



December 17, 2023

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My Dear Brother Jason Bradfield:

I have re-reviewed Dr. Kenneth Talbot's book *Confirming Our Faith* since my last letter, and I felt the need to send you this *addendum* on my earlier comments about the Jewish religion.

### **Faith of Abraham**

As you know, the patriarch Abraham-- who had no Mosaic law or orthodox Jewish religion-- exercised a type of *civil or natural justice*, when he took up arms against the ravishing kings of Shinar, Ellasar, Elam, and nations, who had taken Abraham's nephew Lot into captivity. (Genesis 14: 14-17).

After Abraham had armed his trained servants and successfully slaughtered these criminals and rescued his nephew Lot, he was visited by a mysterious king of Salem named Melchizek, who brought forth and administered the *bread* and *wine* to Abraham, blessed Abraham, and then received Abraham's tithe. (Genesis 14: 18-20).

Who was this king of Salem who is part and parcel of the Old Testament? Was he a type of Christ or Christ himself? See, e.g, Hebrews 7: 1-7, stating:

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest

continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

It would thus seem to me that in the faith of Abraham was the true religion-- the Christian religion-- established.

The Apostle Paul says, “[e]ven as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.... So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.... For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” (Galatians 3:6 -9, 18).

### **Judaism**

Obviously, Judaism was instituted in order to lead an oppressed people who had been recently enslaved back to the original faith of their father Abraham.

When the descendants of Abraham’s grandson Jacob (i.e., Israel) fell into Egyptian slavery, they had attained a slavish mentality and a heathenish mode of living under Egyptian domination.

Moses’ expressions frequently alluded to this awful fact.

Therefore, what the formerly-enslaved Children of Israel needed was a formalized system of religion-- liturgical practices-- to bring them out from darkness into to the light of Christ.

Hence, the ceremonial, judicial, and moral laws of Moses were instituted, “four hundred and thirty years after” the covenant promise was given to Abraham. (Galatians 3 :17)

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote: “Wherefore the law [i.e., “Judaism”] was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” (Galatians3: 24-25).

But was this ancient Israelite or Jewish “schoolmaster” teaching doctrines fundamentally distinct and different from that of the future Christian faith?

In Talbot's *Confirming Our Faith*, the following is observed:

### Old Testament Sacraments

The Divines have little to say about the Old Testament sacraments. In [Westminster Confession of Faith] 28:5, they simply wrote:

The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited; were, for substance, the same with those of the New....

What the Divines mean by this statement is that since there are only two sacraments ordained by God in the New Testament, only those sacraments common to the same purpose and application in the Old Testament are considered important for a contextual understanding of the New Testament sacraments. Keep in mind that the substance of the covenant of grace in the Old and New Testaments is the same; they point to salvation in and through Jesus Christ alone.

However, under the old and new administrations, the outward signs or symbols differed, even though they both spoke of the same 'thing signified,' Christ as our salvation. The former have been replaced by the latter. The two Old Testament sacraments that correspond to the New Testament [i.e., baptism and the Lord's Supper] are circumcision and the Passover.<sup>1</sup>

But even in the religion of Judaism, Moses and the Prophets all emphasized the importance of *inner holiness*, *inner righteousness*, and a *circumcision of the heart* that corresponds directly to the "faith" of Abraham. (Deuteronomy 30: 6 "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.")

### Judaism and Christianity

The Christian religion, therefore, is the same faith of Abraham (Hebrews 7: 1 - 28), which Judaism was instituted, as a sort of schoolmaster, to train the Israelites in through the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:24).

Even the devout and orthodox Jews, who keep the Law of Moses to carry out the faith of Abraham, *unwittingly* worship the Christ -- although most Jews wittingly reject Jesus of Nazareth as their Christ!

Under this condition, I think, more and more Jews shall come into the light and the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, as prophesied.

In the meanwhile, I believe that Augustine of Hippo's theological interpretation of this set of circumstances is correct.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kenneth Gary Talbot, *Confirming Our Faith: A Reformed Covenantal Theology of the Sacraments* (Lakeland, Fla.: Whitefield Media Publishing, 2009), pp. 53-54.

The Jewish religion is not invalidated, according to Augustine, but rather there are “two walls of partition” between Jew (sons of Judah) and Gentile (sons of Israel). To that point, while commenting on the prophecy of Hosea, Augustine writes:

The prophet Hosea speaks so very profoundly that it is laborious work to penetrate his meaning. But, according to promise, we must insert something from his book. He says, ‘And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there they shall be called the sons of the living God.’

Even the apostles understood this as a prophetic testimony of the calling of nations who did not formerly belong to God; and because this same people of the Gentiles is itself spiritually among the children of Abraham, and for that reason is rightly called Israel, therefore he goes on to say, ‘And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together in one, and shall appoint themselves one headship, and shall ascend from the earth.’

We should but weaken the savour of this prophetic oracle if we set ourselves to expound it. Let the reader but call to mind **the corner stone and those two walls of partition**, the **one of the Jews**, the **other of the Gentiles**, and **he will recognize them**, the one under the term **sons of Judah**, the other as **sons of Israel**, supporting themselves by **one and the same headship**, and ascending from the earth.<sup>2</sup>

According to Augustine of Hippo, Judaism (or the sons of Judah) are like the proverbial older brother Esau; whereas Christianity (or the sons of Israel) are like the younger brother Jacob!

The elder shall serve the younger!

The fundamental question, then, is **whether Judaism and Christianity are two sides of the same coin**— in terms of theology and redemption— and the radical answer is that this appears to be the case, at least as both the Apostle Paul’s Epistles and Augustine of Hippo’s *The City of God* have described the existential state of Judaism.

Yours Faithfully,

Rev. Roderick Andrew Lee Ford

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<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 634.