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- **Is the Law Abolished According to Eph. 2:15?**
- **La loi est-elle abolie d'après Eph 2.15?**
- **Ist das Gesetz nach Eph 2,15 überholt?**

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## RÉSUMÉ

*Il s'agit là d'une contribution au problème de l'attitude des premiers chrétiens vis-à-vis de la loi de l'Ancien Testament. Certains d'entre eux pensaient-ils qu'elle n'était plus valable pour eux?*

*La réponse à cette question ne dépend pas de l'identité de l'auteur de l'Épître aux Ephésiens.*

*Le contexte d'Eph 2.15 ne suggère pas que nous devions nous attendre à un point de vue négatif sur la loi dans ce texte. Le verset 12 est très important pour nous permettre de comprendre le verset 15. Il rappelle aux chrétiens issus du paganisme tout ce dont ils étaient privés avant de connaître Christ, à savoir les privilèges du peuple de Dieu de l'Ancienne Alliance.*

*La triple expression 'la loi des commandements avec ses ordonnances' n'a aucun parallèle dans la littérature biblique ou extra-biblique de l'époque. Il n'est pas vraisemblable que ce soit un pléonasm.*

*Nous devons comprendre Eph 2.15 dans son contexte. Celui-ci suggère que ce n'est pas la loi de l'Ancien Testament dans son ensemble qui est abolie, mais seulement les éléments de cette loi qui séparaient les Juifs des non-Juifs. Il s'agit surtout des règles cérémonielles. D'autres éléments de la loi, comme par exemple les dix commandements, gardent leur validité pour les chrétiens d'origine païenne. Pour préserver l'unité de l'Église, les chrétiens d'origine juive sont invités à abandonner quelques-unes de ces 'ordonnances'. Mais les chrétiens d'origine païenne peuvent encore beaucoup apprendre de l'exemple du peuple du Dieu de l'Ancien Testament.*

*Il est nécessaire d'effectuer un travail exégétique sur plusieurs passages-clés (et souvent difficiles) pour obtenir des appuis fiables pour notre vision d'ensemble de l'enseignement biblique. On ne peut pas se fonder sur le texte d'Eph 2.15 pour contester l'unité de la théologie du Nouveau Testament.*

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

*Diese Untersuchung widmet sich der Frage, ob manche in der frühen Kirche die alttestamentliche Gesetzgebung als nicht mehr gültig betrachteten.*

*Die Antwort auf diese Frage ist unabhängig davon, wer den Epheserbrief verfaßt hat.*

*Der Kontext von Eph 2,15 legt nahe, keine negative Einstellung zum Gesetz in unserem Abschnitt zu erwarten. Besonders wichtig für das Verständnis von Eph 2,15 ist Vers 12. Hier werden die hellenistischen Christen daran erinnert, was ihnen vorenthalten war, ehe sie zu Christus fanden: nämlich die Vorrechte des alttestamentlichen Gottesvolkes.*

*Die dreiteilige Aussage 'das Gesetz der Gebote in Satzungen' ist ohne Parallele in*

*biblicher und zeitgenössischer außerbiblicher Literatur. Es ist unwahrscheinlich, daß es sich dabei um einen Pleonasmus handelt.*

*Eph 2,15 muß in seinem Kontext verstanden werden. Und dieser legt nahe, daß es sich hier nicht um das gesamte alttestamentliche Gesetz handelt, sondern nur um die Teile der Gesetzgebung, die Juden von Nicht-Juden unterschieden. Dabei handelt es sich vor allem um die kultischen Anweisungen oder Satzungen, während andere Teile des Gesetzes, wie zum Beispiel die Zehn Gebote, auch für Christen hellenistischer Herkunft weiter Gültigkeit besitzen. Um der Einheit der Kirche Gültigkeit zu geben werden die Judenchristen aufgefordert, einige ihrer Satzungen aufzugeben. Auf der*

*anderen Seite können hellenistische Christen viel vom Beispiel des alttestamentlichen Gottesvolkes lernen.*

*Um einen eindeutigen Befund über die gesamtbiblische Haltung zu dieser Fragestellung zu erhalten, muß noch mehr*

*exegetische Arbeit über viele, meist schwierige, Schlüsselpassagen geleistet werden. Eph 2,15 kann nicht als Beweismaterial gegen die Einheit neutestamentlicher Theologie verwendet werden.*

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**B**y abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances ... (RSV)

## 1. Introduction

In academic circles there is a growing tendency to challenge the unity of the theology of the New Testament. The discussion is based on certain major texts. Scholars have to work in an argumentative circle (or, rather, spiral): one looks at the evidence in detail; then one builds up a general picture; then one goes back to the individual parts of the evidence to understand it better in the light of the whole picture. This process has to be repeated many times. However, my impression is that one temptation of scholars is that of cementing their picture and not being open to re-examine parts of the evidence on which they have built their picture.

It is a substantial challenge for New Testament theology if the thesis can be proved: there is no unity in the New Testament because there are views in the New Testament antithetically opposing each other.

One example is the question of the relationship between the law and the gospel in the New Testament. Scholars point to passages which seem to prove that the orthodox early church had opposing views about the validity of the OT law for Christians. In the opinion of some Christians the New Testament gospel meant that the OT law was not valid any longer.

There are many passages brought into the discussion. One of these is Eph. 2:15. If it can be shown that the OT law is abolished according to Eph. 2:15, then it stands in antithetical contrast to, for example, Matt. 5:17, where Jesus is reported to have said:

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them (RSV).

So let us examine the question afresh: Is the Law abolished according to Eph. 2:15?

## 2. Authorship of Eph.

For the sake of arguing from other parts of the Pauline corpus it would be important to decide the question: Who is the author of Eph.? I do not think it essential to decide it here. One group of scholars holds the view that Eph. was written by a disciple of Paul. Others maintain the traditional view that Eph. was written by Paul. One has to acknowledge the right to bring in arguments from Pauline theology even if one holds the disciple theory, and be open to compare the theology of Eph. with the theology of letters which are generally regarded as Pauline. The comparison then may contain similarities as well as differences.

## 3. The immediate context of Eph. 2:15: vv. 14–18

Eph. 2:15 is part of a long sentence: vv. 14–16. Therefore, to find an answer to our question in this paper, we have to look at the exegetical problems of the immediate context, vv. 14–18. Then, subsequently, vv. 14–18 must be interpreted in the context of vv. 11–13 and 19–22.

It is generally agreed that vv. 14–18 form a unit.<sup>1</sup> These verses stand out from their surrounding context. The main characteristics which set apart vv. 14–18 as a unit are its form, its theme and its vocabulary.

Vv. 14–16 form one sentence. It begins with a short main clause which is followed by three participial clauses which enlarge on the predicate. Two of the participial

clauses are introduced by 'and'. The third, which interests us most in this paper: v. 15a, has no connecting word. Schlier argues that the absence of 'and' here indicates that this clause complements and explains the preceding one.<sup>2</sup> Vv. 15b and 16 contain two subjunctive verbs. At the end of both these final clauses there is a short participial clause. Schnackenburg thinks this complex structure to be the creation of the author of the epistle.<sup>3</sup> V. 17 is a combination of references to Isa. 52:7 and 57:19. V. 18 may be regarded as a summary of the unit. The 'we' style in vv. 14 and 18 marks the boundaries of the unit as opposed to you in vv. 13 and 19. I suggest that 'you' in v. 17 may be due to the fact that it is a Jewish Christian who writes here addressing Gentile Christians (see also v. 11).

The whole section of vv. 14–18 has one theme: he is our peace.<sup>4</sup>

Some words occur only here in the epistle (e.g.: two of three words used in the description of the law in v. 15: *nomos*, law; and *dogma*, ordinance). Some are rare in the New Testament (e.g. *dogma* only 6 times in the New Testament, but only here and possibly in Col. with reference to the OT law).

It is significant that theologically important notions are briefly mentioned but not explained, e.g. peace, wall, enmity, body, cross, spirit. This calls for hypothetical reconstruction of the background of these verses. For example, Schlier marshals passages from Rabbinic and Gnostic literature where 'wall' between 'two spheres', 'enmity' occur.<sup>5</sup> Schlier's thesis is that Jewish material was used by groups having gnosticising tendencies. Eph. fights against gnosticising Judaism. As Schlier himself acknowledges that his examples are later than the New Testament, I do not enter into discussion with his thesis.

In as much as we can emphasise the unity of verses 14–18, we can also affirm that it fits into its immediate context. We have to note that words and topics related to those of this unit also occur in the passages which precede and follow vv. 14–18: 'flesh' in v. 11; 'far' and 'near' in v. 13—'alienated from the commonwealth of Israel' in v. 12—'no longer strangers' in v. 19; 'blood' in v. 13; 'Spirit' in

v. 22; 'without God' in v. 12—'dwelling place of God' in v. 22.

It is also to be noted that the name of Jesus Christ does not occur in vv. 14–18. The personal pronoun in the third person singular occurs in all of these verses, very pointedly as the first word in v. 14, with the exception of v. 17 which contains references to the OT in its larger part.

The variety of expressions with a similar meaning and the complexity of the structure of vv. 14–16 may raise the possibility of changes, glosses in the text. Together with the fact that Jesus is not mentioned by name in vv. 14–18, these phenomena may suggest that vv. 14–18 form a unit originally not belonging to the chapter.

However, all these phenomena may be due to the style of the author of Eph.; he chooses his vocabulary carefully in order not to use simplistic language. Because of the fact that vv. 14–18 are related to their context by ideas and also by grammar ('he' at the beginning of v. 14 refers to 'Christ' at the end of v. 13) I suggest that we regard vv. 14–18 as an integral part of the chapter.

If we accept this working hypothesis as a starting point then it is worth looking at the wider context that surrounds vv. 14–18, in order to gain help for the interpretation of our crucial passage.

#### 4. The significance of the preceding section: Eph. 2:11–13

##### a. *Far and near*

In v. 11 the readers are addressed as Gentiles. They have to compare their present situation with that of the past. In the present they are 'near' (v. 13). In the past they were 'far'. The antithesis is most likely based on Isa. 57:19 which verse is referred to in Eph. 2:17. It is interesting that in the Isa. passage those who are 'far' as well as those who are 'near' are Israelites. In Isa. 57:19 it is not said that those who are far would become people who are near (unlike in Eph. 2:13). Most probably the Jews in the diaspora and those who are at home in Jerusalem are addressed. They all have sinned (Isa. 57:17), but God offers them peace.

Schlier mentions that later 'far' and 'near' have expressed an antithesis between

Proselytes and Israelites and also between non-Jews and Jews. He refers to Nu R 8 (149<sup>d</sup>) where the Gibeonites are those who are 'far' and Isa. 57:19 is quoted in application to them.<sup>6</sup>

Robinson pointed to Deut. 4:7 to show that Jews felt privileged over against other nations in that the Jews had God 'so nigh unto them'.<sup>7</sup> I note that in the same context the law is mentioned as a reason for Israel to feel distinguished among the nations (Deut. 4:8).

We may say that the author of Eph. has in mind a unified church made up of Gentile Christians together with Jews who are in the right relationship with God, because they repented from their sins (Isa. 57:15). Both these groups are now near to God.

#### *b. Comparison between Jews and Gentiles*

My key argument is that the past of the addressed Gentiles is described in comparison with the benefits it meant to be a Jew. Commentators discuss the elements of the comparison but they usually cannot see the significance of it. In this comparison the Jews are referred to in positive terms. It almost seems as if the writer would say: Look what privileges you have lost by not having belonged to the chosen people. Robinson argues in support of this view: 'The Jew, and the Jew alone, was nigh to God. And hence it followed that to be nigh to the Jew was to be nigh to God . . .'.<sup>8</sup>

The only negativeness in this section about the Jews is the reference to made by hand which is generally understood in contrast to things made by God.

Schlier argues that law is not mentioned in the list of the privileges of the Jews. He affirms that: 'The principle of life for Israel is the promise and not the Law'.<sup>9</sup> [Die Verheißung und nicht das 'Gesetz' ist das Lebensprinzip Israels]. Against this affirmation I would indicate Rom. 9:4 where in a similar list of Jewish privileges the giving of the law is mentioned. Schnackenburg can even see a reminiscence of Rom. 9:4 here.<sup>10</sup> ['eine Reminiszenz an Röm 9:4'].

I suggest that v. 12 is a positive argument in the hand of the author: the benefits of Israel are real benefits. One can only feel sorry if one does not share those benefits.

The fact that the law is not mentioned here does not mean that the law was not a benefit.

#### *c. Why is this comparison here?*

It is striking how tentative a justification commentators can bring for the inclusion of vv. 11–13 before our crucial section. For example, Schnackenburg suggests the theme of the author is 'the right relationship, the unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church'; and 'the understanding that Gentile Christians should have toward Jewish Christians'<sup>11</sup> ['das rechte Verhältnis, die Einheit von Juden-und Heidenchristen in der Kirche and das Verständnis der Heidenchristen für die Judenchristen']. Gnlika notes that churches in Asia Minor toward the end of the first century had almost exclusively members of Gentile origin. Thus the argumentation in this section is a theoretical one: it deals with a basic, general issue. God had chosen Israel previously. Now God has chosen the Gentiles. This election does not change the promise character of the previous election. Now Gentiles can better understand their present situation if they consider in retrospect what were the characteristics of a chosen people.<sup>12</sup>

These reasons are plausible ones. However, I think that the reason for the inclusion of this comparison here may be the view of the author about Israel. About this view my suggestion may be summarised tentatively as follows. There is a part of Israel which understood and followed God's will in the right way. They repented from their sins, consequently God had promised peace to them. They had privileges in the past (see Eph. 2:12): Christ (as a promise in the past); commonwealth (i.e. the fellowship of the chosen ones); covenants of promise (the plural probably referring to the covenants of Noah, Abraham, Moses etc); hope (for eternal life); and God (the only one true God, and a relationship with Him based on what God himself revealed to them).

Following the development which had evolved after the time of Isa. 57:19, the author of Eph. calls these Jews those who are near. These benefits were valid in the past and are still valid for Jews in the time of the epistle. These Jews, who have a right

relationship with God, are now Christians. The author of Eph. is most likely one of them. They share these benefits with Christians of Gentile origin.

To sum up what I have found up to this point: The context would not lead us to expect a condemnation of the Law as such. We must now look at the words themselves in v. 15.

### 5. The expression for 'Law' in v. 15: 'the law of commandments contained in ordinances' (AV)

#### a. Is it a pleonasm?

Scholars' opinion on this issue may be divided in two groups. One group thinks that the three-part term simply means law, because, as Lincoln put it, this 'lengthy formulation is characteristic of the style of Ephesians'.<sup>13</sup> The other group takes *en dogmasin* (in ordinances) as a qualification: the phrase limits the meaning in which the law is thought of here. For example, Mitton unfolds the meaning of the three components of the phrase as follows: "The whole Mosaic law consisted of broad commandments (like the Ten Commandments), and these were then elaborated in numerous precise regulations (the oral tradition of the Pharisees)".<sup>14</sup>

Although my own view about v. 15a is in line with that of this latter group of scholars, I have to note that the term which is crucial for this interpretation, *en dogmasin* (in ordinances), does not occur in manuscripts P<sup>46</sup> and vg<sup>ms</sup>. Nor have I found any place in the LXX, Philo, Josephus and the New Testament where *dogma* would qualify the law in a similar way to Eph. 2:15.<sup>15</sup>

The term 'law of commandments' does not occur in this genitival form in the LXX, in Philo, in Josephus or in the New Testament. The two expressions are mentioned together e.g. in Ex. 16:28; 24:12; Josh 22:5; 2 Kings 17:13, 34; Ps. 118:34, 35; Sir 32:23f (not in Philo, Josephus and in the New Testament). Dan 3:29 has a genitival connection, but the other way round: 'commandments of the law'.

The term *dogma* does not occur in the Pentateuch. It appears in 3 and 4 Macc, Dan (Theod.), Philo and Josephus frequently. Very often it refers to imperial decrees (in this sense in the New Testament in Lk. 2:1;

Acts 17:7; Heb. 11:23 text. var.). According to Bauer (-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, 1979<sup>2</sup>, p. 201), it refers to the Mosaic law e.g. in 3 Macc 1:3; Philo Gig 52; Leg All 1:54f; Josephus C. Ap. 1:42.

It seems that although *dogma* (ordinance) was not used in connection with the Mosaic law in the Pentateuch, it could be used in that connection in the first century A.D. Thus it may have been available for the author of Eph. as a term in the context of the Mosaic law.

Because of the fact that the author of Eph. often uses synonyms and long structures it is worth looking for possible parallel constructions. I have found that in all cases where a noun, a noun in the Genitive, and a noun with the preposition in follow each other, one can say that: the three nouns are not synonyms; or, even if the meanings are related, there is a qualified, new meaning of the structure as a whole. Thus the phrases, which occur in a similar construction, are not pleonasms (see e.g. 1:17; 2:7; 4:19; 5:26).

#### b. Is the law good or bad here?

Westcott affirms that the Law was abolished, annulled, but he can refer to positive matters in relation to the law:<sup>16</sup> 1) the law brought 'into clear light' the twofold enmity which was brought about by the Fall: enmity among men and enmity toward God; 2) the Law was an imperfect symbol of the will of God-Christ 'went behind' the Law and fulfilled the will of God; 3) the Law 'was fulfilled, and taken up into something wider and deeper'. Gnilka argues that the law of the Jews resulted in an Apartheid: non-Jews had no confidence in the Jews—and Jews had a certain scepticism toward the Gentiles. The author of Eph. interpreted the picture of a 'cosmic wall' as a 'wall of the law' [Gesetzesmauer]. The law caused separation on the side of the Jews. This separation has resulted in enmity. The law has caused another enmity: enmity toward God [Feindschaft mit Gott]. The death of Jesus is the end of the law.<sup>17</sup>

In arguing for this understanding of Eph. 2:15a Gnilka refers to Rom. 10:4 in the same sense: 'end of the law'. Rom. 10:4 is often referred to by those who hold that Eph. 2:15 says the law as such, i.e. the whole OT law is

abolished. Here, however, R. Badenas has in my opinion recently shown rather convincingly that *telos* in Rom. 10:4 is not likely to mean 'end', but rather: 'goal'.<sup>18</sup>

In spite of the suggestions that the law is mentioned here in negative terms, I suggest from the closer context that the law may be thought of as a part of the privileges the Jews had and which the Gentile Christians are reminded of as among the things they had missed before they came to accept Jesus Christ (v. 12).

From the wider context of Eph. I also argue that it is not likely that the law is spoken of here in completely negative terms. Lincoln mentions an argument (which he thinks does not rule out his negative view about the law) which supports the probability of my non-negative reading of the law here. In Eph. 6:2 the author of Eph. refers to one of the Ten Commandments in a clearly positive sense 'for secondary support for his own paraenesis': 'the first commandment with a promise'.<sup>19</sup>

## 6. Is the law abolished according to 15a?

### a. Context

As we have seen, the uniqueness of the three part term in connection with the law make its impossible to argue for its meaning from parallel material. I suggest that we should understand what v. 15a means by attempting to find its relationship to the context.

For example, an exegetical remark based on the context may strengthen my thesis. This concerns the term 'middle wall of partition' (AV) in v. 14. On the one hand, we know that the dividing wall in the Jerusalem Temple was a material, visible manifestation of the separation between Jews and Gentiles. It was not simply a wall: it had a deep symbolic meaning. On the other hand, we have a reference to a temple in Eph. 2:21: the addressees of Eph. are to grow into a temple. Thus I suggest that the dividing wall may also be that of the temple. The author affirms that there is nothing to separate Jews and Gentiles in the church of Christ. They can grow together into a new temple which does not have a middle wall of partition between them.

### b. *katargeo*, 'abolish'

This term is never applied by Paul directly to the law, but only 'to the effects the law has upon people not yet saved' ['auf die Wirkungen des Gesetzes im unerlösten Menschen'] (e.g. Rom. 7:5f).<sup>20</sup> In Rom. 3:31 Paul opposes the view that the law would be abolished. M. Barth also points to Rom. 7:22; 13:8–10 to argue against the view that Eph. 2:15 would mean the 'invalidation of the revelation given to Moses on Mount Sinai'.<sup>21</sup> These remarks are only helpful if one holds the view that Paul wrote Eph., and that Paul was not inconsistent.

2 Cor. 3 may present a difficulty. In v. 7 the glory on Moses' face is referred to as *katargoumenen*, fading. In v. 11 the neuter of the same term is not explained in other words. Even if it refers to the service of the letter, i.e. the law, there is a comparison between something glorious and something even more glorious. I cannot exegete 2 Cor here. I think, however, that the law is not simply spoken of in negative terms there.

Robinson has pointed out an interesting textual variant in Eph. 2:15 which is not reported in Aland<sup>26</sup>: *katartisas*, 'repairing' in D<sub>2</sub>\*. He calls it an interpretative change.<sup>22</sup> This 'change' probably means that a scribe did not like the strong word 'abolishing'. He may have thought that the law was good in its true meaning, but its usage needed 'repairing'.

The Greek verb, *katargeo*, may not necessarily have the strong meaning: 'abolish'. Westcott pointed to 1 Cor 13:11: things which are valid for the child pass away only in the sense that the child develops in a man ('I gave up', RSV, from the same verb, *katargeo*, as in Eph. 2:15: 'abolish').<sup>23</sup>

### c. In what sense is the law abolished according to v. 15a?

Let us summarise the major answers of scholars to this question.

1. Abbott in the first ICC series held that the law in Eph. 2:15 is the law of Moses in general.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to know that Professor E. Best will argue for this interpretation in his forthcoming commentary in the second ICC series.<sup>25</sup> Recently, Lincoln has revived this interpretation. Lincoln argues that 'the division between Jews and

Gentiles was produced by the law as such, by the very fact that Israel possessed the Torah, and so in order to remove the divisiveness Christ has to deal with its cause—the law itself.<sup>26</sup>

2. Macpherson held against this view that it is the 'ceremonial law' which is abolished according to Eph. 2:15. He affirmed that 'in ordinances' expressed the idea that the precepts of the Mosaic law 'were imposed by external authority'. Macpherson argued: 'If the apostle had intended the law generally, he would simply have called it the law . . .'.<sup>27</sup> This is a simple argument in itself. However, the style of the author and the context suggest for me that Macpherson may be right: the three part term does not mean the law as such, but the law with certain qualifications.

Schnackenburg argues from the context that those parts of the law are abolished which erected a wall between the Jews and the Gentiles: circumcision, laws of purification, and laws in connection with meals.<sup>28</sup>

Mitton holds a similar view. His list of the aspects in which the law is abolished also includes: methods of slaughter of animals, sabbath behaviour.<sup>29</sup>

Although Col. 2:16ff is a very difficult passage, and there is a controversy among scholars with regard to the question about its background, it is worth mentioning that Robinson thinks the author of Eph. uses parallel language to that of this Col. passage. Col. 2:14 mentions *dogma* in the plural. Col. 2:20 uses the same root in a verbal form. According to Robinson, the author of Eph. asks of those who seemed to wish to return to a modified system of external prohibitions: 'Why are ye still ordinance-ridden?' And at the same time he explains his meaning by examples of such ordinances: 'Touch not, taste not, handle not'.<sup>30</sup>

M. Barth mentions two further possible interpretations (with disapproval):<sup>31</sup>

3. 'Eph. 2:15 may well allude exclusively to those additional rabbinic teachings which were added as a "fence" around the law after the formation of Israel's Bible'.

4. 'The formula "the law . . . the commandments . . . in statutes," may serve the purpose of identifying the law with a sentence of death. In this case only a specific

function of the law is meant: its role in bringing knowledge and an increase of sin, and in inflicting a curse and death upon man'.

## 7. Conclusion

We have seen that there is no parallel for the three-part term for the law. There must be a reason for using this term instead of a simpler one. We can only make sense of the sentence if we try to make sense in its relation to the context. The context suggests that only that aspect of the law is abolished which made it impossible for Jews and Gentiles to become one fellowship. This cannot simply be the divisive function of the law, as M. Barth<sup>32</sup> suggests in his fifth interpretation, but probably does include the invalidation of regulations which separate Jews from Gentiles.

To conclude, I agree with the view of those who hold that it is not the whole Mosaic law which is abolished according to Eph. 2:15, but only those regulations which separated the Jew from the non-Jew (points 2–3, possibly 4 in the preceding section). These regulations were not valid for the Gentile Christians. Those Jews who became Christians (like the author of Eph.) felt that they are one with the Gentile Christians. This one-ness asked them to give up those of their laws which marked them off from other nations.

However, Eph. 2:15 expresses a truth which had to be accepted willingly. If there were some Jewish Christians who were not willing to give up circumcision for the sake of fellowship with Gentile Christians that does not mean that this interpretation of Eph. 2:15 is not possible. Eph. 2:15 states something which is expected from Jewish Christians: a decision they may make in their maturity.

On the other hand, the abrogation of the separative regulations of the law did not mean that the Gentile Christians did not have anything to learn from their Jewish brothers and sisters. They could rejoice in sharing many privileges with the Jews. We have listed some (see v. 12); here we point repeatedly to the Ten Commandments.

I hope I have been able to show that Eph.



2:15 does not say that the OT law as such is abolished for Gentile Christians. It cannot be used as a strong evidence for supporting the view that there were Christians in early 'orthodoxy' who thought the OT law was not valid for them. This is, of course, only one of the passages in the debate. The question of the law and the gospel is only one of many which are in connection with the problem of the unity of the theology of the New Testament. This paper only aimed to keep us alert. We have to turn to well known key passages with a certain freshness and openness again and again, so that our wider understanding the New Testament may be based on solid foundation.

- 1 Eg. Westcott, B. F.: *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: The Greek Text with Notes and Addenda* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1906) 36; Schlier, H.: *Der Brief an die Epheser: Ein Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1965<sup>5</sup>, orig. 1957) 122.
- 2 Op. cit., 122, 125.
- 3 Schnackenburg, R.: *Der Brief an die Epheser* (EKK X, Zürich: Benziger Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982) 107.
- 4 Schlier, 123; many scholars share this view of the unity of theme.
- 5 Op. cit., 127ff.
- 6 Op. cit., 122.
- 7 Robinson, J. A.: *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1903) 61.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Op. cit., 120.
- 10 Op. cit., 110.

- 11 Op. cit., 109.
- 12 Gnilka, J.: *Der Epheserbrief*. (Herders theol. Komm. zum NT X/2; Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Verlag Herder) 1983<sup>3</sup> (orig. 1971) 134.
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