't love my neighbor. He won't forgive my sins if I do not forgive the sins of others. (Matthew 6.12, Luke 6.37, etc.) That is what Calvin and Luther don't believe. They want to believe that God's UNCONDITIONAL and IRRESISTIBLE grace will save me regardless of what I do or don't do. This Reformation doctrine of passive salvation denies the Spirit and denies the blood of the martyrs.

Blood of the Martyrs

Christ's blood alone But what of the blood of Stephen, of James, of Peter, of Paul ? Is there not a relationship between their sacrifice and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ? Do they not receive Christ's spirit and carry on his mission ? Do they not share in his life, his death and his resurrection thereby ? There is a peculiar emphasis in Calvin where he insists upon putting down men. All men. All the works of all men. Like Luther, Calvin, seems never to have lived the Christian life or to have understood what it required. His absolute philosophical categories, hatched at the university, and mulled over in the comfort of the residences and sinecures of the state church, concealed from himself and others the necessary human realities of living the Christian faith.

The right relationship with the saints was corrupted along with everything else in Constantine's Imperial Church. (see chapter XIII of my book **THE CHURCH OF THE EMPIRE**) The Reformation doctrine of God's Sovereign grace and man's entire irrelevance has caused Protestant Christianity to entirely lose track of the models of the Christian life while Catholic Christianity perpetuates the saints as statues and as superstitious cults.

Were the works of Saint Paul *dung* ? Saint Paul says that the works he did in keeping with the Law were of no value. But he also writes about all the labors he undertook as the minister of Jesus Christ and, far from seeing them as worthless, he joins them to the infinitely valuable works of Jesus. In Colossians 1.24 Paul speaks of his own sufferings: *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church;* That is the opposite of the Calvinist doctrine that God Does it All. God does it all through men to whom he has given his Holy Spirit. As Paul says in 1st Corinthians 3.9 **FOR WE ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS.** And in 2nd Corinthians 1.5 *For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation.*

Paul states here that 1. he shares in Christ's sufferings when he suffers 2. he suffers for the church; that is, there is a moral purpose to his sufferings and a **spiritual effectiveness**--*it is for your comfort and salvation.* This is contrary to the insistence of Augustine, Luther, Calvin that man is totally depraved and completely helpless, that he can do nothing to help himself, that none of his acts or works or sufferings have any spiritual value or merit or effect upon God, and that he depends entirely upon Predestination, upon God's Sovereign and Irresistible Grace, and that his only hope is *Passive Righteousness*.

Paul sees his personal sufferings as benefiting, not just himself, but the church. He sees his love for the church and his sacrifices and sufferings for it as *sharing* in the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the Church. He actually says that his own *afflictions* have value towards the *salvation* of the church ! Is he substituting himself for Jesus Christ ? No, but he is identifying himself with Jesus Christ, and he is identifying his sufferings with those of Jesus Christ, and he is claiming that **I COMPLETE WHAT IS LACKING IN CHRIST'S AFFLICTIONS.**
(Colossians 1.24 RSV)

How can he possibly say that there is something *lacking* in the *afflictions* of Jesus Christ ? He must mean it in the sense of 2 Corinthians 12.9 *my strength is made perfect in weakness.* That is, Jesus Christ shares himself with us and he shares his mission with us. Just as he chose to be a loser and a failure in worldly terms, just as he chose to humble himself as a man, as a criminal even, so he chooses to work through our weakness and to give us a share of his mission.

faith AND suffering

2nd Corinthians 4.8-10 *we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; . . . always carrying in the body the death of Jesus.* Acts 9.16 *For I will shew him [Paul] how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* Suffering is a major part of Paul's calling and ours ! Philippians 1.29-30 *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.* Paul tells the Philippians that *suffering* is part of their calling, just as it is part of Paul's calling. **NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE ON HIM, BUT ALSO TO SUFFER** contra the doctrine that **FAITH ALONE** is required and that we don't have to do anything or suffer anything. (cf Appendix C *Action and Passion.* *Passion* means Suffering.)

2nd Thessalonians 1.4-5 *So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:* Here their suffering is linked to the idea of merit in that suffering *that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God;* if they aren't **WORKING THEIR WAY INTO HEAVEN** they are at least suffering their way into the kingdom of God.

Revelation 2.10 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Here the crown is a reward for their *faithfulness* while they are being tried by suffering. 2 Timothy 2.12 *if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* Clearly the promise here is that **YOU WIN THE CROWN THROUGH SUFFERING**--the cross earns the crown. Like Jesus, like Paul, we must **Suffer** and **Labour**. Which means *well-doing*, which means **WORK** and **GOOD WORKS**!

Romans 8.16-18 *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Paul tells us that we must **suffer with** Jesus. Contra the assertion that Jesus only suffers for us and that our sufferings do not matter. It turns the one way relationship into a reciprocal relationship. That is the opposite of the doctrine of Augustine and the Reformation that God does it all and that we do nothing in the plan of salvation. cf. Philippians 3.10 *the fellowship of his sufferings.*

The God of the gospels, the suffering servant who shares everything with his followers, who shares his very Spirit with them after his Resurrection, was alien to Augustine and his followers as He is alien to modern Secular Christians. They insist upon a God of Imperial Power who takes care of it all, while enabling them to live in safety and comfort. He is a God who marshals the Powers of this World in a Grand Alliance. They believe in a God who wields Secular Power.

If God is in fact on the side which is opposed to Secular Power, they don't want to know about it, because they never intend to go there. Augustine sticks with the Emperor. Luther sticks with the Prince. Calvin sticks with the king and the duke and the magistrate. It is not surprising that **THE WORSHIP OF POWER** permeates their theology.

Does God love me even if I don't love Him ?

Christian faith is the perception that God is a Father who loves me. The same Spirit which shows me this gives me the ability to Love God as my Father. In Luther's *Passive Righteousness* God saves me for some inscrutable reason of his own. He has plucked me from the mire, despite my total depravity. My total inability to do anything good means that I am entirely unable to love God in return. That is the logic of Bondage of the Will. Salvation depends upon God alone. It cannot depend upon anything the believer ever did or ever will do. God captures someone, takes him home and locks him up in the Castle. It's done. How that person feels about it does not matter. He is Saved by Irresistible Grace.

Jesus teaches a love relationship between God and man. God is Our Father. Jesus is my Friend as well as my Savior. The Holy Spirit is my guide and my companion. In Reformation theology the relationship resembles that between the Emperor and one of his soldiers. Notice is given that you are now in the army. You are a conscript, not a volunteer. The social distance between you and the Emperor is incalculable. Yes, you should love the emperor--or worship him rather. But your membership in the army comes about regardless. Yes the Emperor "Loves" his soldiers in some sense. But the notion that they are friends and companions of the Emperor is absurd.

In Reformation theology, how can there be a love relationship between God and man ? Man is totally vile and depraved, the image of God has been entirely erased. Can I love a slug that I have dug up in the garden ? Can I have a father / son relationship with it ? And even after man has been restored, he still has no free will. He has nothing in him except what God has put there. Can you love without any capacity for free will ?

Can Love be forced ?

Can *involuntary* love still be love ? That is the key point, isn't it. **CAN LOVE BE FORCED ?** Is that not the reason that God gives us free will ? Because he wants us to love him ? There is a spirit in Reformation theology, which reproduces that of Augustine, and which negates the free will to love in the Christian person. Even when the Reformers somehow arrive back at a verbal affirmation of the Love of God by tortuous circumlocutions, it is logically eliminated by their theology and their entire emphasis upon Passive Righteousness.

Luther rejected the epistle of James because of the insistence that faith without works is dead. As James points out, the demons have faith in God. But do they Love God ? So it isn't enough to have faith in God, you must also Love God. Do you do that passively ? No, like all love, it requires Acts of Love. In fact, we cannot love God if we do not love our neighbor. How else do we show that Love except through **ACTS** of Love ? And aren't they the same as Good Works ?

To Love God with your whole heart and to love your neighbor as yourself is the whole Law and the Prophets. Jesus says so. He says we have to love our enemies. Then he says *A New Commandment I Give You that You Love One Another as I Have Loved You.* That is, you have to lay down your life for the Brethren. You have to follow Paul's injunctions to care for your fellow Christians and to do things for them just as Paul did. That describes *Active Righteousness*. Actions which flow from the Spirit of Love. It is the reverse of Reformation doctrine.

God Does It All

The moral paralysis of Secular Christianity, in both its Catholic and its Protestant variants, is due to the absence of the Holy Spirit more than it is due to bad theology. But this theology of *faith, not works* produces the mind set which justifies the refusal to live the Christian life and the shrugging off of moral responsibility: it is up to God and the Government to confront evil and work at establishing a moral society. It isn't up to me. That is the theological charter of Secular Christianity. What Augustine's Imperial Church and Luther's State Church and Calvin's Church State all had in common is a set of attitudes of subservience towards secular authority and moral helplessness in respect to living the Christian life. It is up to God and the Prince to establish a Christian society while I rest upon *Passive Righteousness*. That is the inheritance of modern Secular Christianity.

The prince should do everything while Christians do nothing. It is up to the prince and his soldiers to establish *Christendom*, that is the Secular Kingdom of Jesus Christ which He himself refused to establish; the alliance between God and government, Church and State, which pretends to establish Christian society through the power and wealth and violence of the empire. (The establishment of Secular Christianity by Constantine, Eusebius and Augustine et al is described in my book ***The Church of the Empire***.)

So I Don't Have to Do Anything

The Works of Mercy are perverted when they are taken out of the hands of the Christian community and turned over to the government and to organizations which operate for money, not love. If those who call themselves *Christians* would obey the injunction of Matthew 25.35 ***I was a stranger, and ye took me in*** there would not be enough homeless people to go around. We would have to import homeless people from other countries to meet the demand. Instead we have organizations which collect money on the pretense that they are taking care of it. There are 9 which collect money for every 1 that actually provides any housing.

Then the government takes over, promising to do what needs to be done, taking the moral responsibility off of those who are morally obligated to do it in person and not by proxy. They build a welfare system which allows all of us to shrug off our obligation to the poor. We now have a welfare system which is systematically destroying families, forcing women away from their children. It was promoted by the de facto alliance of so-called *conservatives* and radical feminists.

It is the same with abortion. Secular Christians rely upon God and the government to do something about it. To change a situation which is being continuously created and renewed by our neglect of it and by our refusal to live Christian lives. Our pursuit of the affluent American life style, our love of money, requires Careers for Women. It mandates that women must remain virgins until they are 35, or else rely upon the contraception, backed by abortion which is necessary to the achievement of affluence.

We sign the souls of our children over to the public schools and then prayerfully try to win them back again. We live like the pagans around us and then are shocked when our children become pagans. We entrust Christian morality to the secular state and then make indignant speeches when they predictably fail to maintain it.

The Perversion of Prayer

Prayer is perverted when it calls upon God to do that which Christians as individuals have neglected to do, what they haven't the Courage to do. It is an **affront to God** when we call upon Him to do that which he has called upon us to do. The doctrine of Moral Helplessness thereby pushes us to affront God. There is a zany illogic in our prayer. If God does it all, why does he need us to tell him what to do ? Is he unwilling to do right unless we nag him to do it ? Is he not capable of figuring out what needs to be done unless we enlighten him ? Instead of serving God, we try to make God our servant.

The doctrine of *saved by faith* has become the doctrine that we are saved by the righteousness of our right opinions. You are Saved by your opinions and by endlessly arguing them. Endless arguments to arrive at correct doctrines are how we measure the Christian faith. It is a faith which has been disconnected from anything resembling a Christian life.

We Praise God as a cover for our idleness and put Jesus up on a pedestal so we don't have to walk with him.

We put it upon God to do it without us, instead of letting his Spirit work through us.

We take no Responsibility.

That is the legacy of the Reformation and of the Secular Christianity it grew out of. Secular Christianity is Pass the Buck Christianity. We do our part by telling God and the government to take care of it.

The bad theology which Luther and Calvin developed from Augustine isn't just a mental error. It is a fountainhead of false faith and morals which deeply infects the Churches. It is one of the intellectual foundations of that Secular Christianity which remains the major obstacle in the way of real Christianity.

Pagan Sources of Secular Christianity

The peculiar teachings about Law found in Reformation theology are based upon Augustine's borrowings from pagan philosophers and also upon Calvin's own study. Calvin was a lawyer and his first book, the *Seneca Commentary* is a testimony of his faith in *CLASSIC* philosophy in respect to the law and the state. These views are later incorporated into his *Institutes* and into what pretends to be a bible based understanding of the law. Like Luther, Calvin mixes up secular law with The Law of the Pentateuch and thus draws conclusions about Christian faith and morals from the two sources which are most alien and antagonistic to the anti **WORLD** and **NEW COVENANT** teachings of Jesus Christ.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus defines his teaching contra The Law: *you have heard it said AN EYE FOR AN EYE but I say;* Contra Deuteronomy 24.1 he tells them: *Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but . . .* The doctrine of the radical antagonism between the *KINGDOM OF GOD* and *THE WORLD* which hates it means the radical antagonism between the Roman Empire--all empires--and the Christian society. But Augustine's theology (and the Reformation theology which followed it) put *THE WORLD* and The Church together to create the Worldly Church and Secular Christianity. (In my book, *The Church of the Empire*, I re-constructed the history of the 4th century establishment of this apostate church and analyzed the theology--and scriptures--which Augustine invented to support it.)

The doctrine of the pagan philosophers that *the rulers represent the gods and the decrees of the rulers are the decrees of the gods* was inserted by Augustine into Romans 13.1-7 (see chapter XI of *The Church of the Empire*.) Luther and Calvin derived their state worship from Augustine, and from their own dependence upon the state church, but Calvin developed his own version from his belief in law and his study of *classic* philosophy, that is pagan philosophy. So the ordinances of Egypt and Caanan are mixed up with the Law of Moses. The commandments which Jesus gives in the gospels are mixed up with the laws of the Roman empire. This is a major doctrinal source of the moral mess which Secular Christianity has arrived at and which has led to its helpless and hopeless dependence upon the State to establish a moral society. We can have as much Morality as The People want the Politicians to enact. If it isn't Popular, it is no longer Morality.

Dependence upon the State

Like Augustine, Luther and Calvin, we rely upon the soldiers and the police and the magistrate to enforce what pretends to be morality. When they fail to do it--they always do fail--we are left helpless. What can we do except write more letters to the magistrate ?

Saint Paul's sense of mission is accompanied by a sense of the power which he has been given to carry out that mission. In place of that we have a sense of powerlessness, which comes directly from the Reformation doctrine of moral helplessness, and from the absence of the Holy Spirit.

Contra this theology, if you call yourself a Christian, it means that **You have to Do Something !**

You have to Live the Christian Life ! You have to **WORK** at it !

Appendix A Paul Teaches Good Works

Many verses in his epistles show that Paul insisted upon good works, *doing good, well-doing* and **Acts of Love** as essential to the Christian Life----

Romans 2.6-7 *Who will render to every man according to his deeds 7 To them who by patient continuance in WELL-DOING seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.*

Romans 2.7 promises *eternal life* to those who continue patiently *in well-doing*. That is, in doing good. Which means **DOING GOOD WORKS**--what else can it mean ? See Calvin's attempt to explain away this and similar verses. Note the value Paul puts on these *good deeds* in contrast to his disparagement of the **DEEDS of The Law**. In this and many other passages he clearly distinguishes the two, in contrast to Luther's distortion which lumps them together.

Romans 3.28 Luther added *alone* to this verse--*faith alone*. He corrupted this text and effectively discarded the epistle of James to support his distortion of Paul's teaching.

Romans 12.3 *For I say, through the grace given to me, 12.6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us . . . prophesy . . . ministry . . . teaching . . . exhortation . . . giving . . . leading . . . showing mercy . . . 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality*

here grace = *Spirit* note that they are all activities; people are doing something, namely the Lord's work, having received the "grace" to do it. The Spirit is an activating and energizing principle. Passive Christians obviously lack this Spirit. Note the emphasis on meeting *the needs of the saints* and practicing **hospitality**, which meant the opposite of what people now mean by it. cf. Luke 14.12-14.

Romans 13.8 *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit Adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. keep the commandments by loving your neighbor*

Romans 16.6 *Greet Mary who labored much for us 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ 12 the beloved Persis who labored much in the Lord 1st Corinthians 3.6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase 3.9 For we are God's fellow workers WE ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS !!!*

2 Corinthians 9.8 *that ye may abound to every good work.* God gives us the Holy Spirit that we may do the **Work of God**. **Good Works** is the same as **God's Work**. And we are called to do it.

Galatians 4.19 *for whom I labor in birth*

Galatians 5.6 *faith working through love*

love requires **ACTS** and **WORKS** = doing something. see Luther's attempt to explain away this text in his 1535 *Commentary on Galatians*.

Galatians 6.9-10 *And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. And as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

well-doing and do good unto all men obviously means **GOOD WORKS**.

Ephesians 2.8-10 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

verse 9 is often quoted while verse 10 is ignored.

Colossians 1.10 *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 5.8 the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 1st Thessalonians 1.3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ 1st Thessalonians 2.9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 2 Thessalonians 2.17 [May God] Comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work.*

1 Timothy 2.10 women should adorn themselves with good works 1 Timothy 5.10 A widow should be *well reported of for good works* 1 Timothy 6.18 [charge them] *that they be rich in good works*

2nd Timothy 2.1 *You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 You therefore must endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ . . . warfare . . . athletics . . . 6 The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops.*

be strong in the grace means to get out there and do it, like a soldier, like an athlete, like a hard-working farmer. There is no way to square it with Luther's doctrine of *Passive Righteousness*.

2 Timothy 3.17 *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Titus 1.16 *They profess that they know God, but IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

UNTO EVERY GOOD WORK REPROBATE is a good description of many self-styled Christians who use the doctrine of *Faith, not Works* as their excuse.

Titus 2.7 *in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works;*

Titus 2.14 *zealous for good works;* 3.8 3.14

Hebrews 6.1 *repentance from dead works* Hebrews 9.14 *purge your conscience from DEAD WORKS to serve the living God.* Hebrews 10.23-24 *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto LOVE and to GOOD WORKS.*

as Hebrews 8 and 9 spell out, the *dead works* are the "works of the Law." But *love and good works* are essential to the Christian life.

Paul was the hardest working man in the Bible

He worked hard at being a Christian:

He demanded the same of others:

He taught us to work at our salvation:

Romans 16.6 *Greet Mary who labored much for us* 9 *Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ* 12 *the beloved Persis who labored much in the Lord* 1st Corinthians 3.6 *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase* 3.9 **FOR WE ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS** 1 Corinthians 16.10 *he [Timothy] worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do* 2 Corinthians 6.1-10 *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. . . . 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings* 2 Corinthians 11.23 *in labours more abundant* Galatians 4.19 *for whom I labor in birth*

Are not *labours* the same thing as "works" ? Does Paul dispense himself or Mary, Urbanus, Persis, Apollos, Timothy etc. from doing these works, from performing these labors ? Obviously Paul means that we *receive . . . the grace of God in vain* if we don't Do Something with it. Contra the Saved by My Smugness doctrine of modern secular Christianity.

Romans 16.9 *our fellow worker in Christ.* 1st Corinthians 3.9 *For we are God's fellow workers* 1 Corinthians 16.10 *he (Timothy) worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.* **Does that square** with the doctrine of Luther and Calvin that God does it all himself and that He disdains our works ? 1 Corinthians 9.26-27 *I do not run like a man who loses sight of the finish line. I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. What I do is discipline my own body and master it, for fear that after having preached to others I myself should be rejected" I RUN, I FIGHT, I LABOR, I SUFFER* has nothing in common with *Passive Righteousness*.

You Are Not *Saved* Because You Think You Are !

Romans 11.22 *Consider the kindness and the severity of God--severity toward those who fell, kindness toward you, provided you remain in His kindness; if you do not, you too will be cut off* 1 Corinthians 10.12 *Let anyone who thinks he is standing upright watch out lest he fall.* And compare Jude 5 where he reminds them that the Lord later destroyed those he had once saved; *Once Saved, Always Saved is not* Paul's Teaching !

2nd Corinthians 5.9-10. *we labour that . . . we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* 2nd Corinthians 6.1 *we . . . plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.* Grace is supposed to start us doing the Lord's work. If we do not thereafter love God and love our neighbor, we have received the grace of God in vain. Philippians 2.12 *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* Like Hebrews 6.4-6, it clearly implies that you can lose your salvation. And compare 2 Peter 2.2-22.

Hebrews 10.23-31 *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering . . . provoke one another to LOVE AND GOOD WORKS . . . for if we sin . . . hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. the neglect of love and good works leads to a FEARFUL FALL ! the profession of our faith without wavering depends on it !*

Appendix B Balthasar Hubmaier on <i>Justification</i>

written in 1526

No True Faith without the Works of Love

"Faith alone and by itself is not sufficient for salvation. This article will first be tested in the writings of Paul. *With the heart man believes to righteousness and with the mouth confession is made to salvation* (Rom. 10). Now we do not wish to be mouth Christians only, to boast and say: O, yes, we believe that Jesus Christ suffered agony and death for us. Rather, faith must express itself also in love to God and the neighbor. Thus John teaches us when he says: *Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth* (1 Jn 3). *Faith must be active in love* (Gal. 5). Therefore faith by itself alone is like a green fig tree without fruit, like a cistern without water, like a cloud without rain . . .

O, we wish to be good evangelical Christians; we boast about our great faith, but have never touched the works of the gospel and faith with the smallest finger. Therefore we are, as stated above, nothing but mouth Christians, ear Christians, and paper Christians, but not action Christians. About these St. James severely admonishes us in his Christian and useful epistle when he writes: *What does it profit, my brothers, if a man says he has faith but has not works ? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them: Go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit ? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe in one God; you do well. Even the devils believe and shudder* (Jas. 2). I confess this article with all my strength: that faith by itself alone is not worthy to be called faith, for **THERE CAN BE NO TRUE FAITH WITHOUT THE WORKS OF LOVE.**"

Appendix C Action and Passion

from a letter to Brother Jerry:

That book is called *The ACTS of the Apostles*, not the Passive Faith of the Apostles.

The Christian Life is defined by ACTION and PASSION, not by a passive faith which avoids risk and which takes any way it can find, however dishonorable, to escape from hardship and suffering.

The foundation stone of Christianity is the PASSION of Jesus Christ--allowing himself to be done to death on the cross. But too many preachers put a period there instead of a comma. They don't want to see that we must add more stones to the building.

They neglect to point out the PASSION of Stephen which led to the conversion of Saint Paul, and the PASSION of James, Peter and Paul himself which *fill up* the sufferings of Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1.24.) Paul's account of his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11.23-25 is an indictment of Christians who take no risks and suffer no consequences. In the early church, you weren't counted much of a Christian if you hadn't been in jail, as Acts 5.18, 12.3, and 16.23 relate.

What happened to the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, is supplemented by later Christian writings which tell of the deaths of Paul and Peter, and the martyrdom of their heroic successors, worthy of them, like Polycarp and Ignatius of Antioch.

Thousands of later Christians, like Perpetua and Felicitas, followed the Master in facing death bravely for the sake of the Kingdom of God. By the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, they renewed his witness to the people of their own time. The story of these maidens and their heroic witness was read in the service of the early church. They were the models of the Christian life for those who were often about to encounter the same ordeal.

Imagine them reading such accounts in most of today's churches. They wish instead to hear the witness of someone who made a million dollars with the help of the Lord.

Of course every century has had its Christian martyrs. The 20th century had as many martyrs in as many places as any other. You know more of that than I do.

We must be willing to share in the PASSION of Jesus Christ by taking the risks and accepting the suffering that always accompanies any serious attempt to live the Christian life.

We need to imitate the ACTS of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and not just repeat their words. The ACTS show us what the words mean. What Paul said grew out of what he did and what he suffered. The words of the gospels renew their meaning when we try to live and act in the *WAY* of Jesus and his first followers. The *WORD* and the *WAY* belong together.

Terry Sullivan c 2008

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