Obedience to the Law of Christ. An Inquiry Into the Function of the Mosaic Law in Christian Ethics from a Mennonite Perspective

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mean to establish the reality to which the law pointed as its future fulfillment, does not hold. For one thing here of establishing and fixing firmly righteousness as Israel's special prerogative.” Christ is the end of that specific function of abrogate and therefore determined by its opposite. In Matthew 5 to fulfill is the opposite of abrogate as a negative argument. When Bultmann argues e.g. that the later development of the Church signalled a loss of the pure Pauline gospel, he presupposes that such a development cannot be other than negatively valued. But in my opinion both the positive and negative use of the argument of success ought to be dismissed. Against Bultmann it could be argued that this principle would also imply (granting the firm distinction he himself makes between the historical Jesus and the Christ of Pauline theology) that the historical Jesus that he cannot reconstruct or give a place in theology, must by default be the more original and the Christology of Paul therefore a deviation.

The argument of success is invariably weak. It involves a bias for the majority view or for the kind of almost universal tradition that emerged immediately after the apostolic era. But it can easily be turned around and used as a negative argument. When Bultmann argues e.g. that the later development of the Church signalled a loss of the pure Pauline gospel, he presupposes that such a development cannot be other than negatively valued. But in my opinion both the positive and negative use of the argument of success ought to be dismissed. Against Bultmann it could be argued that this principle would also imply (granting the firm distinction he himself makes between the historical Jesus and the Christ of Pauline theology) that the historical Jesus that he cannot reconstruct or give a place in theology, must by default be the more original and the Christology of Paul therefore a deviation.

The argument that to “fulfill” in Matthews always means fulfilling a prophecy, i.e. to fulfill the law must mean to establish the reality to which the law pointed as its future fulfillment, does not hold. For one thing here in Matthew 5 to fulfill is the opposite of abrogate and therefore determined by its opposite.

As Dunn explains (Romans II, p. 596) Paul was thinking of the law in terms of the “works”, i.e. as “a means of establishing and fixing firmly righteousness as Israel’s special prerogative.” Christ is the end of that specific function of the law. The same could be deduced if one would read the greek τέλος as meaning the “goal” in Rom. 10:4. In Käsemann’s commentary on this verse however the law is seen as the absolute antithesis to the gospel, so Christ is then the full abrogation of the Mosaic law and the greek is rendered as “end.” (Kaesemann, Romer, p. 269)

Bultmann, Theologie, p. 56

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Christian ethics in this study can be broadly defined as the doctrine of the attitude towards life and the definition of behaviour, to which God has called (a) people in Christ and (b) for which He enables them. Christian ethics is therefore a part of theology, since it involves a normative position and is based in some way on revelation.

In the same direction but more nuanced in the conclusion, is Peter J. Tomson’s “A Bridge between Jesus and Paul on the Question of the law”, 1983; in Jesus, Paul and the law, 1990. The bulk of his work is concerned with evidence that Paul uses the specific Rabbinic though-structure of “halakah” to define the way of life of the Christian community. Drawing upon Jewish, apostolic and Christ’s halakhic teachings, Paul specifically in his first letter to the Corinthians displays a great affinity with this proto-rabbinic way of thinking. This has consequences for the understanding of Paul’s theology, that is now not so much concerned with the individual’s justification but with the matter of the inclusion of gentiles into a community where Jewish dietary laws, prohibitions of idolatry and restrictions for table-fellowship with gentiles are still prevalent.

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith is shown to be aimed at gentile Christians who sought to find a moral best analogy for such a pattern is a function. The religion, defined positively, is the description of how a religion is perceived by its adherents to obtain righteousness. From which they can obtain righteousness. Gentiles were given the same access to righteousness that had previously been given only to Jews on the basis of self-definition and self-mastery by introducing elements of Jewish law into their Christian lives. Through Christ, the law. Moral betterment is not the answer for the gentiles; the faithfulness of chosen individuals like Abraham and Christ however is. Here the gentiles find the pattern of behavior and in Christ, also the source of power, from which they can obtain righteousness.

20 Yoder, Politics, p. 215

21 “Way of life” under moral principles as binding on the members of a community.

22 The main issue is not to add a concept of sanctification to the foundational notion of justification where each remains a separate concept, but to describe both justification and sanctification from a Biblical perspective on their inner and intrinsic connection.

23 Defined very generally as the effort to construct general rules of behavior that embody more general value-concepts and apply the latter to specific situations. These are to be distinguished from moral decisions by an individual and the moral discernment of a community.

24 Cf. e.g. Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments, Minneapolis, 1992, pp. 70 – 79.

25 Cf. E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, pp. 1 – 24. On p. 17 he gives a definition: “A pattern of religion, defined positively, is the description of how a religion is perceived by its adherents to function.” The best analogy for such a pattern is a soteriology because the patterns deal with questions relating to how one stays within the religious community and what defines concrete adherence to a belief-system.

26 As Rudolf Bultmann did in his Theologie des Neuen Testamentes.

27 Or for the assumption of contextual integrity, i.e. the assumption that the context adequately expresses or is a vehicle for the original intent of the passage. The principle that authentic Jesus’ sayings would be those, that dissent from Judaism, is actually a case in point. It accepts the dissenting context as the main indicator for the dissenting nature of the logia and after interpreting it like that, uses it as support for the thesis that the logion would have to have been incongruent with Judaism as well to be remembered in the first place. The uncritical acceptance of the denominator “Pharisees” and its implicit generalization helps further that impression. But the opposite is more likely: that traditions in the mixed Church after or around the destruction of the Temple would have the tendency on account of their own heightened awareness of the growing rift with mainstream Judaism to reconstruct creatively and adapt the logia to fit their own context if they did not oppose the remembered Pharisaic position, for they would expect Jesus to contradict the theology of the Pharisees with which they were in conflict themselves.


29 The author’s main aim has since long been recognized as dissuading Christians from succumbing to the attractions of Judaism. This ofcourse presupposed both in the historical reality of the Church of his day as in the intended audience of his letter, that there was common grojnd, spec. In the deep respect for scriptures and in thearea of moral exhortation. Barnabas integrated a Jewish text in his letter in chapters 18-20 which shows precisely that. Equally important is that the distinction between moral and ritual commandment is not made in Barnabas, though the ritual commandment is spiritualized. Cf. alsoGraham Stanton, “Other early Christian writings”, in Barclay, Early Christian Thought, pp. 181-184.

30 Cf. A. Harnack, Verfassung und Recht der alten Kirche, Leipzig, 1910. Harnack of course argued that the transformation of the charismatic Church into a Church governed by rules and appointed ministers was both necessary for and beneficial to its survival.

31 There were ofcourse important differences between Bultmann and Käsemann. The latter published a lecture entitled “Das Problem des historischen Jesus” in 1954 (Reprinted in Käsemann, Exegetische Versuche, pp. 187-214), in which he argued that the center of the New Testament is not only the proclamation and preaching of the gospel, but also includes historical facts. The historical Jesus could not be ignored in matters of faith, as Bultmann had tried to do. In this re-eavaluation of the historical, Käsemann effectively inaugurated a new era of theological research. The new pupils of Bultmann all remained faithful to the existentialist interpretation of the gospel, with the exception of Käsemann who returned to a position more orientated towards the historical basis of the gospel.

32 We must be mindful of the difference between Lutheran and Calvinist theologies here. Both had accepted that the law had several functions in the life of the faithful. To Luther, there were two: (1) the usus civilis, in which the law became a source-book for ordering society and (2) the usus elencticus sive theologicus, in which man became aware, through the law as indictment, of his inner sin and guilt before God. Calvin added to these.
two the (3) usus in renatis, its use for the reborn. God has written His law in their hearts (cf. Jer. 31) but the written law may still grant them insight into the contents of the divine will, may drive them toward obedience. Menno did accept the second of these, but rejected the first and third and instead focused on the meaning of the gospel as law of Christ, i.e., evangelical obedience superseded the Mosaic law in his view. In that sense, he declined to accept the tension between gospel and law within Christian faith and laid heavy emphasis on the covenantal character of the Christian Church.

32 Which might have led to a concept of ‘evangelical law’ or even the introduction of self-righteousness through works.

33 The term “interim ethic” must be understood in its wider sense of ethics for the present day on this side of the eschatological fulfillment. A. Schweitzer, I believe, coined the phrase to indicate the eschatological ethic of the Sermon on the Mount that derived its legitimacy from the nearness of the Kingdom. It was therefore a heroic ethic to be applied during the short time before that kingdom became a reality.

34 Cf. Pesch 130, WA 39, 1, 83

35 Cf. Pesch 133


38 In the USA this emphasis was already present since the 1880s and 1890s in the so-called Social Gospel movement. Especially in the period between 1900 and 1914 it was highly active, as were many such similar movements in Europe. They did not lead to as much reappraisal of Paul as can be said of the political gospel movements of the 1960s. The former were to some extent influenced by socialism and the questions of capital and labor; the latter were more concerned with the indigenous images of social justice as the people themselves would define them. The former movement can be summarized in Rauschenbusch’s famous dictum: “The Kingdom of God is a social idea.” It must be realized by human beings, working together.

39 Exemplified, e.g., in a theologian like J. A. L. Wegscheider. Forgiveness of sins is reduced to a growing of hope and confidence with the increase of virtue. Substitutionary sacrifice is contrary to reason and therefore to be rejected; the death of Christ is merely the symbol of the love of God; grace equals a specific form of provision. Justification is true only in so far as it teaches that man is acceptable to God, not through singular deeds and merit but only through an inner conscience directed towards God (Wegscheider uses the term ‘Gemut’). Such a direction of consciousness needs to be ‘exercised.’ In Barth’s judgment: “This is the theology of pure rationalism.” (K. Barth, 1946, p. 407)

40 That of course was the modernist’s way of putting it. After 1870 the response to modernism gained momentum in the movement of Confessional Theology, propagated by A. Kuyper (1837-1920) and H. Bavinck (1854-1921) Against modernism and “mediation-theology” he emphasized that Scripture remained the objective principle of knowledge, based on objective revelation through the Holy Spirit. The subjective principle of cognition was faith, the witness of the Spirit within us. The ethical-psychological method of Hoekstra and others was rejected.


42 Hoekstra, ibid, p. 227

43 Hoekstra, ibid, p. 233.

44 Hoekstra, ibid, p. 234

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47 The source of these quotations is: Heppe, die Dogmatik der Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche, 1958, pp. 254-258.

48 Calvin, Inst. III, 11, 1

49 A characteristic passage in Calvin is the following: “The shortest transition, however, will be from faith to repentance; for repentance being properly understood it will better appear how a man is justified freely by faith alone, and yet that holiness of life, real holiness, as it is called, is inseparable from the free imputation of righteousness. That repentance not only always follows faith, but is produced by it, ought to be without controversy.” [Italics mine] (Calvin, Institutions, book 3, pg. 682) The connection between justification and sanctification is affirmed, but their relationship is structured along the lines of condition and effect. Menno stresses the simultaneity of both.

50 In: Hauerwas, Kingdom, 1983, 57

51 Cf. Pesch, op. cit., 385.

52 R. Bultmann, the translation of this 1962 address was published in 1964 (Jesus Christus und die Mythologie, Hamburg) p. 99, in Bultmann, Existence and Faith, Hodder and Stoughton, 1961
would involve the invalid logical form of affirmatio consequentis. 

...does not imply anything with regard to the presence of faith. To deduce faith from the presence of works does not imply anything with regard to the presence of faith. To deduce faith from the presence of works would involve the invalid logical form of affirmatio consequentis.
would use the term 'post-Mennonite liberalism' to describe the shape of theology and congregational life, but they are not necessary to effectuate salvation. Cf. J. Heinz, Justification and Merit, p. 49 and the sources referred to there.

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Cf. J. Heinz, Justification and Merit, p. 37: "The recognition that the non-reckoning of sin represents one aspect of justification has long been demanded of the Catholic theologian by the Church dogma. In the same breath however, the dogma forces him to identify this forensic declaration completely with effective sanctification."

McGrath, Iustitia Dei 1986-1, 15

Fathers, Nicene & Post-Nicene, s.1, v.5 (15) (CD-Rom edition in PDF)

What follows here is in essence derived from the summary in Pesch (1981), pp. 80-107.

The gratia infusa then led to a state of grace, habitus infusa that could be understood on the basis of grace, as an intrinsic righteousness of man. E. Jungel has argued, that this in fact open the doors to a rejection of the justification by faith position and made in effect something other than God's sovereign grace the formal cause of redemption. Cf. Jungel, Evangelium pp. 162-163.

It is clear however from studies by Goertz, Voolstra and others, that the influence of the Sacramentarians and late-medieval piety on the Anabaptist movement was substantial. The polemical situation in which the Anabaptists found themselves was determined by their fragile contact with the magisterial Reformation in the Swiss and Dutch contexts in particular.

Cf. S. Voolstra's inaugural address, published in English as "Justification and Sanctification," The Conrad Grebel Review, Ontario, Canada, Fall 1987, pp. 221ff., where he states: "The controversy over the meaning of justification and sanctification, centering on the relationship between faith and works, also gave life to the Anabaptist movement." In this statement, the controversy did not spring up after Anabaptism was established as a movement, but it was in part the cause of its existence.


S. Voolstra, ibid, p. 223. (see note 74)

W.E. Keeney, Dutch Anabaptist Thought, p. 115

Walter Klaassen, Anabaptism, 1973, p. 28

Klaassen agrees in this assessment with Robert Friedmann's earlier attempt in the 1950s to distinguish the Anabaptists from the Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists by the lack of systematic theology (Anabaptists would have an implicit theology) and from the Catholics by the rejection of priestly institutions. Friedmann's posthumous Theology of Anabaptism (Scottdale, 1973) presented this case. Others have stressed that the Anabaptist movement belonged to the Reformation but was distinguished by its radicalism in the issue of the separation of Church and state, opposing it to the "magisterial Reformation". George H. Williams presented that viewpoint in his The Radical Reformation (Kirksville, 1992). J.A. Oosterbaan presented a third option, defining the Anabaptist movement as a "Reformation of the Reformation". Now the Reformed Churches stand in the middle of a spectrum defined by the Catholic Church on the one side and the Anabaptist movement on the other. Cf. Oosterbaan's article "De reformatie der Reformatie" in: Doopsgezinde Bijdragen 2, Amsterdam, 1976, pp. 36-61. The essential characteristic of the Mennonite Church, as seen from this third option, is that of the renewed man, that lives in full obedience to God.

W.E. Keeney, Dutch Anabaptist Thought, p. 115

John H. Yoder expressed this succinctly when he wrote: "For Roman Catholics this act of justification may be found to be in correlation with the sacraments, and for Protestants with one's self-understanding, in response to the proclaimed Word; but never should it be correlated with ethics." This third option was however, the view of the minority that constituted the Mennonite movement. (Cf. Yoder, Politics, p. 8)

F.H. Keeney, Dutch Anabaptist Thought, p. 116

I would use the term 'post-Mennonite liberalism' to describe the shape of theology and congregational life that has evolved in the Netherlands since the early decades of the 19th century, which seemed very much concerned with finding in itself and identifying in the surrounding world the secular expression of a part of Mennonite doctrine, especially with regard to the separation of Church and state, the voluntary character of faith, and the insistence on an ethical life. Such (now) civil virtues came to be expressed without recourse to essential Christian doctrines, and made theology at times seem like a social or moral ideology.

In the late 1800s North American Mennonite leaders came under the influence of revivalism and Sunday school and mission movements that tended to move them away from the emphasis on peace and nonresistance as the focal points of Christian (social) ethics. T. Schlabach showed this "shift away from the references to the nonresistant gospel" in a study of the language patterns in the Mennonite Quarterly Review, July 1977. In his
Keeping Salvation Ethical (Herald Press, 1997), J. Denny Weaver documented this theological shift from an identification with a nonresistant Christ to an adoption of a penal substitutionary theory of atonement.


95 H.-G. Tanneberger, Vorstellungen, p. 218.

96 W.E. Keeney, Dutch Anabaptist Thought, p. 89


98 The English translation of Menno’s works corrected this reference to Mark 1:15 according to KJV and so it reads: repent ye and believe the gospel. Menno’s particular emphasis is then lost, because the original reads: “beter u [better your life] ende geloofden evangelio.” In Anabaptist parlance, though, particularly among conservative groups like the Amish, ‘repentance’ and ‘Besserung’ (Old Dutch: beteringe) are saying about the same thing.

99 Cf. S. Voolstra, "Van ware penitencie", Doopsgezinde Bijdragen * 248-265. “The evangelical-Anabaptist Reformation makes the contritio interior the precondition for an anticlerical and anti-sacramentarian, semi-pelagian religious practice, which is characterized by the aspiration to freedom from sin and the performance of evangelical works in accordance with faith in Christ. True penitence on the part of both believers and servants of the Church confers a biblical validity and effectiveness on baptism, communion and Church as media of salvation. Strict discipline is intended to preserve the pure Church as the place where assured salvation is to be found and the place where penitent religious conventions can be practiced. In this way, the content of belief remains traditional, although the form of belief is renewed in accordance with the biblical model. It was not the principle of the division between Church and state which constituted the most important impediment to the Anabaptists’ ability to fulfill the role of public Church, but the emphasis on true penitence and the corresponding aspiration to perfection.”

100 For a contemporary (conservative) Mennonite treatment of repentance in conformity with Menno’s original doctrine see e.g., L. M. Haines, Redemption Realized, Northville, pp. 114-121. His position is decidedly against the ‘faith-alone’ position.

101 S. Voolstra has argued that Menno in his reaction to Catholic practices wanted “more penitence, not less. His objective was to restore to the contritio, or the true, heartfelt repentance, the profundity and intensity which it had lost.” His rejection of the priestly confession had nothing to do with the general reformers’ thrust to lighten the burdens of faith. Voolstra, Justification and Sanctification 1997, p. 40. So the argument here is against the sacrament’s actually reducing the burden of confession, not against the practice of confession in itself, that served the purpose of bringing sin into the light and to intensify repentance. (ibid, p. 39) Contrition must not be equated with a feeling of sorrow. Precisely because confession was the means of deepening it as experience, we must emphasize its character of reflective meditation on one’s own life in the light of God’s word which was its inner core.

102 The importance of the notion of obedience in this connection was also stressed by Voolstra (1997, p. 53): “The reinstatement of the penitent in a state of grace, the justification of the sinner, is not unconditional. Without contrition, without real penitence, there can be no absolution, which is no longer granted by the priest, however, but by Christ himself. Faith is a process of penitence and reformation of the life being led. Faith is not faith unless it becomes effective in love. And this love is principally a deed of grace, which fails to bring about any change in how life is lived is only cheap grace. Grace is not absolution alone, but also starting to behave as a liberated person. Law and Gospel, law and Grace, penance and faith, justification and sanctification, God’s work and human activity are closely interconnected in the theology of Menno Simons and are sometimes difficult to distinguish. His traditional, penitential piety is made to serve a practical objective, namely the raising of the evangelical quality of Church and society, a renewal which demands obedience.”

103 Grace and faith are given in Christ, according to Luther. It is a gift that is part of the act of justification and the means by which it, or rather Christ, is apprehended. Faith to Luther is neither Augustinian intellectual assent, nor affirmation of key doctrines, nor inner response to Christ in a free choice, but an existential in Heidegger’s sense of the word, of the reborn and elect. (It is at once the mode of their being and the way by which they know and experience that.) In that sense, justification is not “by” faith, but by Christ, (known to us and grasped in life, partially) through faith in Christ. Cf. McGrath, Iustitia Dei, II, p. 10-20.

104 The reason that Menno’s teachings on justification were so filled with references to the experiential side of faith can be explained by two factors. One of them is his insistence that the sacrament as objective process could not grant the assurance of salvation that his parishioners were seeking. Menno’s theology in that sense is a...
'practical theology' developed from his 'pastoral experience.' (Voolstra, 1997, p. 41) The other is the view on anthropology that in Menno's case was enhanced by his teaching on the incarnation. Menno reasoned that Christ's flesh could not be anything other than a new creation by God, so Jesus did not share the flesh of his mother Mary. That prepared the ethical insistence on the removal of sin in a practical non-forensic sense. Only a completely perfect Christ could bring about such a total transformation. (Cf. Voolstra, 1982)  

105 To Luther, certitudo (objective certainty) derived from the word of God and went hand in hand with a lack of securitas (subjective certainty). Pharisaism, which derived certainty from its own actions, was the height of injustice and lack of faith. Man cannot rest in his understanding of the law or his accomplishments in fulfilling that law. Though certitudo is said to be based on the external Word, the mode of our certainty is purely subjective, i.e., knowledge or persuasion. Dialectically, the objectivity is based on subjectivity. Menno’s insistence on certainty derived from faith-experience is subjective insofar as the inner word must accompany the external Word. But it is objective in the sense that the results of faith are there for all to see and judge.  

106 Such a doctrine, which accepts both imputed righteousness and external grace and an infusion of grace and works of righteousness – though from faith, caused by justification – cannot but be described as semi-Pelagianism. The analytical distinction between external (forensic) justification and its fruit in a life of holiness is its counterpart and extreme opposite. But as I set out to show, Menno’s position is not that of Wesleyanism, in which the believer needs to add to the primal justification in order to be fully saved and to “earn” – ultimately by grace, as in Augustine – his redemption.  

107 Luther differed on the principle of good works with Catholic doctrine precisely because of its motivation and the lack of faith that was expressed in it. So he can state in the Sermon on Good Works “When we reject the great, pretentious works of our time, which are done entirely without faith, they say: Men are only to believe and not to do anything good. For nowadays they say that the works of the First Commandment are singing, reading, organ-playing, reading the mass, saying matins and vespers and the other hours, the founding and decorating of Churches, altars, and monastic houses, the gathering of bells, jewels, garments, trinkets and treasures, running to Rome and to the saints. Further, when we are dressed up and bow, kneel, pray the rosary and the Psalter, and all this not before an idol, but before the holy cross of God or the pictures of His saints: this we call honoring and worshiping God, and, according to the First Commandment, “having no other gods”; although these things usurers, adulterers and all manner of sinners can do too, and do them daily.” Sermon on Good Works, p.123 (211). Faith then as an act of “obedience” to the first commandment is immediately taken in the sense of certainty and trust and as such becomes a form or quality of human actions.  

108 To Luther faith in this context is the certainty or inward trust that God finds pleasure in what we do connected to our acceptance that Christ is the One that God has sent. (John 6:28) Cf. Sermon on Good Works, p. 112 (LWW, VI, 204)  

109 On the other hand, Mennonite theology does not amount to Pelagianism, since it does not accept the latter’s basic thesis that man is able on his own account to achieve salvation and live according to God’s will. Pelagianism lies in the assumption of the plenary ability of man; his ability to do all that righteousness can demand, i.e., to work out not only his own salvation but also his own perfection. Experientially however, the notion that man is restored to full freedom by Christ’s sacrifice would amount to the same thing, since the recognition of Christ’s work has no role to play in it. Here enters the importance of the notion that freedom is restored only in so far as the ability to repent is concerned. Freedom brings insight into man’s predicament and his need for grace.  

110 Still, Paul states in Rom. 5:12 that death reigned over Adam’s posterity because ‘all have sinned’. The imputation of Adam’s sin to his children is not a matter of being ‘reckoned’ unjust with no basis in man’s actual behaviour. But as an attribution of guilt it is the basis of our being left in the power of sin.  

111 Williams, Radical Reformation , p. 1270  

112 Calvin’s appraisal of the Anabaptist movement was perhaps guided mostly by the aberrations he saw in its spiritualist (South-German) version, which went through Lutheranism first (Hubmaier of course came from Zwingli, not Luther) and laid heavy emphasis on spiritual rebirth and the new life. Calvin had no sympathy for that kind of fanaticism: “Some Anabaptists in the present age mistake some indescribable sort of frenzied excess for the regeneration of the Spirit, holding that the children of God are restored to a state of innocence, and, therefore, need give themselves no anxiety about curbing the lust of the flesh; that they have the Spirit for their guide, and under his agency never err.” (Cf. Calvin., Inst. III, 3, p. 693. Cf Also Beachy, Grace, p. 17.)  

113 Complete Works of Menno Simons , 1871, II, p. 246  

114 Cf. J.C. Wenger, The Doctrines of the Mennonites, p. 62. Wenger summarizes Menno’s point of view: “It is faith that saves and faith alone, but where there is no discipleship there is no saving faith.” [Ital. mine]  

115 Loewen, 1985, 78.  

116 Ibid., 74.  

117 Ibid., 79; [Ital. mine]  

118 Ibid., 214.
submitting to it. The grace' that is like a light that shines unto every individual, and for which every individual is responsible for submitting to it. *Ibid*, p. 438. Their use of the doctrine was different.

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Yoder moves a little too fast here by incorporating the Pauline concept of the law as preparatory (Gal. 4) into his thesis regarding the Jewish experience of the law. Later on he chides Luther for interpreting the pedagogos of Gal. 4 as the schoolmaster instead of as tutor, which is a necessary correction, but the Jewish experience was not that the law kept the people under restraint until the coming of the Messiah would bring spiritual freedom. The law itself was freedom! In fact, there was serious debate about the ongoing function of the law even after the Messiah had come, with some arguing that the Messiah would restore the Torah to its full force.

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See par. § 5. *Justification as the definition of the ethical condition* for the discussion of Keck's article.

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Yoder gives as his basic argument that *this* is a new creation. Instead of the older translation which add the personal pronoun: if anyone be in Christ, new is creation. More recently: if anyone be in Christ, new is creation. Yoder argues as his main thrust of his gospel by the Reformers. Paul’s theological program is more that of salvation history and is concerned with communities, not so much with individuals. Cf. also E. Käsemann, *Paulinische Perspektiven*, Tübingen, 1972, pp. 108-139. Käsemann defends the thesis that the doctrine of justification builds the core essence of the New Testament, though it should be understood as being about God’s kingdom and not about personal guilt (*ibid*, p. 133). “Die Rechtfertigung bleibt jedoch Mitte, Anfang und Ende der Heilsgeschichte.” (*ibid*, p. 135)

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By reading 2 Cor. 5:17 as: If anyone be in Christ: a new creation. or: If anyone is in Christ, new is creation. Instead of the older translation which add the personal pronoun: if anyone be in Christ, [he is] a new creation. Yoder gives as his basic argument that *ktisis* ordinarily does not mean creature, but the whole of creation, e.g., in Mark. 16:15; Col. 1:15, 24; Rom. 8:19-22; Heb. 9:11.

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Alvin Bechey shows from Marbeck (*sic*) that some Anabaptists agreed in general with the notion of ‘first grace’ that is like a light that shines unto every individual, and for which every individual is responsible for submitting to it. *Ibid*, p. 438. Their use of the doctrine was different.

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*Ibidem*.

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Schleitheim Confession, Loewen, 1985, p. 79b.

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John Calvin, Inst. II, ch. 8, p. 450

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In like manner, Paul in Romans 12 first establishes the inner nature of the Church as a collective devoted to Christ and ordered along the lines of faith, not those of power and interests.

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See par. § 5. *Justification as the definition of the ethical condition* for the discussion of Keck's article.

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Christendom and not about personal guilt (*ibid*, p. 133). “Die Rechtfertigung bleibt jedoch Mitte, Anfang und Ende der Heilsgeschichte.” (*ibid*, p. 135)

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Friedrich, *Rechtfertigung*, p. 208

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Kümmel (*Einleitung*, p. 357) cites the various problems of an early dating: (1) Similarities between James and 1 Clement and Hermas can be derivations from similar parenetical sources instead of direct quotations or allusions, (2) the letter is not recorded in the Canon Muratori and the old Latin version, and neither Terrullian nor Irenaeus quotes or mentions it; (3) the first evidence of its existence can be traced to c. 200, e.g., in a papyrus fragment found in Palestine (*ibid*); (4) the letter became canonical after the Council of Laodicea in 360. Some argue for a late date because of the scarce mention of Christ and its cultivated Greek style. Some have argued, like Dibelius, that the letter cannot be accurately dated because it consists of varied parenetical materials without a specific origin. There are still some who argue for an early date, because of its proximity with Jesus’ sayings and its reference to Paulinist theology. Schlatter and Leslie Mitton have argued for an early dating and we have followed both in this respect.

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Both of these: rules (commandments) and observations about the (moral) nature of things can be found in sayings attributed to Jesus in the gospels. Matthew 5:44 is an example of commandment, but the main point in
Matthew 5:32 is an observation about moral nature. Though stated in the indicative, it does imply a rule of behavior.

From the general viewpoint that defined canonicity in terms of the theory of inspired scripture, this is of course standard procedure in the Reformation. Cf., e.g., this passage from Calvin’s Institutions (Book II, ch. XVII, 11, p. 941) 11. “But they say that we have a still more serious business with James, who in express terms opposes us. For he asks, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works?” and adds “You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” (James 2:21, 24.) What then? Will they engage Paul in a quarrel with James? If they hold James to be a servant of Christ, his sentiments must be understood as not dissenting from Christ speaking by the mouth of Paul. By the mouth of Paul the Spirit declares that Abraham obtained justification by faith, not by works; we also teach that all are justified by faith without the works of the law. By James the same Spirit declares that both Abraham’s justification and ours consists of works, and not of faith only. It is certain that the Spirit cannot be at variance with himself.” And the solution then lies in changing the meaning of the words: “Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance of faith. In one word, he is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative” (ibidem, 13). Of course, James is not saying that at all, as we will see.


R. Bultmann, Theologie des Neuen Testaments, 1953.

The imperative, according to Dunn, follows the indicative in two separate forms. The one expresses the continuing sustaining grace of God in sanctification and charisma, the other is an appeal to human responsibility. The latter is denied by Bultmann, thought to be a part of the old world, the former is not called imperative at all, but interpreted to be an integral part of the indicative event.

Cf. R. Bultman, Theologie, p. 332, #38
151 R. Bultman, Theologie, p. 339, #39
152 R. Bultman, Theologie, p. 16, #2.3
153 R. Bultman, Theologie, p. 19, #2.5
154 James D.G. Dunn, The Partings of the Ways, p. 102.
155 Cf. J.H. Yoder, Politics, 1972, p. 7
156 R. Bultmann, Theologie, pp. 544-545.
157 mPeha 1:1, tr. Philip Blackman (Mishnayot, Gateshead, 1990)
158 Ibid., p. 12.
159 Cf. Siphra 19:18, Pirkei Avot 1:12, 6:1. See also Encyclopedia Judaica, XI, 530.
160 A. Schlatter, Jacobus, 1932, p. 185.
161 So e.g. Leslie Mitton Epistle of James, p. 99, the opposite however Blackman, Epistle of James, p. 90.

This connection between the shema and moral commitment was even more obvious when, during the second Temple period, the recitation of the Ten Commandments preceded the recital of the passage Deut. 6:4-9. Later on two other passages from scripture were added, and blessings were added before and after the recitation of the now threefold shema, while the ten Commandments were dropped. This happened apparently because of Christian insistence that only the Ten Commandments were valid now that Christ had come. But the passage that expressed God’s unity (Hear Israel, the Lord, our God, is the only Lord) became linked to the prohibition of idolatry and the obligation to suffer as a martyr to prevent it. Rabbi Akiba is reported to have died because of his refusal to commit idolatry under Roman torture while reciting the shema. That obligation was well established in 2nd Temple Judaism. Cf., e.g., S. Safrai (ed.) The Jewish People in the First Century, 1987, vol. II, pp. 800-801, and Encyclopedia Judaica under “Shema.” The latter mentions that saying the shema implied accepting the “yoke of the Kingdom of heaven.” All in all, the confession of the shema has a perfect counterpart in Matthew 5, where confessing Christ leads to martyrdom as well, and implies full commitment to the messianic Torah.

A. Schlatter, Der Brief des Jakobus, p. 199.
163 Cf. Blackman, Epistle of James, p. 91, also Richardson James, p. 129; Schlatter Brief des Jakobus, p. 188.
164 James D.G. Dunn Theology of Paul, p. 367.
165 In ch. 22.
166 1 Clement 10, 1-3, 6 Translation by Kirsopp Lake, Harvard edition of the “Apostolic fathers,” vol. 1.


Ibid., p. 20.


Cf. R. Hays (1993), p. 21

Ibid., p. 27

See chapter 43

For a full discussion of the division between empirical and constructed audience and its importance for understanding Romans, see Stanley K. Stowers, A Reading of Romans, 1994, esp. chapters 1 and 2.


In itself this is not a new insight. Harnack, quoted by Miller, and subsequently J. Knox (1942), had acknowledged Marcion as responsible for the creation of the catholic canon. Gnosticism, which claimed secret traditions from the apostolic age, was equally important, as Miller recognizes. Montanist claims to fresh prophetical revelations were equally influential.

J.W. Miller (1998), p. 43

Ibid., p. 49.

Ibid., p. 50.

2 Peter 3:15. On the other hand, such a statement presupposed the existence of Paul’s letters. Following the inner dynamics of the LXX as a history-oriented collection (as opposed to the order in the masoretic text expressing the order of revelation: Torah, early and late prophets, writings) it would have been expected that Paul’s letters preceded those of Peter.


Ibid., pp. 26-27.

James is given that date on the assumption that closeness to the gospels, the simplicity of Church organization, the simplicity of the author’s self-introduction, and the lack of reference to other issues are arguments in favor of an early dating, despite the fact that the letter is written in literary Greek and was accepted fairly late into the canon (cf. Richardson [1997], p. 41). Galatians is dated around 49 on the assumption that it must fit into the timeline of Acts, which implies its having been written before the Jerusalem Council (cf. Dunn [1993], p. 8).


Commission is a better word than conversion, even though Paul’s transformation from enemy of the gospel to its prime advocate serves as a model for the conversion of gentiles in the sense that here, too, the Spirit leads to an awareness of the presence of the risen Christ. But Paul, in truth, was not converted to another religion, but experienced a change in his view on the status of the gentiles after Jesus as the Messiah had been resurrected. Cf. James D.G. Dunn (1993), p. 3. His own description of the status of being an apostle differs completely from that of Luke in Acts. To be a witness to the resurrected Christ as an apostle was possible for those who had witnessed during Christ’s life and had been authorized by Christ in their positions, with Matthias becoming an apostle as the successor of Judas in Acts 1 and being authorized through an act of the Spirit. Paul’s apostolate necessarily entails the notion of being commissioned and being a witness to the resurrection, but it does not comply with the first two conditions. But Matthias’s election also refers to a primacy of the Spirit in these matters: the resurrected Christ continues to have the authority He had on earth, and Paul is vigorous in defending on that grounds the equal status of his apostolate.


Ibidem

That this emphasis on salvation as a function of the proposed keeping of the law is an unnecessary hypothesis is evident from Dunn’s reading of Paul’s opponents: “In short, the letter makes clearest and fullest sense if we see it as a response to a challenge from Christian-Jewish missionaries who had come to Galatia to improve or correct Paul’s gospel and to ‘complete’ his converts by integrating them fully into the heirs of Abraham through circumcision and by thus bringing them ‘under the law’.” James D.G. Dunn (1993), p. 11.

J.C. Beker (1980), p. 44.

James D.G. Dunn (1993), p. 2. Betz is quoted there as well.


James D.G. Dunn excludes this possibility by arguing that Paul refers to the troublemakers always in the third person, whereas he would include them in his 2nd-person address if they had been part of his gentle Church. Dunn (1993), p. 9, n. 1.

Is it possible that to Peter his vision in Acts 10:9-16 not only meant that gentiles were able to receive the Spirit but also that food laws were abrogated? Though the vision refers to the impurity of gentiles, now declared pure by God, by means of the analogy with pure and impure foods, it is possible that it also implied a change from the foods being declared impure to being pure; i.e., the terms of the analogy possibly share in the transformation of what they refer to.

This is of course also the way Jesus was reported to have behaved himself in order to convert Jewish sinners. Cf. Mark 2:16; Matth. 11:19.

It is obvious that the theme of “reward and punishment” is found everywhere in rabbinic literature. Several concepts of reward coexisted. Some argued that the reward for performing a mitzvah was the performance of another mitzvah, or a reward in the world to come. Because just reward was a subconcept of the concept of God’s justice and judgment was connected to each human action, the notion of divine approval or retribution had to be the logical outcome of any reflection of the value of man’s actions sub specie eternitatis. Three remarks are in order. First of all, the merit of a human deed was a free and sovereign response by God and not an automatic part of human achievement. Therefore it was considered inadmissible to act in order to gain merit. Mitzvot should be performed for the sake of heaven. Secondly, God dealt with humans above and beyond the strictures of justice. God’s quality of mercy outweighed His quality of righteousness. Thirdly, the ‘merit’ is most often considered as the effect of a good deed beyond the physical meaning of it as an action within creation, the metaphysical meaning or effective moral influence, so to speak, of human deeds. The effect of good deeds was then considered helpful in aiding others who lacked the ability to perform in such a way beyond the call of strict duty or in determining the moral standing of a community. In all of this, rabbinic “theology” does not equal the strict notion of a divine justice that needs full compliance in every respect from every creature while at the same time considering that man is unable, because of his inner duality, to accomplish anything good. In fact, the concept of Torah and the concept of Covenant must be seen as interlinked. Full compliance with the Torah in the sense of moral perfection was never seen as a prerequisite of the Covenant.

We use the term Judaism as implying an effort to proselytize, though that is strictly speaking not correct: a Judaizer, in 1st-century parlance, is someone who lives according to Jewish halakah, not someone who tries to have others follow the Jewish halakah as well.

Luther on Gal. 2:14 states it thus: “In civil life obedience to the law is severely required. In civil life Gospel, conscience, grace, remission of sins, Christ Himself, do not count, but only Moses with the lawbooks. If we bear in mind this distinction, neither Gospel nor law shall trespass upon each other. The moment law and sin cross into heaven, i.e., your conscience, kick them out. On the other hand, when grace wanders unto the earth, i.e., into the body, tell grace: “You have no business to be around the dreg and dung of this bodily life. You belong in heaven.”

LXX Deut. 27:26 reads as follows: ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ἀνθρώπος ὡς οὐκ ἐμμενεί ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς λόγοις τοῦ νόμου τοῦτού τοῦ ποιήσας αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐρωτάν πᾶς ὁ λαὸς γένοιτο

This adoption of the Noachide Code in principle meant the establishment of a Christian halakah, which would also entail a “halakhic” form of applying the Mosaic law. Not only the specific regulations (as a Torah
for gentiles) but the manner and mode of halakhic reasoning, a messianic oral law (a Torah of the gentiles) should be considered here.


Stowers's expression for the audience implicit in and intended by the rhetoric as distinct from our reconstructed audience, based on historic presuppositions only loosely connected to the text.

Such references to future judgment are (too) heavily emphasized by J. Chr. Beker, who argues that Paul's theology was in a way derived from his eschatology, which gave all of his texts an "apocalyptic texture." (Beker [1980] p. 17)

It is difficult to determine what difference, if any, Paul had in mind when he stated (Rom. 3:30) that the circumcised were made righteous from (a) faith (ek pisteoos) and the uncircumcised by the faith (dia tes pisteoos). Justification obviously had the same sense for Jew and gentile in 3:28. But it might be construed that the Jew, on hearing the gospel, heard in essence a principle of faith expounded that was already expressed in the Torah, as Paul meant to show elaborately in chapter 4. So the Jew was redeemed out of 'a' faith that was expressed in different ways to Jew and gentile. The gentile, who had had no prior access to this Abrahamic faith that was fulfilled in Christ, was made righteous by the faith, as was now preached to him through the gospel. That would explain the use of the determinate article. From faith, echoing the formula of Rom. 1:17 might then emphasize the notion of trust in a God who makes good on his promise, and by this faith, refers immediately to the faithfulness of Christ that is at the heart of the gospel that now also reached gentiles. Rom. 3:28 already stated that man, both Jew and gentile, is justified "in the power of faith" (instrumental dative: pistei), which can then be understood to imply separate histories but equal forms of faith.

To Luther this was an adequate basis for the doctrine of justification by faith. Cf., e.g., his remarks in the "Sermon on Good Works": "This is what St. Paul means in many places, where he ascribes so much to faith, that he says: Justus ex fide sua vivit, "the righteous man draws his life out of his faith," and faith is that because of which he is counted righteous before God. If righteousness consists of faith, it is clear that faith fulfills all commandments and makes all works righteous, since no one is justified except he keep all the commandments of God. (Emph. mine) Again, the works can justify no one before God without faith. So utterly and roundly does the Apostle reject works and praise faith, that some have taken offence at his words and say: "Well, then, we will do no more good works," although he condemns such men as erring and foolish." (Luther, op. cit., p. 122) From this passage, however, it may be inferred that the rejection of good works involves those works that have been done without faith, and equally that faith implies works of faith. The issue then becomes what this concept of faith can mean if notwithstanding obedience is equalled to doing "works" without faith.

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Ha-tzadik be'emunato jichjeh, the righteous will live through his faith.

There are four versions in all of this Habakkuk verse. (1) The righteous by his faith(fulness) shall live (Masoretic text). (2) The righteous out of my faith(fulness) shall live (Septuaginta). (3) the righteous out of of faith(fulness) shall live (Paul). (4) My righteous one out of faith(fulness) shall live. (Heb. 10:38). Cf. Dunn (1988), ad loc.

Cf. Schlatter, Romans (1935), p.42, where he mentions this possibility.

Johnson (1997), p. 27.

Stowers (1994), pp. 100-102. Stowers calls this interlocutor the "Pretentious gentile."

A. Schlatter, Brief an die Römer, p. 90.

Cf. James D.G. Dunn (1988, ad loc.) argues that "syntax and balance of the sentence require that fusei be taken with what follows", against Cranfield and Achtemeier. The parallels cited in 2:27; Gal. 2:15, and Eph. 2:3 do show that Paul in general would have put fusei within the phrase and not at the end of it. Is it not possible, however, that Paul would have wanted to stress "by nature" because the context is about natural prerogatives? In that case, he would have put fusei at the end of the phrase. "gentiles who do not have the law, by nature [that is], since after all, gentiles could have the law by becoming proselyte or adopting it in their Christian context. Furthermore, if Paul wanted to stress that gentiles practice the law "by nature" he would have put the fusei within the next phrase, following the same logic that Dunn proposed and we would have had the phrase: ta tou nomou fusei poioosin. If fusei, finally, does belong to the next phrase, as Dunn argues, it is somewhat singular in that its position is contrary to Paul's general practice of using it within the phrase and the only reason for that could be the desire for emphasis. But if emphasis accounts for its positioning outside the phrase it is connected to there is no reason why it could not be connected to the previous part of the phrase anyway, since emphasis could be achieved in both positions.

Romans 2:27 has "ek fuseoos," which implies a different concept. Gal. 2:15 does show fusei within the phrase, but here the phrase is quite short and no emphasis is intended: hemeis fusei loudaioi. Finally, in Eph. 2:3 there is also no opposite to fusei, since it applies to all that "we are by nature children of wrath." So again, there is no reason there to put fusei in a separate construction. More importantly, both Gal. and Eph. show that fusei is normally connected to the origin of people, not to a mode of behavior.
Karl Barth e.g. stated in his *Church Dogmatics*, I,2, p. 332 that Rom. 2:14 can only refer to pagan Christians in whom the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:33 was being fulfilled.

The literature usually considers different possibilities in dealing with Romans 7: Paul is either speaking autobiographically about his individual experience with the Torah, or he is speaking about Israel's collective experience under the law (Ex. 19), or, in a combination of both, about the 'typical' experience of a Pharisee (Dunn). In our estimate he is speaking about the effect that acceptance of the law has on gentiles, who take that law as the means for salvation (with Stowers).

C.G. Kruse *Paul* (1996), p. 188.

Interestingly, in the commentary on Romans by St. Thomas Aquinas the role of faith is expressed as *primus motus mentis in Deum*, and faith thereby becomes *prima pars justitiae*. For if faith in that way becomes a cause of righteousness, such faith must be a faith that is alive (James 2), works through love (Gal. 5), implies Christ being in our hearts (Eph. 3), and purifies (Acts 15). Apparently this exegesis is prompted by the succession of "through faith" and "for all who have faith," with the first mention of faith signifying the means of access and the second referring to a mature faith that works through love and therefore signifies a being righteous (St. Thomas Aquinas, in *Omnes S. Pauli Apostoli Epistolae Commentaria*, c. iii, i. iii).

The phrase dia pisteos Iesou Christou can be translated as: through faith in Jesus Christ. Since pistis can also mean "faithfulness," it might be rendered, "through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." The argument could be made that it was intended to be the opposite of "works of the law" so that the greatest antithesis is present as in the text. Dunn, however, argued strongly against that, on the grounds that Romans 4 deals with the believer's faith in extenso. To him, the faithfulness of Christ was not in the apostle's mind (Dunn, Romans [1988], ad loc.)

Käsemann, 1974, p. 86; Schlatter, 1935, p. 143)

The LXX reads in Gen. 15:6 καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίζθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην


Ibid., p. 133.

I am disregarding the reading of Gen. 15:6 that argues that it was Abraham that reckoned righteousness to God. The verse would then say that Abraham trusted in God's promise because he reckoned (thought) it was righteous for God to do so, and not because he thought he had merited it. This reading by Nachmanides (commentary on Torah ad loc.), however, reflects rabbinic Hebrew usage, which hardly ever uses chashav ("to think") for human achievements and most often as 'thinking' (even in Gen. 50:22), and instead uses commercial expressions like he'elah ke-ilu. It might also be motivated by the fact, that Gen 15:6 uses kal, whereas in later rabbinic thought it would be more common to use a passive mood to express an activity of God.

R. Bultmann (1953), 269-270.


Cf. Erich Gräßer, "Rechtfertigung im Hebräerbrief," in Friedrich, *Rechtfertigung*, pp. 79-94; against our interpretation, e.g., see F.F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 285, who emphasizes the connection between Heb. 11:1 and 10:38 (the righteous one will live from faith) and concludes "There is no fundamental difference in this respect between Paul and the author of Hebrews...but our author...emphasizes the forward-looking character of saving faith, and in fact includes in faith...what Paul more often expresses by the companion word 'hope'." (p. 275)

Cf. chapter 15.

So A. Schlatter, 192. The worthiness of being just will be given to believers when Jesus will accept them in His royal glory.

Most often the term δικαίωσις is taken to mean exactly what is expressed in the passive participle δικαίωσιος, (cf. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, 1964 – vol. II, p. 191). Yet it is agreed that Paul sometimes uses the passive δικαίωσιος, for those who have kept the law (Rom. 2:13, stating the general principle) implying an intrinsic meaning. The more complex formula referring to Habakkuk 2:4, stating that the just will live on the basis of his holding fast to righteousness, is expressed by Paul as being justified through faith. Through faith we cling to God's righteousness revealed, which is a power of God unto salvation. The notion of accepting the righteousness of Christ as the essence of our own life does not seem to exclude the idea that having been justified also means that we are no longer sinners in Adam. Δικαίωσις, in Rom. 5:19, as the opposite of ἀποκτάλογος must then mean being intrinsically righteous. To be intrinsically righteous can however mean two things: to be part of the the community of those who have been
made righteous, or to be on a high moral level individually. I prefer the former sense as in general agreement with Yoder's correct emphasis on the ecclesiological dimension of justification in Paul.

253 R. Bultmann (1953), pp. 272-73.

254 The language of bondage under sin and sin and death as powers does not signify that Paul thought of these as separate, metaphysical entities. The language is metaphorical, and the real subject behind them is scripture, which defines gentile sin and shows its ultimate result in death. Cf. Stowers (1994), pp. 176-183, who on this basis claims that the interpretation of sin-as-power has led theologians astray since Augustine, since they derived from it a "universal individualism" in which sin was made into a metaphysical characteristic of mankind, whereas it should be understood historically.

255 Cf. the discussion in E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, pp 439-440. Sanders agrees up to a point with the classical position of Albert Schweitzer that in general Paul grounded his ethics on the life in the Spirit and not directly on justification. But he argues that there are many passages that do make that connection. We agree with Sanders that justification by faith is connected intrinsically to life in the Spirit, the Spirit being received through faith, for one thing (Gal. 3:1-5), and being also the seal of justification, the sign of the future redemption, the gift of being identified with Christ in His resurrection, etc. But we disagree that this amounts to a form of mysticism. The life in the spirit and the reception of the Spirit are terms for the entrance into the congregation and the adoption of a new lifestyle, only partially and initially defined by the ecstatic signs of the presence of the Spirit in the shape of speaking in tongues, prophecy and the like.


259 James D.G. Dunn (1988), I, p. 333


261 Justification by faith, participation in Christ, and the gift of the Spirit are called the basic focal images of Paul's doctrine of salvation and of his ethics (Dunn [1998] p. 631). Though each of these do represent different sub-systems in the language and imagery of Paul, they are all connected experientially: by faith the believer participates in (and identifies with) Christ, and the transformation inherent in that is expressed as the gift of the Spirit. Hays combines these three notions into one by talking about the new creation, and then adds the Cross as the paradigm of action and the community as the topos of God's effective grace (Hays [1996], pp. 196-206). I prefer to make the simpler distinction between justification and sanctification.

262 Käsemann, (1974) pp. 204, 205

263 "Das Gesetz des geistes ist nichts anderes als der Geist selbst nach seiner Herrschaftsfunktion im bereiche Christi." Käsemann, Commentary on Romans ad loc. Schlatter however still tried to explain 'law' with reference to Mosaic law: "The law that was valid until then has been divested of its sovereign power by a new law." (Schlatter, 253) "Dem bisher gultigen Gesetz wird die Herrschermacht durch ein neues Gesetz genommen." The result is, that God "shapes both will and mind creatively" of man. Man is made obedient in Christ, and has no autonomous power left to do anything but the negative of striving against it.

264 The LXX reads here: 39:7 θυσίαιν και προσφοράν οὐκ ἡθέλησαν υτία δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι ὁλοκαυτώμα καὶ περὶ ἄμαρτίας οὐκ ήττος.

39:8 τότε ἔπον ἵδον ήκου ἐν κεφαλὶ διβλίου γεγράπται περὶ ἐμοὶ

39:9 τοῦ ποιήσαι τὸ θέλημά σου ὅ θεός μου ἐβουλήθην καὶ τὸν νόμον σου ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κούλιας μου

265 In Rom. 5:16 the translators most often choose 'judgment', but that does not make much sense to me. Out of the offences of the many the gift of grace brought them to the just demand of the law, because that was being fulfilled in them by God's grace, making them righteous, as in 5:19. The plural diakooomata, however, used once by Paul in 2:26, means the requirements of the law specifically. In Hebrews 9:1, 10 the word is used for ordinances, and in Revelation (15:4; 19:8) it is also used for 'righteous acts'. The plural can be used for many acts flowing from a quality to denote that quality itself, especially in Hebrew, as in Psalm 11:7. This might be the source for the usage here. In Rom. 1:32 we have the singular, meaning the righteous demand. In Rom 8:4 the dikaioooma tou nomou (the righteous demand of the law, being fulfilled in the spirit-led life) is not fully equal to the dikaiooomata tou theou (God's demand in the shape of separate mitzvoi) in Rom. 2:26, and it certainly does not refer to the demand in its application as judicial verdict as in Rom. 1 where it denotes God's verdict of death.

266 It does not state that we are debtors to the Spirit, presumably because that would imply a new kind of formal obligation. The obligation Paul intends to put forward is a negative one only: to refrain from something, as if the transformation in the Spirit only allows us to abstain from what is incongruent with our new status but does not enable us to act positively in accordance with the intent of the Spirit. That positive side is expressed only as an accomplishment of the Spirit in us.
The plural ὁλοκτόνων does not primarily denote a manifold number of compassionate acts, but is derived from the LXX-translation of the abstract plural δίκαιος α δίκαιος a divine attribute: compassionate. Paul seems to play here on the plural, since it may denote in Greek a plurality of acts.

The Greek λατρεία (latreia) expresses both hired labor and cultic service. Both meanings enforce each other here: the cult qualifies the ethics in the sense that notions of dedication and sacrifice, embodied in the gospel, are not a motivational power, but shape the form of ethics in itself. It also means that the cult is approached from ethics as well: ethics qualifies the cult in the sense that our worship is part of our moral dedication. The precise meaning of λατρεία however, can only be explained with reference to chapters 12 and 13 which follow.


Ibid.

The body as living sacrifice seems also to stand in contrast to the dishonoring of the bodies in pagan practices in Romans 1:24. So is the renewal of the mind a reversal of the "despicable thinking" in Romans 1:28.


‘Recognize’ from Greek dokimazo: to learn, to test and affirm.

A. Schlatter (1935); p. 331.

Ibid., pp. 334-35.

"Die drei Adjektive können die Attribute des thelema sein oder selbständig als Apposition an dieses an­treten." According to Schlatter the difference is of minor importance: the attributes only express the reason why the divine will should be sought. But Schlatter has already decided, of course, in his commentary on chapter 2, that the goal of Christian ethics is inner congruence between our and the divine will, setting all heteronomy aside. He actually argues in conformity with the ‘Enthusiasm’ that Käsemann sees as the opponent in the passage.

Cf. K. Barth, Kirchliche Dogmatik, Zürich, 1942, II/2, p. 796 (§38.3)

Apparently the reading of the powers in the opening of chapter 13 as the state obscures the inner connection between love for the enemy in chapter 12 and love as fulfillment of the law in 13:8ff., both of which deal with love on the level of the personal encounter. Many have argued, as Ridderbos, e.g., (1959, ad loc.) that the passage is more like a separate discourse inserted only because Paul felt its need for his Roman audience. By applying the alternative reading of the powers as "officials," however, the connection is restored.

J.H. Yoder, 1972, p. 196.


J. H. Yoder (1972), pp. 198-199.

Ibid., p. 203.

Ridderbos (1959), p. 293.


Emil Brunner, Das Gebot, p. 484

Cf. also Emmanuel Levinas, e.g. in "Liberté et Commandement", p. 266 in Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale 58 (1953) who argues that the discours of the encounter (i.e. the moral order) constitutes a relationship between individuals that precedes the institution of the rational law and is the effort to involve someone in a dialogue without using violence. The -exercise of violence and power rest precisely on the refusal to join in that dialogue.

The Greek εξουσία refers to delegated power, the fact that one can exercise the power given him as if it were his own, but it can also be used for the persons carrying that power, so in this case: rulers, officials. Its usage as equivalent to power would be a Semitism; cf. Hebrew יהושע, reshut, domination, authority, domain.

Schlatter stated that it was not impossible that Paul had received messages that the Zealots were influencing the synagogues and Churches in Rome. Even without such a historical incentive, it would still be necessary for Paul to discuss the issue (Schlatter [1935], p. 350).

So we have a reversal here of the situation in which Judas Maccabeus decided to kill his countryman for obeying the command to sacrifice to the Greek god, and the representative of the Greek king who came to his home town to enforce the state's demand. That representative was killed because he was identified with the state, and the state was a power to be opposed (1 Macc. 2).

Cf. M. Dibelius, Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums, Tuebingen, 1933, pp. 239-244.


Goppelt finds fault with Karl Barth for emphasizing the presence of God's kingdom at the expense of the Kingdom that is still to be fully realized. According to Goppelt, Jesus wants the "total conversion" of human beings, but the complete fulfillment of His commandments can never be a requirement for all, it has the character of an exception that acts as a sign pointing toward a kingdom in which it will be possible for all to obey. The
reality of the present kingdom, one might oppose to Goppelt, is then reduced to an ideal without effectiveness in the present.

294 J.H. Yoder, Royal Priesthood p. 147
295 Cf. J.H. Yoder, Royal Priesthood, p. 149
296 J.C. Beker, Paul p. 255.
297 J.C. Beker, Paul, p. 263
298 J.C. Beker Paul, p. 289.

300 Ridderbos Romeinen p. 295. He reads the εἰ μὴ as equivalent of 88” construing the passage as an adversative clause: be not indebted to anyone but (instead) love each other.

301 It might be different if we could read here ὑπαίτωμα, which would take up the kind of obligations that are mentioned in verse 8. The sense would then be that we are required to meet our society’s obligations toward one another, and above and beyond that to love each other. The ‘law’ would then be intended to refer to the principle of law as given in society, and the verse would teach us to move beyond legal obligation to moral obligation as well. (Cf. O. Michel [1955], p. 288). But the reading ὑπαίτωμα is to be preferred even though it is not present in the major authorities (ὁπαίτωμα in Ν, ὑπαίτωμα in Ν', ὑπαίτωμα in Β).

302 According to Käsemann, the expression is derived from mathematical parlance and can only mean "to sum up." Still, he acknowledges that in this context it refers to the rabbinic issue of the ‘summary’, i.e., a definition of a general hermeneutic perspective of the law as can be found, e.g., in the last chapter of the tractate Makkoth.

303 James Dunn argues that Paul’s critique of the law was “carefully targeted” against its abuse by sin, and against the assumption that having the law implied a favored position and redemption. The other functions of the law, defining sin and condemning transgression, were still valid for the believer.

304 James D.G. Dunn, Theology of Paul, pp. 650-651.

306 James D.G. Dunn, Theology of Paul, pp. 74-75.
307 Ibid., p. 148.
309 Ibid., p. 441
310 James D.G. Dunn, Theology of Paul, p. 646.
312 Ibid.

313 Ulrich Luz confirms the idea that, according to Matthew, the law is fulfilled in its character of Torah (Weisung), and not merely in its character of prophecy (Hinweis). The same is true of the fulfilling of the prophecies. Cf. Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 4 (1989), p. 238. Cf. note 292.

314 The LXX has here: καὶ ἵδε ἔτι λαλούσης σου ἐκεί μετά τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ἐγὼ εἰσελύσομαι ὑπίστω σου καὶ πληρώσομο τοὺς λόγους σου.

315 I agree here with the view of U. Luz (in: Das Matthaeusevangelium und die Perspektive einer biblischen Theologie) that Matthew did not view this kind of quotation from Chronicles, but expanded an already established use within the early Christian community as present, e.g., in Mark 14:49. It has in his presentation no clear relationship to rabbinic usage, where not fulfilling (ἁκούαται) but “establishing” (ῥυθμεῖται) is prominent, in the sense of confirming the validity of a verse by another. Cf. Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 4 (1989), pp. 236ff.) In our view, the translation of “establishing” by the Greek πληροῦν in the Deuteronomy passages is of vital importance to understanding of the expression “fulfilling the law” as distinct from fulfilling the prophets. But in both cases a teaching or deed by Jesus confirms the validity of the quotation.

316 Meinrad Limbeck, Das Gesetz, p. 131

318 Mark is based on Palestinian traditions about Jesus, which account for most of the sayings, and Hellenistic and Galilean narratives. His main effort was to provide a consistent narrative that could combine the various traditions that he had received. The main intent of Mark’s theology seems to be linked to a very early type of piety that saw in Jesus the exceptional teacher, debater, leader, and healer. The debates are constructed in order to show Jesus’ exceptional nature, and they focus less on the contents. Nevertheless, Mark was limited to reproducing Palestinian reports that did focus on the contents, as is clear in particular from such passages as Mark 2 and 7. The context, however, leads away from that emphasis to the man Himself. In the same manner, the role of the disciples is portrayed in various ways as a response to Jesus. The crowds, the disciples, the Pharisees, and
other groups are confronted with Jesus and are astonished or in fear. (E.g. 1:22, 27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:20, 42; 6:50; 7:37; 9:14; 10:32; 12:17, 34; 15:5; 16:8) The meaning of Jesus’ mission is not presented in a more or less independent Christology, but through the response of men to the exceptionality of Jesus’ character and mission.


320 “Gemara,” literally: completion. Can refer to the oral discussions on the Mishnaic law as they were recorded and collected in the two recensions of the Talmud, the Babylonian or the Palestinian (Jerusalem) Talmud, or the whole of the Talmud consisting of Mishnah and Gemara.

321 The authorities in the Mishnah are called “Tannaim,” expounders (of the law). The authorities that commented on the Mishnah are called Amoraim, teachers (of the law). These Amoraim lived in Babylonia or Palestine from the 3d century onward.

322 Cf. E. P. Sanders (1993), p. 219. Handwashing before a common meal (as opposed to a festive meal or on Sabbath), according to Sanders, was a Pharisaic tradition at most and not a law; there is hardly any evidence for it in the 1st century; it was certainly not a uniform tradition; most Jews probably did not abide by it, so it could not have been a cause for deadly enmity. Based on these historical assumptions, probably not, but the passage is not directly about the handwashing issue at all. It is about the principle of rabbinic authority, which is evident if we do not separate the core passage from its redactional setting and context. We will argue elsewhere that we need to distinguish core passage and redaction without separating them. There is continuity between both that we need to detect. We should not assume as a principle of method that the quoted material is in opposition to the redactional interests, even if there is difference in terminology, style, and field of application.

323 James D. G. Dunn (1991), p. 43. Here Dunn bases his counter-argument on Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 1985; referring to pp. 178, 199, 209, 264-5. Dunn more or less accuses Sanders of having introduced the dogma that there could have been no conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees about *halakah*. Our solution has been that precisely because in this handwashing both the issue of the authority of rabbinical enactments and the major drive towards sanctification of ordinary life were at stake, it must have been an item of grave conflict. The debate between Jesus and the Pharisees was therefore not about washing hands or not, as Sanders rightly assumes, but about who could decide such an issue and for what reason it could be deemed desirable to have such a *halakah*. Besides that, Dunn’s statement that Mark 7 is itself a piece of historic evidence for the existence of the issue in the 1st century seems correct to me.


327 It is our contention that Mark 7 especially shows the validity of Neusner’s approach over against that of Guttmann (in his *Rabbinic Judaism in the Making*, Atlanta, 1970 ) who claims that Pharisaic teachers were “willing to adjust the demands of the Torah to the ever-changing realities of life” (p. xii), which would suggest a lifting of ritual law rather than the search for an application. Gutmann’s thesis has found support on this single point from Ellis Rivkin in *A Hidden Revolution,* who also denies Pharisaic interest in matters of purity.

328 Represented in the symbolic act of the multiplication of the five loaves of bread, perhaps referring to the five books of Moses, complemented by prophets and writings (the two fish) combining into the seven pieces of food that can feed the multitude (the hundreds and fifties of the Roman army). In the chapter itself, Mark goes on to describe Jesus’ dealings with a gentile woman from outside the boundary of the Holy Land, indicating that, to him, the issue of purity is intrinsically connected to that of the extension of the preaching of the gospel beyond Israel (verses 24-30). The mention of bread in chapter 6 and the washing of the hands before partaking of bread in chapter 7 might form an element of connection between the passages.

329 After discussing and rejecting Sanders’ contention that the incident could not be authentic, Sanders argued that Jesus’ attitude would of necessity have been far more favorable to existing Pharisaic regulations, so the passage reflects more the concern of the later Church, Dunn states as his conclusion that Jesus’ “cavalier” attitude toward the purity laws might have constituted a threat to the integrity of the Temple, depending on the level of provocation of the recorded incidents and on the level of concern for purity regulations, which, though present in all factions of Judaism, might have varied. So, according to Dunn, the passage reflects Jesus’ own attitude toward the purity laws and the Korban law mentioned later, because it is doubtful to him that a gospel written before 70 could have reflected a concern over purity that had developed much later, as Sanders contends. The issue must have been pre-70, and therefore an authentic point of debate between Jesus and the Pharisees, and the latter would probably have held positions that were not recorded in later collections of rabbinic materials. Dunn does not discuss, however, the implications of the fact that Mark is obviously addressing a Roman audience unfamiliar with these laws, and that at least the context of the incident, which stresses a clash between Jesus and the Pharisees, is redactional in nature. Precisely because the gravity and implications of the issue are dependent on such circumstances as Dunn mentions, this contextual element in Mark’s rendering becomes more important than he gives it credit for. So Dunn is right in contending that the issue was real in Jesus’ time, but the evidence
is inconclusive for his implicit affirmation that Jesus’ position was as principled a rejection of Judaism as the Markan context makes it out to be (cf. Dunn [1991], pp. 43-44).

330 We find in BShabbat 14b that several rulings (18 in all) in which Hillel and Shammai concurred after having disputed each other had to be renewed by their pupils, apparently because the Sadducees prohibited their observance. Cf. Soncino Talmud Shabbath, p. 14 and n. 4 and the references there.

331 The ‘sages’ or ‘elders’ are never mentioned in a positive sense in this gospel. They are the enemies of Christ (Mark. 11:27; 14:43; 15:1) and they conspire to kill Jesus in Mark 8:31.

332 Expressed, e.g., in MPirkei Avot 1:1: “Moses ‘received’ the Torah from the Sinai and handed it over to Joshua.”

333 This might also have bothered Matthew, who changes the order of things, first making Jesus answer the Pharisaic question with a counter-question referring to Korban, and then introducing the theme of the hypocrites and ending with an explanation to the disciples about the source of defilement.

334 As Stevan Davies observed (1996, p.1 NB: not in bibliography), 35 separate sayings are recorded in Mark’s account of Jesus’ public ministry that are neither Markan redaction nor occasional comments, and 21 of them are in Thomas as well, which cannot be accounted for by a dependence of Thomas on the Synoptics. We find both Davies’s and S. Paterson’s argument persuasive, that Thomas represents an independent tradition of material going back to Christ, or at least to early pre-70 Christianity, as surely as the Q-sayings do. The most persuasive argument is the complete absence of redaction material in Thomas, suggesting an early separation of traditions. As a matter of fact, Patterson argues persuasively for an origin of Thomas around A.D. 60-70, making it a contemporary of Mark.

335 This rule of inference from the lighter to the heavier case is based on the assumption that the law has “the tendency to proportionate its effect to the importance of the cases referred, so as to be more rigorous and restrictive in important, and more lenient and permissive in comparatively unimportant matters.” Mielziner, 1894 (1968), p.180.


338 James Dunn, op. cit. p. 111.


341 If Jesus is using the weight of written law to reject Pharisaic halakah, how then could he reject the weight of scripture in the case of Sabbath law in Mark 2? We will later argue that Jesus did not oppose Sabbath law, and that even Markan redaction did not make him take up that position. Cf. § 36.3.

342 Cf., e.g., the completely different implication of the beginning of Matthew’s collection of anti-Pharisaic statements by Jesus in chapter 23, where verse 3, despite its negative intent, does uphold the ethical and hermeneutic authority of the rabbis. Also the wording of Matthew 5:18, referring to the tittle and iota of the law, indicates in rabbinic usage an acceptance of the oral law, which was often taught to be contained in the shape of the letters.

343 Bultmann (1955), p. 16.

344 In our explanation of the mishnah I follow the Gemara BNedarim 64a and H. Freedman’s remarks on the passage in the Soncino translation under note 4 (p. 205). This explanation is in all major respects the same as that of Ph. Blackman in his edition of the Mishnah.

345 The down side of the Pharisaic effort to cultivate ritual purity amongst the laity was the emergence of a separate class of people, so defined by the Pharisaic party themselves, who were usually designated as “people of the land” (am ha ‘arets). All those who were not knowledgable about Torah and the interpretation of the rabbis belonged to it. We find that non-Jews living in Israel, Samaritans, tax-collectors, and inhabitants of the countryside are designated as such almost automatically. The Mishnah (Demai 2:3) states that a member of the Pharisaic movement (organised perhaps as chevurot, small companies of teachers and students) could not be a guest of such people and would not invite them to his own home.


347 The general intent of such laws and the tendency to widen their scope is nicely expressed in this mishnah attributed to R. Phineas b. Jair: “Zeal leads to cleanliness, and cleanliness leads to purity, and purity leads to self-restraint, and self-restraint leads to sanctity, and sanctity leads to humility, and humility leads to fear of sin, and the fear of sin leads to piety, and piety leads to divine intuition, and divine intuition leads to the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection of the dead shall come through Elijah of blessed memory” (MSotah 9:15).

348 Safrai, disagreeing with Sanders, thinks the custom was quite common and mentions the Letter of Aristeas and the third book of the Sibylline oracles as evidence for its early date. Washing the hands was a symbolical act that represented taking a bath. Cf. Safrai (1987), p. 831.

349 David Catchpole also notes this in his “Mark”, in: Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 71, 72. Vs. 27 would originally serve as the final argument of Mark 2, which in our interpreta-
tion fits reasonably well: the intent of the original debate might then be reconstructed by saying that Jesus shows with a familiar thesis (the phrase is to be found also in the Mekhilta de R. Ishmael), that the laws of peah served to safeguard human wellbeing and are therefore in this case − of reaping without instrument − of higher precedence than the rabbinic ruling that even plucking grain is a forbidden work. Vs. 28 would in such an early context indicate an inference: if the Sabbath is for man (generally), then man (=1, Jesus am) is lord over the Sabbath, and can and must therefore interpret its laws in such a way, that the wellbeing of man is served. After the issue of peah had been forgotten or was no longer relevant, i.e. when Mark's materials entered a non-Jewish community, vs. 28 could rise to greater prominence and the aramaic reference to the speaker as representative of weak mankind (son of man) could come to mean a messianic title, indicating an "imperial" authority over the law.

The continuing importance of this is that the precedent which gave rise to the rabbinical rule, quoted in Mekhilta Exodus 31:13, that one is allowed to desecrate the Sabbath in order to save a life, was historically the need to defend oneself against the enemy when attacked on a Sabbath. During the Maccabean war the use of weapons in self-defense on Sabbath was accepted. In the Mekhilta text however this motive from the context of war was given no further consideration and the reason is now given as something within the system of law. Because it states 'And ye shall keep the Sabbath for it is holy unto you'(Ex. 31:14) Says R. Simon b. Menasiah: this means, the Sabbath is given to you but you are not surrendered to the Sabbath." Furthermore, if the law allows circumcision on Sabbath which deals with one limb, the more one is allowed to save a soul on Sabbath. Immediately afterwards however, the phrase "throughout their generations" is used to emphasize the holiness of Sabbath: "We should disregard one Sabbath for the sake of the life of a person so that person may be able to observe many Sabbaths." The intent of this ruling therefore is not to reject the importance of Sabbath, but to actually add weight to it, by making it possible for man to keep it.

Even Thomas-logion 27 seems to accept the Sabbath as a divine institution where it has Jesus say "If you do not keep the Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father." There is no need to surmise that the phrase 'as Sabbath' should refer to a spiritual observance of the Sabbath, in fact, the logion provides evidence for at least a partial non-Gnostic origin of the sayings.


Cf. Isaiah 49:6: "I will also give thee for a light to the gentiles," but here obviously the reference is to the Messiah (though he of course represents the collective identity of the nation), as it is to David in 2 Sam. 21:17. Yet in Is. 60:3 the light image is transferred to the restored nation: "And the gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." In rabbinic literature the image is applied to God, specific individuals, Israel itself, the Torah, or the Temple and Jerusalem (cf. Str-B. I, p. 237).

The image seems to be specific to the gospel. Str.-B. ad l. quotes Bereshit Rabbah 2 (3c), which shows R. Abbahu explaining Gen. 1:3 as a reference to the deeds of the righteous. But Abbahu lived at the end of the third century.

Betz suggests ad loc. the interesting possibility that the saying was directed at a real statement falsely attributed to Christ. If we accept an early origin of the text, this must mean that even before the writing of Matthew there were strands of tradition current that differed widely on the issue of Jesus' relation to the Torah.
A contemporary application of this order of things would be to deny the validity of the use of the prophets to ground a rejection of Old Testament law. The prophetic critique of Torah predates the writing down of the Torah and points to a tradition of explanation in which the Torah itself was given its final shape. This makes the prophets intrinsically interdependent with the Torah, as "oral" tradition would be in relation to a written statute. The need to ground Jesus' messianic claims on the prophets has tempted many Christian theologians to see in the prophetic writings the nucleus of the Old Testament, as if the Torah had already been abrogated in these writings.

Of course, we cannot have it both ways. Either the passage is authentic, and then it contains a principle of Christian exegesis of the law that cannot be undone by Paul, especially when it proves to be at odds with Paul’s gospel, or it contains a polemic reference to Paul which makes it belong to a later redactional stage, but then it represents a secondary response and we are left with the question of which approach is closer to Jesus’ intent: Matthew’s effort to reconstruct Jesus’ affirmation of the law, or Paul’s to reflect on the consequences of Christ’s death while under the (system of) law for the validity and function of that law.

According to Lev. 19:17 it is a duty to rebuke the offender first in private, since one "should not suffer sin because of him." Only in regard to duties toward God is it necessary to rebuke someone in public. The private offense should not be made public because that amounts to the sin of "gossiping." Cf. Lev. 19:16 and Rambam, Mishneh Torah, I, 6:6 and I, 7:1.

Excommunication in this sense is the “ratification of the rejection of the original baptismal covenant by the offending brother or sister and the refusal not to be reconciled again with the community. Only a visible Church must have such a procedure by which to establish who is and who is not a member. Cf. J. H. Yoder, “The Forms of a Possible Obedience,” unpubl. paper (1970).

During the Second Temple period the word sofer came to denote a special class of scholars that taught the binding halakah, explained the Torah to the people “distinctly and gave the sense” (Neh. 8:8). As expounders of the oral tradition they held authority in distinction to the priests and Levites who had been the keepers of law, and of tradition before that. Contrary to this view, and since there are no specific halakot recorded in the Talmud and attributed to a specific era of soferim, it is surmised by others that they did not exist as a group. The term would then denote any Torah scholar, but in particular all authorities before the formation period of the Mishnah. Cf. EJ, 15, 80a, b, 81a.

Darby emphasizes the usurpation: “have set themselves down.” Cf. KJV: “sit in Moses’ seat,” and Luther: sitzen (sit), which all express a rightful position.

Though difficult to establish with any degree of certainty, I find the greatest probability in the hypothesis that Matthew here has the most reliable tradition and quotes it accurately. The presence of such a rabbinically structured saying within Greek materials is an argument for its authenticity, based on the meaning, not on a hypothesis with regard to age. Mark would then have augmented his source by adding "nothing," since that was to him the final point of the issue. It also served to stress the moral aim of the passage. Matthews though restructuring the Markan passage and accepting its implicit theology, restored the saying attributed to Jesus to its older form or had in his possession a separate tradition.

The notion that one may not heal a man on Sabbath, not even when it would not imply a forbidden use of an utensil, is sometimes attributed to Qumran halakah. I have not found any reference to this in scholarly work, but did find such an opinion circulating among academic theologians in oral reports. One of the quotes that is given in support stems from the Damascus-document, CD, XI, 13, 14., 16 al jejaled ish behemah be-jom ha-shabbat (you will not assist, no one, your cattle to give birth on the day of Sabbath) VE-im tippol el bor ve-el pachat al jeqimah ba-shabbat. (and if [it] falls into a well or pit you will not lift [it] up on the shabbat. Because of the syntax VE-im (and if) and the feminine tippol, the subject must be the cattle of the previous prohibition. In that case, there would be no evidence to support the contention that at least according to CD a human being could not be helped on shabbat. However, CD, XI, 16 only reports that one may not help someone that has fallen into a pit with the aid of a ladder or a rope. So the idea is again that no forbidden utensil might be used; not even to help someone in distress. But the issue in Mark 3 is healing without the use of any forbidden instruments.

Cf. Goppelt, Theologie, p 142
E.P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism, p. 252-254.
H. Mulder, Lukas II, een praktische bijbelverklaring, Kampen, 1988, p. 31.
H. Baarlink, Matteïas I., Kampen, 1997.
E. Soloweyczik, 1948-88 (Kol Koree) Leipzig, 1877. p. 114. Soloweyczik argued in his commentary that the saying expresses the same thought as in Bberakhot 18b: ""But the dead know nothing"; "These are the wicked who in their lifetime are called dead." Soncino Talmud, London, 1948. vol. I (Berakhot) p. 110.
Denny Weaver, in his Keeping Salvation Ethical (1997), investigated the doctrines of eight 19th-century Mennonite preachers and theologians. He concluded: "When these eight figures talked about atonement, it constituted the initial step of a process that reached culmination only with the life of obedience to the commands of Jesus" (p. 224). "Lived faith" and nonresistance were the "integrative principles of theology" (P. 225).

Obedience must be distinguished from submission. The latter is the general acceptance of the sovereignty of God and the inclination of the human will to follow the divine will. The former is the inclination to fulfill God's commandments as duty, i.e., the concrete recognition of God's sovereignty by acts of the will directed toward fulfilling a divine precept. Thomas Aquinas differentiates between separate meanings of obediencia, whereas we prefer to distinguish submission and obedience. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, S.T. II, ii(b), q.4, a.7 r. 3: "Obedience is twofold: for sometimes it denotes the inclination of the will to fulfill God's commandments. In this way it is not a special virtue, but is a general condition of every virtue; since all acts of virtue come under the precepts of the Divine law, as stated above, and thus it is requisite for faith. In another way, obedience denotes an inclination to fulfill the commandments considered as a duty. In this way it is a special virtue, and a part of justice: for a man does his duty by his superior when he obeys him: and thus obedience follows faith, whereby man knows that God is his superior, Whom he must obey." We hold that this second meaning of obedience is a prerequisite of faith since the charity that is its form implies filial obedience, and not merely intellectual assent or charity as virtue.

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a ship’s ensign...in order that the equity of God’s justice may be verified in the world.” The Midrash thereby circumvents the strange implication that God would test because He would not know Abraham’s faith.

402 Stressed by Menno (Works, p. 123): “This is for the encouragement of all the pious, that they should believe, and submissively follow the word of the Lord, however heretical and ridiculous it may appear to them, not murmuring against the Lord why he so commanded it; but it is enough that they know that he has commanded and in what manner he has commanded.”

403 Menno, Works, p. 125.

404 Cf. Jon Levinson, The Death and the Resurrection of the Beloved Son, London (1983), in which the binding of Isaac is shown to be the most fundamental “myth” that binds Jews and Christians together. The ideal of total submission to God in an act that at the same constitutes the basic covenantal relationship with God is present in the akeidah and in its application to the life story of Jesus in the early Church. Judaism rests on the meaning of Abraham’s sacrifice and identifies itself with Isaac. Christianity reads into the story the act of God who relinquishes His son into death for all mankind (1 Cor. 15, this was the gospel Paul received, not invented), and rereads Abraham as the father of all faithful, identifying Isaac with Christ.


409 Ibid.

410 The “binding” of Isaac on the altar is called akeidah in Hebrew.


412 E. Fackenheim, op. cit., p. 62

413 Menno, Works, I, p. 159.

414 Ibid., p. 125a.


418 Confession of Peter Jansz Twisck.


420 Because it did not, it can be presented as a legitimate continuation of that tradition to come up with a different view on the role of Scripture. Instead of being the canonical a priori of all contemporary discernment, it becomes a record of early theology. As J. Denny Weaver puts it, (J. Denny Weaver, “Perspectives on Theology,” in Swartley (1984), p. 19. Mennonite theology is “the continuation of the task of reinterpretation visible in the Bible. It is one more attempt to restate what it means to be God’s people in yet another context and cosmology.” So now the “events” of history are interpreted in the Bible, and theology is a continuation of that process of interpreting events. Canonical Scripture has a priority in this endeavor, but that makes it only a “participant” in dialogue, and the community of that dialogue has the locus of authority.


422 Ibid.

423 E.g. Abraham’s use of the sword in Genesis 14 is immediately countered with a reference to the commandment to abjure any use of the sword under the new covenant when Menno deals with it. Menno Works, I, 122a.


425 Because they are circumcised, they fall under the principle of Gal. 5:3.

426 Ibid, p. 49.


431 Cf. J. H. Yoder (1994), p. 63: “The second scandalous conclusion is that there may well be certain functions in a given society which that society in its unbelief considers necessary, and which the unbelief renders necessary, in which Christians will not be called to participate.”

432 J.H. Yoder, ibid, p. 61.

433 J.H. Yoder, ibid, p. 81.
